

# Information Bulletin

**Office of  
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## **ASSAULT BY A FAMILY MEMBER**

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This paper presents information from victimisation surveys as well as police statistics on the numbers and nature of domestic/family violence incidents recorded by police during the 2000 calendar year. In discussing domestic violence, two elements have to be addressed; how to define the behaviour and how to measure it. The first section of this paper considers these issues.

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## **Introduction**

This Bulletin presents information on the number and nature of ‘family violence’<sup>1</sup> incidents recorded by police during the 2000 calendar year. However, before presenting any statistics on family violence, two elements have to be addressed; how to define the behaviour and how to measure it.

### **Definitional issues**

In defining family violence, it is necessary to consider:

- the types of behaviour to include (i.e. whether physical, sexual, emotional, social, economic etc); and
- the types of relationships to consider (eg partners, ex-partners, boy/girlfriends, children, parents etc.).

For the purposes of this Bulletin, only those behaviours classified as offences for the purposes of criminal proceedings have been included: namely, physical assaults and sexual assaults. While other offence categories could involve family violence, such as breach of restraining orders, stalking or homicide, these have not been included in this Bulletin.

In terms of relationships, the emphasis in this Bulletin is on ‘family violence’, which encompasses not only ‘intimate’ relationships (current and former spouses, defacto/partners and boy/girlfriends) but also ‘other’ family members (such as siblings, parents, children and grandparents). Wherever possible, separate statistics are presented for ‘intimate’ and ‘non-intimate’ assaults.

### **The measurement of family violence**

In measuring family violence, there are two key sources of information:

- victimisation surveys; and
- official crime statistics.

These generate different but complementary data, with the former providing an insight into the prevalence and nature of offending in the community, while the latter generate more specific information on those incidents which come to police attention and are processed through the criminal justice system.

### ***Victimisation surveys***

These surveys involve interviewing a randomly selected sample of individuals to identify whether respondents have been the victims of particular types of offending over a specified time period (such as the last twelve months or since the age of 15). Because these surveys are designed to measure all victimisations experienced by the individual, rather than only those that are reported to police, they generate more reliable estimates of the prevalence of offending in the community than do official crime statistics. In addition, because they ask the victims whether they reported the most recent offence to police, they provide some insight into the comprehensiveness (or otherwise) of official crime statistics.

However, victimisation surveys also have a number of disadvantages:

- As one-off surveys they do not provide a continuous source of information;
- The results are only valid if the sample is truly representative of the target population, and the size is sufficiently large to permit the calculation of reliable estimates for the total population;
- Because each survey tends to use a different set of questions and different interview methodologies, it is often difficult to compare the results from one survey with another;
- Even within the one survey, there may be variations in how victims classify particular types of offences. For example, what one victim may consider to be an assault another victim may class as robbery;

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<sup>1</sup> There has been some debate about the appropriateness of the term ‘domestic violence’, with some commentators preferring to identify this behaviour as ‘family violence’ or ‘relationship abuse’. In this Bulletin the term ‘family violence’ is used, which incorporates ‘intimate’ relationships (involving current and former partners) and ‘non-intimate’ relationships (involving other family members).

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- There may be inconsistency between a victim's definition or categorisation of an incident and the official offence definition, which is constrained by legislation. This poses problems when trying to compare victimisation data with official police statistics; and
  - Finally, victimisation surveys rely on the individual's ability or willingness to provide accurate and honest responses.

Despite these limitations, victimisation surveys provide a very important source of statistical information that is independent of official crime statistics.

In Australia, victimisation surveys that have specific relevance for domestic/family violence include:

- The national Crime and Safety Survey undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) every five years. This survey includes questions relating to physical assault of male and female victims and sexual assault of adult female victims. Surveys conducted prior to 1998 only asked whether the victim knew the offender involved in the most recent incident. However, the 1998 national survey was extended to obtain information on the nature of the victim/offender relationship, thereby making it possible to identify, for the first time, the proportion of physical and sexual assaults involving a family member. While a state Crime and Safety survey focusing only on South Australia was undertaken in 2000, questions on sexual assault were not included in this survey because responses from previous years indicated that the numbers were too small to produce reliable state estimates.
- The Women's Safety Survey undertaken in 1996 by the ABS for the Office for the Status of Women and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services. In this survey, interviews were conducted with 6,300 randomly selected women aged 18 years and over, and data on the prevalence of physical and sexual violence experienced by these women over the past 12 months and since the age of 15 were collected. While this survey was not specifically focused on domestic/family violence, the inclusion of questions relating to the victim's relationship to the perpetrator (whether current or previous partner, boy/girlfriend, 'date', other known man or stranger) allowed detailed analysis of violence involving a partner. Its main disadvantage, however, was that the sample size was not sufficiently large to allow the calculation of reliable state-by-state estimates. Hence, only national data were published.
- Two recent victimisation surveys, the "South Australia Health Goals and Targets Violence and Abuse Health Priority Area" (May 1998) survey and the "Interpersonal Violence and Abuse Survey" (September 1999) focus exclusively on South Australia. The first survey (Taylor. et. al., 1998) interviewed just over 3,000 respondents (both male and female) to elicit data on the incidence and prevalence of various forms of interpersonal violence. The second survey (Dal Grande et. al., 1999) again investigated interpersonal violence, but involved a larger sample (approximately 6,000 individuals). The information collected by these surveys provides some insight into the prevalence of domestic/family violence in the South Australian community.

### ***Official crime statistics***

The second major source of information on family violence is that provided by official statistics collected by agents of the criminal justice system - namely police, courts and corrections.

Official crime statistics have some advantages over victimisation surveys. For example,

- the data collection process is continuous;
- it is not based on sampling but relates to all offences recorded; and
- it covers all types of offending.

However, official crime statistics have one major limitation: they deal only with matters that are actually recorded by police. It is well known that many offences are never reported, with the level of reporting for some crimes such as sexual assaults being particularly low. Moreover, not all offences reported to police are officially recorded in police databases. Official statistics therefore do not provide a valid indicator of the prevalence of offending in the community. Instead, they provide an insight into the types of offences that come to the attention of police and the characteristics of those victims and offenders who have contact with the criminal justice system. They also provide vital insights into the

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way in which the system itself responds to particular types of offending, including the characteristics of persons apprehended, levels of prosecution and court outcomes/penalties.

Official statistics have an additional limitation when it comes to the measurement of domestic/family violence. Unlike offences such as *vehicle theft, break and enter, or homicide*, there is no offence which is specifically designated as “domestic” or “family violence”. While the *Domestic Violence Act* of 1994 amended the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act* (SA) 1935 to enable the court to impose a maximum prison term of up to three years rather than two years in those cases where an assault involved a family member, this change applied only to common assaults. There were no comparable sentencing changes introduced for the more serious assaults such as occasioning grievous or actual bodily harm or for sexual assaults. Moreover, the definition of what constitutes a ‘family member’ (under s.39(2) of the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act*) is relatively constricted. It includes current or previous spouses of the defendant.<sup>2</sup> It also includes children (under 18 years) who either normally or regularly reside with a spouse or former spouse of the alleged offender, or whose parent or guardian is the offender’s current or ex spouse. However, it excludes other family members, such as grandparents, siblings, nieces or nephews.

Nevertheless, because of this legislative amendment, there are now two ways of obtaining information relevant to domestic/family violence from official police databases.

- One is to extract statistics on cases where either police or courts have defined the behaviour as “a common assault involving a family member”.
- The other is to select, from all incidents of assaults reported to police or dealt with in court, only those where the recorded victim/offender relationship (as recorded by police) falls within specified categories of current or former partner or other family member.

The latter approach has been used in this Information Bulletin, primarily because the resultant information is more encompassing and provides greater definitional flexibility. In particular, it allows data to be extracted separately for the different types of assault, namely minor or major assault and sexual assault. It also allows investigation of a broad range of victim/offender relationships involved in domestic disputes.

Most of the information presented in this Bulletin is derived from official statistics. In particular, it details the nature and extent of family violence incidents involving physical or sexual assault recorded by police during the period 1 January to 31 December 2000. It provides separate analyses for minor assault, major assault (notably cause actual or grievous bodily harm) and sexual assault. However, to provide a broader context for these official statistics, in the following section some information from the Crime and Safety Survey (ABS, 1998), Women’s Safety Survey (ABS, 1996) and the South Australian interpersonal violence surveys (1998 and 1999) are presented.

## **Victimisation surveys: some key findings**

### **Crime and Safety Survey, 1998**

The latest national Crime and Safety Survey was conducted in April 1998. It sought to obtain information on the level of victimisation in the community for selected offences, including the offences of assault and sexual assault. According to this survey, in the 12 months prior to the survey, an estimated 618,300 people aged 15 years and over were the victim of an assault. Males comprised about 54% of all assault victims. The victimisation prevalence rate was estimated to be 43 per 1,000 people. Overall, 27 in 1,000 people reported being assaulted in the most recent incident by someone that they knew, with approximately 10 per 1,000 reportedly being assaulted by a partner, ex-partner or other family member. Sixteen in 1,000 reported being assaulted by a stranger.

About 24% of the most recent assaults were classified as ‘family violence’, defined as an incident where the offender was the victim’s partner or ex-partner or a member of the victim’s family, regardless of where the incident occurred. More females than males reported being assaulted by a partner, ex-partner or other family member. In the most recent incident, the offender was the victim’s partner in 9.8% of

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<sup>2</sup> A ‘spouse’ of the defendant includes a person of the opposite sex who is cohabiting with the defendant as the husband or wife de facto of the defendant (s.39(2)).

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assaults involving female victims and 1.4% of assaults involving male victims. An ex-partner was involved in 13.3% of female assaults and 2.2% of male assaults. The offender was identified as a family member in 17.6% of assaults where the victim was female and 6.8% of assaults involving male victims.

The survey found that an estimated 30,100 females aged 18 years and over were the victims of a sexual assault in the preceding 12 months. In the most recent incident, most victims were sexually assaulted by someone known to them. About 3 in 1,000 were assaulted by someone they knew, while 1 in 1,000 were assaulted by a stranger. In approximately 11% of sexual assaults the offender was the victim's current partner, while for 12% it was an ex-partner and for a further 12% a family member.

Only 28% of assault victims told the police about the most recent incident, with victims less likely to report incidents involving current partners than assaults by ex-partners (16.9% compared with 41.0% respectively). In comparison, only 33% of sexual assault victims told the police about the most recent incident.

### **Women's Safety Survey, 1996**

According to the Women's Safety Survey, conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 1996, during the 12 months prior to the survey, an estimated 490,400 Australian women aged 18 years and over (7.1%) experienced an incident of violence. An estimated 404,400 women (5.9%) experienced physical violence and 133,100 (1.9%) experienced sexual violence in the previous 12 months. Overall, since age 15, an estimated 2.6 million women (38.4%) had experienced at least one incident of violence. An estimated 2.2 million (32.6%) had experienced physical violence and 1.2 million (17.9%) had experienced sexual violence since age 15 years. Regardless of whether the violence was experienced in the previous 12 months or since age 15 and whether it was physical or sexual in nature, males were the perpetrators in the majority of incidents.

Overall, 23% of women who were in a current relationship or had a previous partner reported experiencing violence at some time during the relationship (42% of women experiencing violence in a previous relationship and 8% in a current relationship). Of those women in a current relationship, 2.6% (111,000) experienced an incident of violence by a current partner in the previous 12 months (2.4% experiencing physical violence and 0.3% experiencing sexual violence). Of those women who had a previous relationship, 3.3% (83,800) experienced violence by a previous partner in the last 12 months (3.0% experiencing physical violence and 0.6% experiencing sexual violence). In response to questions about violence experienced since the age of 15, 8.0% of women with a current partner (an estimated 345,400) reported an incident of violence at some time during the current relationship (7.6% of women experiencing physical violence, while 1.0% experienced sexual violence). Since age 15, 1,080,800 women (42.4%) experienced violence by a previous partner (whether during or after the relationship). Approximately 39% had experienced physical assault, while 10.2% had experienced sexual assault.

As Table 1 indicates, for every 1,000 women aged 18 years and over living in Australia in 1996, 338.7 reported at least one incident of physical violence by a man in the previous twelve months. For those with a current partner, the rate of assault by that partner was 104.6 per 1,000 while for those with a previous partner it was 75.8. In comparison, the rate of physical assault by a stranger was 67.3 per 1,000 while that of assault by an "other known man" was 86.3 per 1,000. In percentage terms, it is estimated that 2.4% of Australian women in a current relationship were physically assaulted by a partner in the previous twelve months, while 3.0% were assaulted by a previous partner. In contrast, an estimated 1.3% of women were assaulted by an "other known man" and 1.0% by a stranger.

Table 1 also details women's experience of physical violence perpetrated by men since the age of 15. As indicated, a previous partner had physically assaulted 41.6% of women who had had a previous relationship. In comparison, 7.6% of women in a current relationship had been assaulted by a current partner.

**Table 1**  
**Australian women's experience of physical violence by a male: relationship to perpetrator**

Relationship to perpetrator	In last 12 months		Victim since the age of 15	
	Estimated number	% of relevant population*	Estimated number	% of relevant population*
Current partner	104,600	2.4	329,700	7.6
Previous partner	75,800	3.0	1,060,300	41.6
Boyfriend/date	27,300	n/a	222,800	n/a
Other known male	86,300	1.3	485,700	7.1
Stranger	67,300	1.0	320,500	4.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>338,700</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>2,069,800</b>	<b>30.1</b>

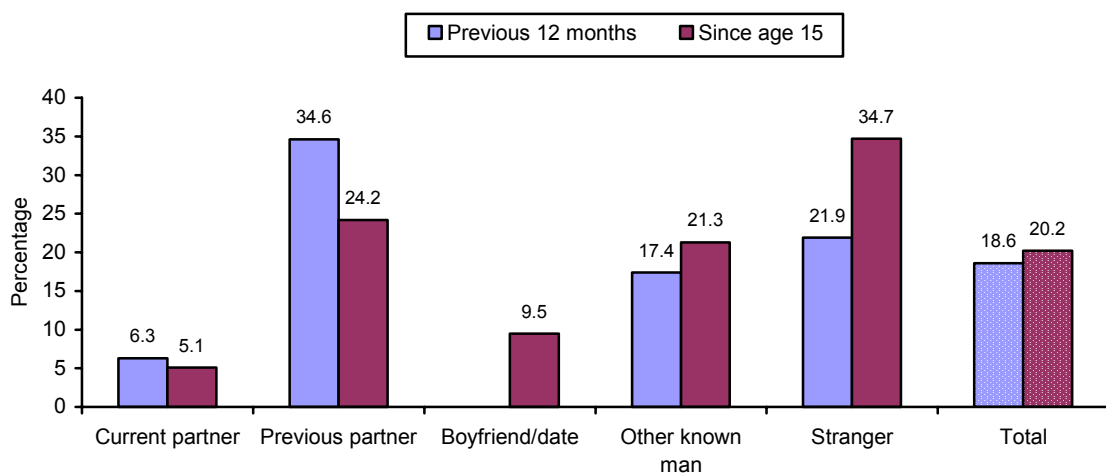
\* Calculated as % of the relevant population (eg. those in a current relationship) of Australian women aged 18 and over.  
Source: Women's Safety, Australia (ABS, 1996)

Although not shown in Table 1, in contrast to physical violence, for sexual violence the perpetrator was more likely to be a stranger. According to the 1996 survey, the rate of sexual assault by a stranger was 45.8 per 1,000, compared with 23.8 for a boyfriend/date, 12.4 for a current partner, 16.5 for a previous partner and 44.4 by an 'other known man'. In percentage terms, an estimated 0.3% of Australian women were sexually assaulted by a current partner and 0.6% by a previous partner in the preceding 12 months, while 0.7% were sexually assaulted by a stranger and 0.6% by an 'other known man'.

Of particular relevance to this Bulletin is the relatively small proportion of women surveyed who indicated that they had reported the most recent incident to police. As Figure 1 shows, of those women who stated that they had been physically assaulted during the previous 12 months, only 18.6% indicated that they had reported the incident to police. The level of reporting varied according to the victim's relationship to the offender. It was lowest in those situations where the perpetrator was a current partner (with only 6.3% reporting the incident to police) but was highest where a previous partner was involved (34.6%).

For incidents which had occurred since age 15, one fifth of women (20.2%) who had ever experienced an incident of physical assault by a man had reported the most recent incident to police. Women were more likely to report incidents that were perpetrated by a stranger than by somebody they knew (35% of women physically assaulted by a stranger reported the incident). Women who experienced violence by a current partner were least likely to have reported the incident to police (5.1%).

**Figure 1**  
**Women who experienced physical violence by a male in the previous 12 months and since age 15: proportion who told the police about the last incident by relationship to perpetrator.**



Source: Women's Safety, Australia (ABS, 1996)

While not included in Figure 1, of those women who stated that they had been sexually assaulted during the previous 12 months, only 14.9% reported the incident to police. On tenth of women (9.8%) who

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had ever experienced an incident of sexual assault by a man had reported the most recent incident to police. Women were more likely to report incidents that were perpetrated by a stranger than by somebody they knew (25% of women sexually assaulted by a stranger reported the incident).

### **South Australian Violence and Abuse surveys, 1998 and 1999**

The 1998 and 1999 interpersonal violence and abuse surveys focused on South Australia and asked interviewees whether they had experienced various forms of interpersonal violence, including domestic violence. For the purposes of these surveys 'domestic violence' included physical abuse (hurt, threat of physical harm or unwanted sexual activity) and emotional abuse (which was broadly defined as including spiritual, social, and economic abuse). Questions were asked of people who were currently married, separated or divorced, widowed, in a defacto relationship or who had had a previous significant long term relationship. In both surveys, 18% of respondents reported experiencing some form of domestic violence (23% of females and 12% of males) by a current or ex-partner. According to the 1998 survey, 14% of adults (19% of females and 8% of males) had experienced physical abuse and 15% (19% of females and 10% of males) had experienced emotional abuse. In comparison, the 1999 survey found that for 12% of respondents the violence was physical in nature (including 4% who reported forced sexual activity), while for 14% it was emotional. Only 17% of respondents in the 1999 survey reported the incident to police. Females were more likely to report domestic violence to police than were males (22% and 7% respectively).

In combination these victimisation surveys demonstrate that official crime statistics, because they count only those offences actually reported to police, seriously underestimate the extent of physical violence and in particular, violence by a current partner. These figures should be borne in mind when interpreting the official statistics outlined in the remainder of this Bulletin.

### **Family violence: the official statistics**

The following section details the number of physical and sexual assault offences involving family members recorded by police in South Australia in the 2000 calendar year. For the purposes of this Bulletin, if a police incident report includes more than one offence of the same offence type, each offence is included. If the same victim reports an incident to police early in the year, and then reports another incident later in the year, this will also be counted twice. Hence the statistics presented in this paper do not refer to discrete individuals. Several other points of clarification also need to be made:

- First, the analysis deals with both physical assaults and sexual assaults and includes actual as well as attempted assaults.
- Second, victim/offender relationships have been grouped into "intimate" (including **current** and **former** partners/defactos, spouses and boy/girl friends) and "non-intimate" (including other family members, such as siblings, parents, grandparents and cousins). In so doing, it should be noted that these groupings do not accord with the definition of "family member" as specified in s.39 of the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1934*. In this present study, perpetrators identified as current or ex boy/girlfriends have been included in the "intimate" category, even though they are not classified as "family members" in the legislation. In addition, under "non-intimate" family member, this study includes a range of other relationship types (such as grandparents, aunts/uncles and siblings), which are not included in the definition specified in the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935*.

### **Family assaults as a percentage of all assaults recorded by police in 2000**

As Table 2 indicates, of the 14,730 physical and sexual assaults recorded by police in 2000 where the victim/offender relationship was known, just over one third (36.6%) involved an offender who, according to our definition, was in a 'family' relationship with the victim. When broken down according to the type of the assault, it was found that a higher proportion of 'minor' rather than 'major' assaults involved a 'family' relationship (39.1% compared with 24.9% respectively). Of the 1,743 sexual assaults recorded by police in 2000 where the victim/offender relationship was known, 32.6% involved a family relationship.

**Table 2**  
**Assaulted recorded by police: type of assault by victim/offender relationship type, 2000**

Relationship of offender	Major assault		Minor assault		Total physical assault		Sexual assault		Total*	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Family	438	24.9	4,387	39.1	4,825	37.2	568	32.6	5,393	36.6
Non-Family	1,319	75.1	6,843	60.9	8,162	62.8	1,175	67.4	9,337	63.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,757</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>11,230</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>12,987</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,743</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>14,730</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Excluded from this table are 1,743 assaults where the victim/offender relationship was 'unknown'.

For the purposes of this analysis:

- Family includes spouse and ex spouse, partner/defacto and ex partner/defacto, boy/girl friend and ex boy/girl friend, parent/guardian, son/daughter, uncle/aunt, grandparent, brother/sister, cousin, in laws (brother/sister and mother/father), niece/nephew, parent's partner/defacto and other relative.
- 'Non-family' includes acquaintance/co-worker, business partner/director, clergyman, employer/master, friend/family friend, health-doctor/nurse, housemate, neighbour, other, police officer, prisoner, stranger, teacher/tutor, worker/servant, and youth leader.

Of the 14,730 physical and sexual assaults recorded by police in 2000 where the victim/offender relationship was known 36.6% involved an offender who was in a family relationship with the victim. This included just under one quarter (23.5%) who were defined as 'intimately' related, and 13.2% who were 'other family' members.

In 24.9% of the 1,757 major assaults recorded by police in 2000, the perpetrator was related to the victim, with 17.6% being 'intimately' related and 7.3% being an 'other family' member. For minor assault the total figure was 39.1%, comprising approximately one quarter (26.5%) who were 'intimates' and 12.6% who were 'non-intimates'.

Of the 1,743 sexual assaults recorded by police in 2000, in one in ten of these offences (9.9%) the perpetrator was identified as an 'intimate', while 22.7% of sexual assaults involved 'other family' members.

A breakdown of the types of relationships classified as 'non-family' is also provided in Table 3. Where the victim/offender relationship was known, 38.6% of major assaults, 25.7% of minor assaults and 26.6% of sexual assaults involved strangers.

**Table 3**  
**Type of assault by victim/offender relationship type, 2000**

Relationship of offender	Major assault		Minor assault		Total physical assault		Sexual assault		Total*	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Family</b>										
Non-intimate	129	29.5	1,414	32.2	1,543	32.0	395	69.5	1,938	35.9
Intimate	309	70.5	2,973	67.8	3,282	68.0	173	30.5	3,455	64.1
<b>Total family</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>24.9</b>	<b>4,387</b>	<b>39.1</b>	<b>4,825</b>	<b>37.2</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>5,393</b>	<b>36.6</b>
<b>Non-family</b>										
Acquaintance/ co-worker	420	23.9	2,320	20.7	2,740	21.1	331	19.0	3,071	20.8
Friend/family friend	102	5.8	510	4.5	612	4.7	229	13.2	841	5.7
Housemate	11	0.6	112	1.0	123	0.9	14	0.8	137	0.9
Neighbour	34	1.9	390	3.5	424	3.3	48	2.8	472	3.2
Stranger	679	38.6	2,886	25.7	3,565	27.5	463	26.6	4,028	27.3
Other**	73	4.2	625	5.6	698	5.4	90	5.2	788	5.3
<b>Total Non-family</b>	<b>1,319</b>	<b>75.1</b>	<b>6,843</b>	<b>60.9</b>	<b>8,162</b>	<b>62.8</b>	<b>1,175</b>	<b>67.4</b>	<b>9,337</b>	<b>63.4</b>
<b>Total*</b>	<b>1,757</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>11,230</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>12,987</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,743</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>14,730</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Excluded from this table are 1,743 assaults where the victim/offender relationship was 'unknown'.

\*\* 'Other' includes business partner/director, clergyman, employer/master, health-doctor/nurse, police officer, prisoner, teacher/tutor, worker/servant, and youth leader.



### Family assaults: type of victim/offender relationship

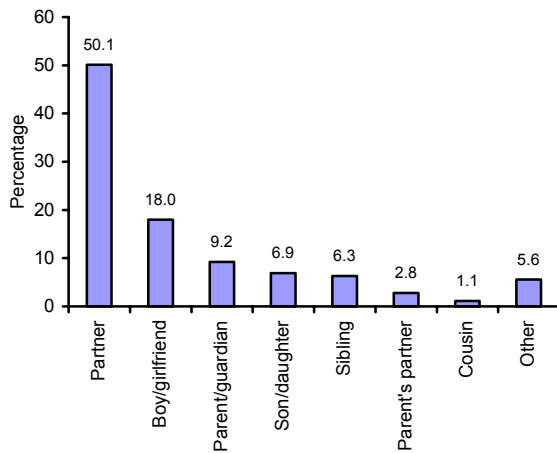
Table 4 provides a more detailed breakdown of the type of victim/offender relationships involved in family violence. As shown, for physical assault, an 'intimate', rather than a 'non-intimate' family member (70.5% for major and 67.8% for minor assault) perpetrated the majority of intra-familial offences recorded by police. The opposite is true for sexual assaults, where only three in ten such offences were perpetrated by an intimate, while the majority were attributed to another family member (69.5%).

**Table 4**  
**Type of assault by victim/offender relationship type for family assaults, 2000**

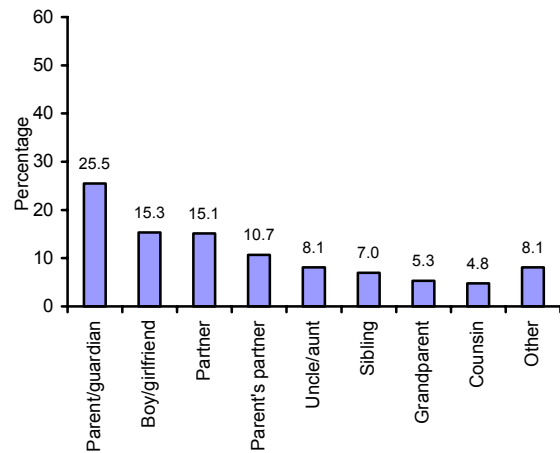
Relationship	Major assault		Minor assault		Total physical assault		Sexual assault		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Intimate</b>										
Boy/girlfriend (inc. ex)	106	24.2	761	17.3	867	18.0	87	15.3	954	17.7
Partner/defacto /spouse (inc. ex)	203	46.3	2212	50.4	2,415	50.1	86	15.1	2,501	46.4
<b>Total Intimate</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>70.5</b>	<b>2,973</b>	<b>67.8</b>	<b>3,282</b>	<b>68.0</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>30.5</b>	<b>3,455</b>	<b>64.1</b>
<b>Non-intimate</b>										
Brother/sister	27	6.2	278	6.3	305	6.3	40	7.0	345	6.4
Cousin	12	2.7	40	0.9	52	1.1	27	4.8	79	1.5
Grandparent	2	0.5	10	0.2	12	0.2	30	5.3	42	0.8
In laws – brother/sister	5	1.1	42	1.0	47	1.0	4	0.7	51	0.9
In laws – mother/father	1	0.2	36	0.8	37	0.8	0	0	37	0.7
Niece/nephew	3	0.7	20	0.5	23	0.5	7	1.2	30	0.6
Parent/Guardian	29	6.6	417	9.5	446	9.2	145	25.5	591	11.0
Parent's partner/defacto	8	1.8	129	2.9	137	2.8	61	10.7	198	3.7
Son/daughter	23	5.3	311	7.1	334	6.9	0	0	334	6.2
Uncle/aunt	2	0.5	21	0.5	23	0.5	46	8.1	69	1.3
Other relative	17	3.9	110	2.5	127	2.6	35	6.2	162	3.0
<b>Total non-intimate</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>1,414</b>	<b>32.2</b>	<b>1,543</b>	<b>32.0</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>69.5</b>	<b>1,938</b>	<b>35.9</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,387</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,825</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5,393</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The difference in victim/offender relationship between sexual and physical assault is illustrated more clearly in Figures 2 and 3. Of all physical assaults of a family member recorded by police in the 2000 calendar year, half (50.1%) were alleged perpetrated by a current or previous spouse/defacto/partner, while a further 18.0% were attributed to current or ex-girlfriends/boyfriends. Non-intimate family members accounted for the remainder, including parents/guardians (9.2%), sons/daughters (6.9%) and siblings (6.3%). For sexual offences, the victim/offender profile was notably different, with parents/guardians accounting for the largest proportion of such offences recorded by police in 2000 (25.5%), followed by current or ex boyfriends/girlfriends (15.3%), current or previous partners/defactos/spouses (15.1%), parent's partners/defactos (10.7%), uncles/aunts (8.1%) and siblings (7.0%). It should be stressed, however, that this pattern may be more a product of reporting practices than actual offending behaviour.

**Figure 2**  
Physical assaults: type of victim/offender relationship, 2000



**Figure 3**  
Sexual assaults: type of victim/offender relationship, 2000



#### Type of assault by sex of victim

A detailed breakdown of the victim's sex according to the type of offence involved is presented in Tables 5 and 6. For the purposes of these tables, major and minor assault have been combined under the broad category of physical assault. As indicated in Table 5, the majority of 'intimate' physical and sexual assaults involved a female victim (88.1% and 97.1% respectively). This discrepancy between males and females was not as pronounced in the case of assaults by a non-intimate family member, although males were still in the minority. As indicated in Table 6, females were the victims in 56.1% of physical assaults perpetrated by a non-intimate family member, and 77.5% of sexual assaults.

**Table 5**  
Assaults allegedly committed by an intimate: type of assault by sex of victim, 2000

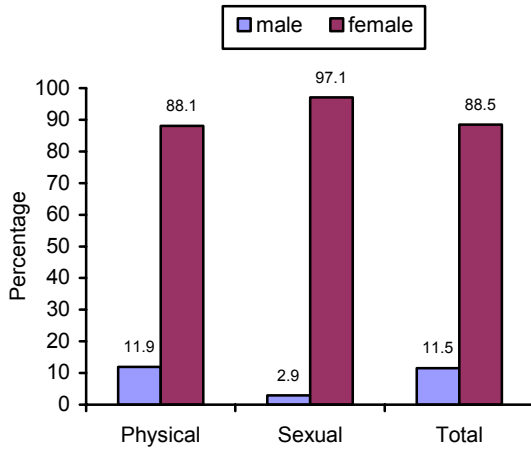
Sex	Physical assault		Sexual assault		Total assault	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	391	11.9	5	2.9	396	11.5
Female	2,891	88.1	168	97.1	3,059	88.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,282</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,455</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 6**  
Assaults allegedly committed by a non-intimate family member: type of assault by sex of victim, 2000

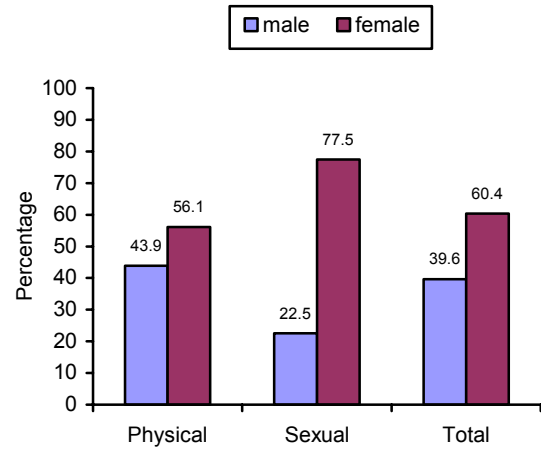
Sex	Physical assault		Sexual assault		Total assault	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	678	43.9	89	22.5	767	39.6
Female	865	56.1	306	77.5	1,171	60.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,543</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,938</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The data from Tables 5 and 6 are presented graphically in Figures 4 and 5.

**Figure 4**  
**Assaults allegedly committed by an intimate:**  
**assault type by sex of victim, 2000**



**Figure 5**  
**Assaults allegedly committed by a non-intimate**  
**family member: assault type by sex of victim, 2000**



The information contained in Tables 5 and 6 is presented differently in Table 7. As shown, whereas the majority of males who were the victims of a physical assault in 2000 identified a non-intimate family member as the perpetrator (63.4%), the converse was true for females, the majority of whom (77.0%) were assaulted by an intimate. In terms of sexual assault, while both males and females were more likely to be assaulted by a non-intimate family member than an intimate, again, the likelihood of the perpetrator being an intimate was higher for females than males (35.4% compared with 5.3% respectively). Given that these data relate only to offences which were officially recorded by police, it is not possible to determine whether these differences reflect variations in offending or in the extent to which men and women are prepared to report certain types of assault to police.

**Table 7**  
**Type of relationship by type of offence and sex of victim, 2000**

Relationship	Physical assault		Sexual assault		Total assault	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Intimate	36.6	77.0	5.3	35.4	34.0	72.3
Family	63.4	23.0	94.7	64.6	66.0	27.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	<b>n=1,069</b>	<b>n=3,756</b>	<b>n=94</b>	<b>n=474</b>	<b>n=1,163</b>	<b>n=4,230</b>

### The type of offence charged in family assaults

A more detailed profile of the type of offending involved in 'intimate' and 'other family' incidents recorded by police in 2000 is presented in Table 8. As shown, minor assaults accounted for the majority of incidents, irrespective of whether the perpetrator was an 'intimate' or 'other' family member, while major assaults and sexual assaults accounted for lower proportions. However, there were some differences between the two groups. In particular, a higher proportion of 'non-intimate' assaults recorded by police involved a sexual offence (20.4% compared with 5.0% of 'intimate' assaults), while proportionately fewer involved a minor assault (73.0% compared with 86.0% respectively).

**Table 8**  
**Victim/offender relationship type by type of offence, 2000**

Offence type	Intimate		Non-intimate	
	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Major assault</b>				
Assault occasioning grievous bodily harm	38	1.1	15	0.8
Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	262	7.6	109	5.6
Assault with intent to commit an offence	6	0.2	2	0.1
Other major assault	3	0.1	3	0.2
<b>Total major assault</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>6.7</b>
<b>Minor assault</b>				
Common assault	2,971	86.0	1,414	73.0
Other minor assault	2	0.1	0	0
<b>Total minor assault</b>	<b>2,973</b>	<b>86.0</b>	<b>1,414</b>	<b>73.0</b>
<b>Sexual assault</b>				
Rape/attempted rape	132	3.8	113	5.8
Indecent assault	18	0.5	161	8.3
Unlawful sexual intercourse	19	0.5	72	3.7
Incest	0	0	4	0.2
Other sexual offences	4	0.1	45	2.3
<b>Total sexual assault</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>20.4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,455</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,938</b>	<b>100.0</b>

#### Type of offence charged by sex of victim

The type of offence involved also varied according to the sex of the victim, with these differences being more pronounced for 'non-intimate' rather than 'intimate' assaults. Although minor assault continued to dominate the offence profile of both sexes, males were proportionately more likely than females to be the victim of a major assault and less likely to be the victim of a sexual assault. As indicated in Table 9, for those intimate assaults where the victim was a male, 13.4% involved a major assault compared with 8.3% for females. Conversely, only 1.3% of males were victims of a sexual assault compared with 5.5% of females.

**Table 9**  
**Assaults where the alleged offender was an 'intimate': sex of victim by type of assault, 2000**

Offence type	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Physical assault</b>				
Major assault	53	13.4	256	8.3
Minor assault	338	86.4	2,635	86.1
<b>Total physical assault</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>98.7</b>	<b>2,891</b>	<b>94.5</b>
<b>Sexual assault</b>				
Rape/attempted rape	1	0.3	131	4.3
Indecent assault	3	0.8	15	0.5
Unlawful sexual intercourse	1	0.3	18	0.6
Other	0	0	4	0.1
<b>Total sexual assault</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>5.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,059</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Gender differences were more pronounced in those instances where the perpetrator was a non-intimate family member rather than an intimate. As Table 10 indicates, only 11.6% of 'non-intimate' incidents involving a male victim were classified as a sexual assault, compared with 26.1% of incidents involving female victims.

**Table 10**  
**Assaults where the alleged offender was a ‘non-intimate’ family member: sex of victim by type of assault, 2000**

Offence type	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Physical assault</b>				
Major assault	81	10.6	48	4.1
Minor assault	597	77.8	817	69.8
<b>Total physical assault</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>88.4</b>	<b>865</b>	<b>73.9</b>
<b>Sexual assault</b>				
Rape/attempted rape	24	3.1	89	7.6
Indecent assault	37	4.8	124	10.6
Unlawful sexual intercourse	9	1.2	63	5.4
Other	19	2.5	30	2.6
<b>Total sexual assault</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>26.1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>767</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,171</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### The nature of the victim/offender relationship

#### *Assault by an ‘intimate’*

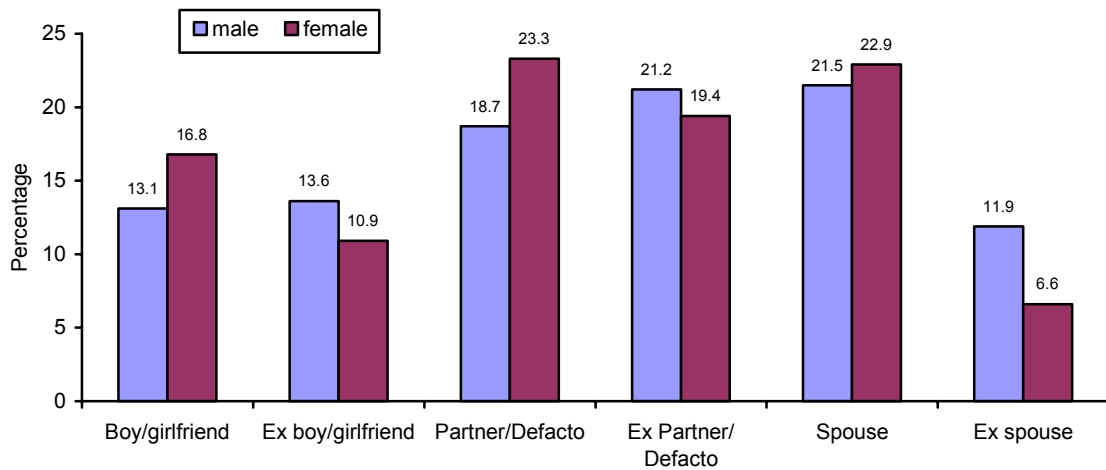
Information about the specific type of relationship involved in ‘intimate’ assaults is provided in Table 11 and Figure 6. As shown, current partners/defactos and current spouses accounted for the highest proportion of offenders (22.8% and 22.7% respectively). However, there were some differences in the relationship type depending upon the sex of the victim, as illustrated in Figure 6.

**Table 11**  
**‘Intimate’ assaults: sex of victim by victim/offender relationship, 2000**

Type of relationship	Males		Females		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Boy/girl friend	52	13.1	515	16.8	567	16.4
Ex boy/girl friend	54	13.6	333	10.9	387	11.2
Partner/defacto	74	18.7	714	23.3	788	22.8
Ex Partner/defacto	84	21.2	594	19.4	678	19.6
Spouse	85	21.5	701	22.9	786	22.7
Ex spouse	47	11.9	202	6.6	249	7.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,059</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,455</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As Figure 6 shows, a higher proportion of female than male victims were assaulted by a current partner/defacto (23.3% compared with 18.7% respectively), while a lower proportion were assaulted by an ex-spouse (6.6% compared with 11.9% respectively).

**Figure 6**  
**Assaults where the offender was an intimate: sex of victim by victim/offender relationship, 2000**

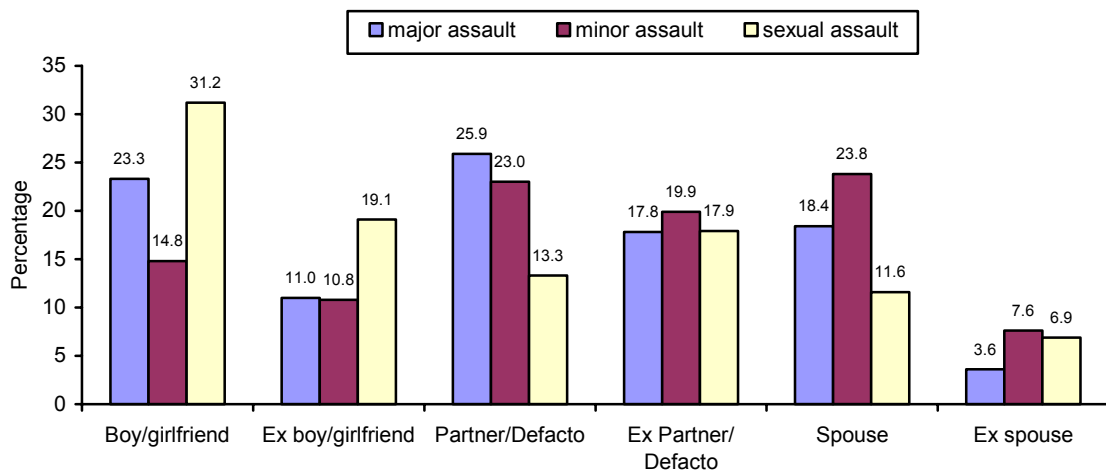


Victim/offender relationships also varied according to the type of assault involved. As Table 12 and Figure 7 show, a higher proportion of minor assaults were attributed to a current spouse than was the case for major assaults (23.8% compared with 18.4% respectively), while a lower proportion were ascribed to a current boy/girlfriend (14.8% compared with 23.3% for major assaults). However, the main differences were between physical assaults and sexual assaults. A much lower proportion of sexual assaults were attributed to a current spouse than was the case for physical assault (11.6% compared with 23.3% respectively), while a much higher proportion were attributed to a boy/girlfriend (31.2% compared with 15.6% respectively). Again, this could be due to variations in a victim's willingness to report the incident to police rather than to real differences in the type of relationship between the victim and perpetrator.

**Table 12**  
**'Intimate' assaults: type of offence by victim/offender relationship, 2000**

Type of relationship	Major assault		Minor assault		Total physical assault		Sexual assault	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Boy/girl friend	72	23.3	441	14.8	513	15.6	54	31.2
Ex boy/girl friend	34	11.0	320	10.8	354	10.8	33	19.1
Partner/defacto	80	25.9	685	23.0	765	23.3	23	13.3
Ex partner/defacto	55	17.8	592	19.9	647	19.7	31	17.9
Spouse	57	18.4	709	23.8	766	23.3	20	11.6
Ex spouse	11	3.6	226	7.6	237	7.2	12	6.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,973</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,282</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Figure 7**  
**Assaults where the offender was an intimate: type of assault by victim/offender relationship, 2000**



Relational differences between males and females persisted across the different offence types. As Table 13 indicates, a current partner/defacto was responsible for a higher proportion of major assaults involving male rather than female victims (34.0% compared with 24.2% respectively). Conversely, a current partner/defacto was the perpetrator in 16.0% of minor assaults involving male victims and 23.9% involving female victims.

**Table 13**  
**Intimate assaults: victim/offender relationship by victim sex for major and minor assaults, 2000**

Type of relationship	Major assault				Minor assault			
	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Boy/girl friend	13	24.5	59	23.0	38	11.2	403	15.3
Ex boy/girl friend	5	9.4	29	11.3	48	14.2	272	10.3
Partner/defacto	18	34.0	62	24.2	54	16.0	631	23.9
Ex partner/defacto	5	9.4	50	19.5	78	23.1	514	19.5
Spouse	7	13.2	50	19.5	78	23.1	631	23.9
Ex spouse	5	9.4	6	2.3	42	12.4	184	7.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,635</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In terms of sexual assault, the number of male victims was too small to permit any comparison with females. However, it is worth noting that for the majority of females who had been sexually assaulted by an intimate and who reported that assault to police, the perpetrator was more likely to be either a current or previous boy/girlfriend rather than a current or previous spouse. Again, this may be a reflection of a difference in willingness to report, rather than an indicator of real differences in perpetrator status.

**Table 14**  
**Intimate assaults: victim/offender relationship by victim sex for sexual assaults, 2000**

Type of relationship	Sexual assault			
	Males		Females	
	No.	%	No.	%
Boy/girl friend	1	*	53	31.5
Ex boy/girl friend	1	*	32	19.0
Partner/Defacto	2	*	21	12.5
Ex Partner/Defacto	1	*	30	17.9
Spouse	0	*	20	11.9
Ex spouse	0	*	12	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Numbers too small to justify the calculation of percentages.

### *Assault by a 'non-intimate' family member*

As indicated in Table 15, of those domestic incidents recorded by police involving a non-intimate family member, three in ten (30.5%) were perpetrated by a parent/guardian. In 17.8% of incidents a sibling was involved, while in 17.2%, the perpetrator was the victim's son or daughter.

Differences between males and females in terms of victim/offender relationship were relatively minor. For both sexes, the main perpetrators were parents/guardians.

**Table 15**  
**Non-intimate assaults: sex of victim by victim/offender relationship, 2000**

Type of relationship	Male		Female		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No.	%
Sibling	144	18.8	201	17.2	345	17.8
Cousin	42	5.5	37	3.2	79	4.1
Grandparent	11	1.4	31	2.6	42	2.2
In laws – brother/sister	19	2.5	32	2.7	51	2.6
In laws – mother/father	26	3.4	11	0.9	37	1.9
Niece/nephew	12	1.6	18	1.5	30	1.5
Parent/guardian	234	30.5	357	30.5	591	30.5
Parent's partner/defacto	60	7.8	138	11.8	198	10.1
Son/daughter	118	15.4	216	18.4	334	17.2
Uncle/aunt	18	2.3	51	4.4	69	3.6
Other relative	83	10.8	79	6.7	162	8.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>767</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,171</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,938</b>	<b>100.0</b>

While gender differences were relatively minor, the victim/offender relationship did vary depending upon the type of assault involved. Again, although there were some differences between major and minor assaults, the main variation was between physical assaults and sexual assaults. As shown, a higher proportion of sexual assaults were attributed to a parent/guardian than was the case for physical assaults (36.7% compared with 28.9% respectively). The same applied to grandparents (listed as the perpetrators in 7.6% of sexual compared with 0.8% of physical assaults) and uncles/aunts (11.6% compared with 1.5%). Conversely, proportionally fewer sexual than physical assaults were attributed to siblings and sons/daughters (10.1% and none, compared with 19.8% and 21.6% respectively).

**Table 16**  
**'Non-intimate' assault: type of offence by victim/offender relationship, 2000**

Type of relationship	Major assault		Minor assault		Total physical assault		Sexual assault	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sibling	27	20.9	278	19.7	305	19.8	40	10.1
Cousin	12	9.3	40	2.8	52	3.4	27	6.8
Grandparent	2	1.6	10	0.7	12	0.8	30	7.6
In laws – brother/sister	5	3.9	42	3.0	47	3.0	4	1.0
In laws – mother/father	1	0.8	36	2.5	37	2.4	0	0
Niece/nephew	3	2.3	20	1.4	23	1.5	7	1.8
Parent/guardian	29	22.5	417	29.4	446	28.9	145	36.7
Parent's partner/defacto	8	6.2	129	9.1	137	8.9	61	15.4
Son/daughter	23	17.8	311	22.0	334	21.6	0	0
Uncle/aunt	2	1.6	21	1.5	23	1.5	46	11.6
Other relative	17	13.2	110	7.8	127	8.2	35	8.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,414</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,543</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As Tables 17 and 18 indicate, there was also some variation in the victim/offender relationship involved in each assault type depending upon the sex of the victim. Males were more likely than females to be the victim of a physical or sexual assault perpetrated by a cousin. Conversely, a higher proportion of females than males were the victims of a sexual assault perpetrated by an uncle/aunt (13.4% compared with 5.6% respectively).



**Table 17**  
**Non-intimate assault: victim/offender relationship by victim sex for major and minor assaults, 2000**

Type of relationship	Major assault				Minor assault			
	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sibling	17	21.0	10	20.8	116	19.4	162	19.8
Cousin	10	12.3	2	4.2	18	3.0	22	2.7
Grandparent	0	0	2	4.2	3	0.5	7	0.9
In laws – brother/sister	4	4.9	1	2.1	14	2.3	28	3.4
In laws – mother/father	1	1.2	0	0	25	4.2	11	1.3
Niece/nephew	1	1.2	2	4.2	10	1.7	10	1.2
Parent/guardian	18	22.2	11	22.9	185	31.0	232	28.4
Parent's partner/defacto	4	4.9	4	8.3	50	8.4	79	9.7
Son/daughter	15	18.5	8	16.7	103	17.3	208	25.5
Uncle/aunt	0	0	2	4.2	13	2.2	8	1.0
Other relative	11	13.6	6	12.5	60	10.1	50	6.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>597</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>817</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 18**  
**Non-intimate assault: victim/offender relationship by victim sex for sexual assaults, 2000**

Type of relationship	Sexual assault			
	Males		Females	
	No.	%	No.	%
Sibling	11	12.4	29	9.5
Cousin	14	15.7	13	4.2
Grandparent	8	9.0	22	7.2
In laws – brother/sister	1	1.1	3	1.0
In laws – mother/father	0	0	0	0
Niece/nephew	1	1.1	6	2.0
Parent/guardian	31	34.8	114	37.3
Parent's partner/defacto	6	6.7	55	18.0
Son/daughter	0	0	0	0
Uncle/aunt	5	5.6	41	13.4
Other relative	12	13.5	23	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Age of victims

#### *Assault by an 'intimate'*

There was a clear relationship between the victim's age and the likelihood of being assaulted by an 'intimate'. As indicated in Table 19 and Figure 8, only 4.7% of 'intimate' assault offences involved victims aged less than 18 years, while only 0.7% involved individuals aged 60 and over. Instead, the majority of victims who had been assaulted by an 'intimate' were concentrated in the middle age range of 25-34 years (39.0%). Those aged 18-24 accounted for a further 23.1%, while those aged 35-44 constituted 25.4%.

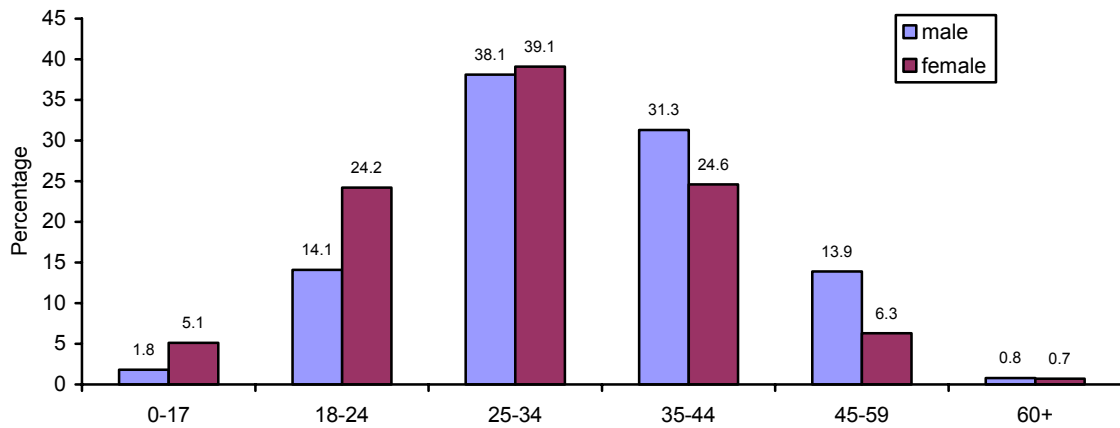
**Table 19**  
**Assaults where offender was an intimate: victim age by sex, 2000**

Age in years	Males		Females		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0-17	7	1.8	157	5.1	164	4.7
18-24	56	14.1	741	24.2	797	23.1
25-34	151	38.1	1,196	39.1	1,347	39.0
35-44	124	31.3	752	24.6	876	25.4
45-59	55	13.9	193	6.3	248	7.2
60 & over	3	0.8	20	0.7	23	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,059</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,455</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Both male and female victims were concentrated in the middle age range of 25-34 years. However, while a higher proportion of females than males were aged 18-24 (24.2% compared with 14.1%

respectively), the reverse was true for the older age category of 45–59 years, with 13.9% of male victims falling within this range compared with only 6.3% of female victims. As Table 20 indicates, these differences held true for physical assaults. However, the number of male victims of sexual assault was too small (n=5) to make any comparisons for this offence type.

**Figure 8**  
**Victims of assault where the offender was an intimate: age by sex, 2000**



As indicated in Table 20, for females, there were some age variations between those who had been victims of physical assaults and those who had been sexually assaulted. Overall, women who had been physically assaulted by an intimate partner were older than those who had been sexually assaulted. For example, of those who had been physically assaulted, only 4.1% were aged 10–17 years, compared with 22.0% of those who had been sexually assaulted.

**Table 20**  
**Assaults where alleged offender was an intimate: type of offence by victim sex and age, 2000**

Age in years	Physical assault				Sexual assault			
	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0-9	1	0.3	0	0	0	*	1	0.6
10-17	3	0.8	119	4.1	3	*	37	22.0
18-24	54	13.8	705	24.4	2	*	36	21.4
25-34	151	38.6	1,148	39.7	0	*	48	28.6
35-44	124	31.7	717	24.8	0	*	35	20.8
45-59	55	14.1	182	6.3	0	*	11	6.5
60 & over	3	0.8	20	0.7	0	*	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,891</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Numbers too small to justify the calculation of percentages.

#### *Assault by a 'non-intimate' family member*

As indicated in Table 21, the majority of victims who, according to police records, were assaulted by a non-intimate family member were relatively young, with almost one in five aged less than 10 and a further 26.9% aged 10-17 years. In total then, 45.3% were aged less than 18 years. At the other end of the scale, only 3.8% of victims of assault by a non-intimate family member were aged 60 and over.

There were, however, substantial differences in the age profiles of victims who had been sexually assaulted compared with those who had been physically assaulted by a non-intimate family member. The victims of sexual assault were considerably younger, with 76.8% aged less than 18 compared with 37.3% of those who had been physically assaulted.

**Table 21**  
**Assaults where the alleged offender was a non-intimate family member: victim age by type of offence, 2000**

Age in years	Physical assault		Sexual assault		Total*	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0-9	211	13.7	145	37.0	356	18.4
10-17	364	23.6	156	39.8	520	26.9
18-24	222	14.4	40	10.2	262	13.5
25-34	200	13.0	38	9.7	238	12.3
35-44	219	14.2	10	2.6	229	11.8
45-59	253	16.4	2	0.5	255	13.2
60 & over	73	4.7	1	0.3	74	3.8
<b>Total*</b>	<b>1,542</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,934</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* There were four victims for whom age was not recorded (one victim of physical assault and three victims of sexual assault).

Overall, the age profiles of male and female victims who reported that a non-intimate family member had assaulted them were relatively similar. However, a slightly higher percentage of males were aged less than 10 years (21.0% compared with 16.7% of females) while a slightly lower percentage were aged 10-17 years (23.8% compared with 28.9% respectively). For both genders, however, it was the younger age groups that dominated, with 44.8% of males and 45.6% of females aged less than 18 years.

**Table 22**  
**Assaults where the alleged offender was a non-intimate family member: victim age by sex, 2000**

Age in years	Males		Females		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0-9	161	21.0	195	16.7	356	18.4
10-17	182	23.8	338	28.9	520	26.9
18-24	93	12.2	169	14.5	262	13.5
25-34	104	13.6	134	11.5	238	12.3
35-44	81	10.6	148	12.7	229	11.8
45-59	114	14.9	141	12.1	255	13.2
60 & over	30	3.9	44	3.8	74	3.8
<b>Total*</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,169</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,934</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* There were two males and two females for whom age was not recorded.

The age profiles of those males and females who reported being physically assaulted in 2000 exhibited some differences. Notably, a higher proportion of males were aged less than 18 years (40.5% compared with 34.8% of female victims) while a higher proportion of females fell within the middle age range of 35-44 (16.1% compared with 11.8% of males). However, age differences were far more pronounced for those who reported that a non-intimate family member had sexually assaulted them. Not only was the number of male victims relatively low (n=89) but over three quarters were aged less than 18 years while over 50% were aged less than nine years. By comparison, while three quarters of females were also aged less than 18 years, 32.2% were aged 0-9 years. Again, it should be stressed that these differences may not reflect real differences in the risk of victimisation but rather, may be a product of reporting practices.

**Table 23**  
**Assaults where the alleged offender was a non-intimate family member: victim age by type of offence and sex, 2000**

Age in years	Physical assault				Sexual assault				
	Males		Females		Males			Females	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
0-9	114	16.8	97	11.2	47	53.4	98	32.2	
10-17	160	23.6	204	23.6	22	25.0	134	44.1	
18-24	90	13.3	132	15.3	3	3.4	37	12.2	
25-34	89	13.1	111	12.8	15	17.0	23	7.6	
35-44	80	11.8	139	16.1	1	1.1	9	3.0	
45-59	114	16.8	139	16.1	0	0	2	0.7	
60 & over	30	4.4	43	5.0	0	0	1	0.3	
<b>Total*</b>	<b>677</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>865</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

\* There were two males (one victim of physical assault and one of sexual) and two females (both victims of sexual assault) for whom age was not recorded.

### Comparison between 'intimate' and 'non-intimate' family assault

The age profiles of persons who reported that an 'intimate' had assaulted them were noticeably different from those who had allegedly been assaulted by a 'non-intimate' family member. As indicated in Table 24, whereas the majority of victims of an assault by an intimate fell within the middle age range of 25–34, victims of non-intimate family assault were predominantly in the young age categories of 0-9 and 10-17 years. The latter finding reflects the prevalence of child sexual abuse perpetrated by a family member.

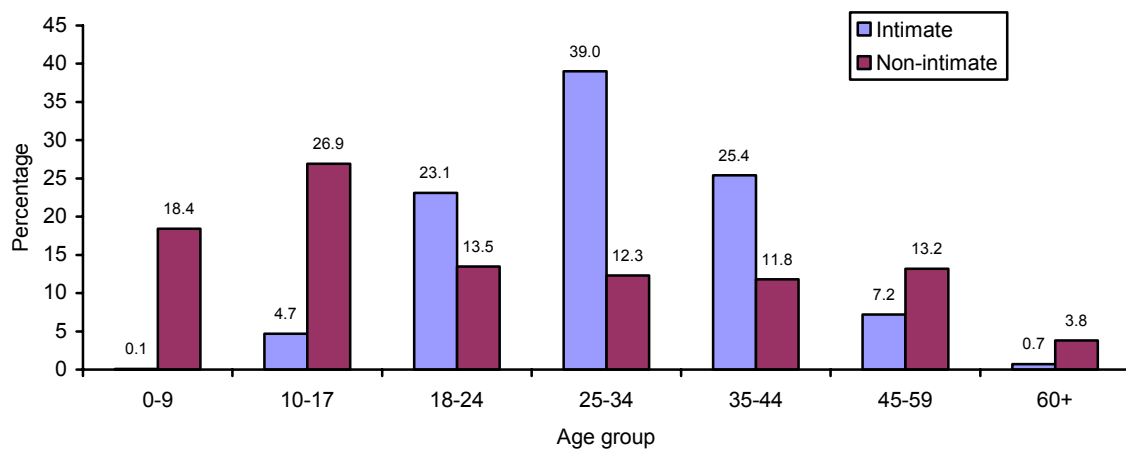
**Table 24**  
**Type of relationship by age of victim, 2000**

Age in years	Intimate		Non-intimate	
	No.	%	No.	%
0-9	2	0.1	356	18.4
10-17	162	4.7	520	26.9
18-24	797	23.1	262	13.5
25-34	1,347	39.0	238	12.3
35-44	876	25.4	229	11.8
45-59	248	7.2	255	13.2
60 & over	23	0.7	74	3.8
<b>Total*</b>	<b>3,455</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,934</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* There were four assaults perpetrated by a non-intimate family member where the age of the victim was not recorded.

The different age profiles of persons who reported being assaulted by an intimate as compared with those assaulted by another family member are more clearly illustrated in Figure 9.

**Figure 9**  
**Family assault: type of relationship by age of victim, 2000**



### Longitudinal Trends, 1997-2000

As Table 25 indicates, the total number of family assaults recorded each year fluctuated over the period 1997 to 2000. The lowest number was recorded in 1997 (n=4,557), while the highest number (n=5,393) was recorded in 2000. The number of physical assaults (both major and minor) also fluctuated over this same time period. However, the number of sexual assaults recorded steadily increased, from 454 in 1997 to 568 in 2000 (an increase of 25.1%).

In each year approximately 90% of all family assaults recorded by police were physical rather than sexual in nature. Of the physical assaults where the type of relationship was known, in each of the four years intimates, rather than other family members, perpetrated the majority of offences (approximately 70% in each year). For sexual assaults these findings were reversed, as in each year 'other' family members committed approximately seven in ten offences.

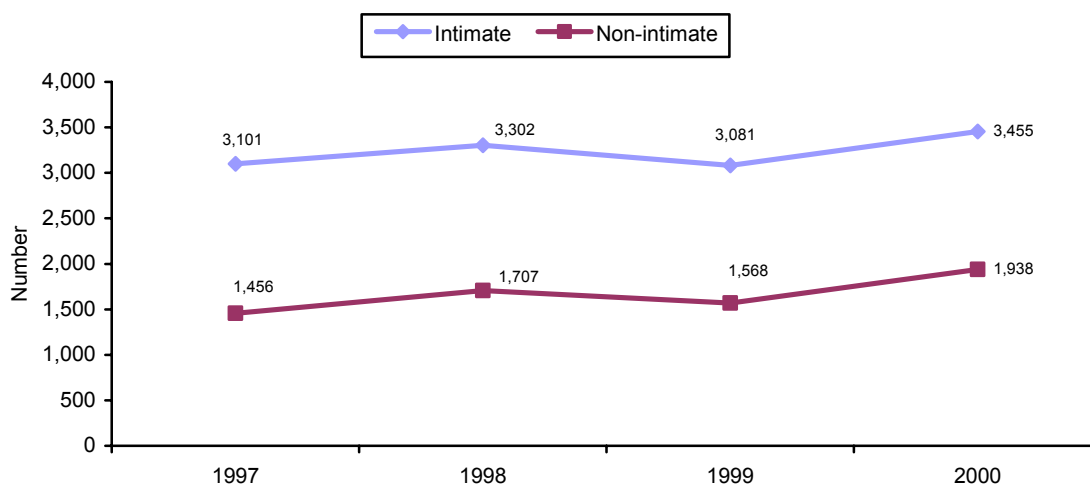
**Table 25**  
**Type of assault by victim/offender relationship type, 1997-2000**

Relationship of offender	Major assault		Minor assault		Total physical assault		Sexual assault		Total*	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>1997</b>										
Intimate	285	70.5	2,673	72.3	2,958	72.1	143	31.5	3,101	68.0
Non-intimate	119	29.5	1,026	27.7	1,145	27.9	311	68.5	1,456	32.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,699</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,103</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,557</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>1998</b>										
Intimate	281	64.6	2,879	70.2	3,160	69.6	142	30.1	3,302	65.9
Non-intimate	154	35.4	1,223	29.8	1,377	30.4	330	69.9	1,707	34.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,102</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,537</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5,009</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>1999</b>										
Intimate	237	62.7	2,670	70.7	2,907	70.0	174	35.0	3,081	66.3
Non-intimate	141	37.3	1,104	29.3	1,245	30.0	323	65.0	1,568	33.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,774</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,152</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,649</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>2000</b>										
Intimate	309	70.5	2,973	67.8	3,282	68.0	173	30.5	3,455	64.1
Non-intimate	129	29.5	1,414	32.2	1,543	32.0	395	69.5	1,938	35.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,387</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,825</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5,393</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Assaults where the victim/offender relationship was unknown have been excluded.

Figure 10 more clearly illustrates trends in the number of family assaults perpetrated by intimates and other family members over the period 1997-2000.

**Figure 10**  
**Number of recorded assaults by victim/offender relationship type, 1997-2000**



## Conclusion

This Bulletin provided statistics on the number of physical and sexual assault offences involving ‘intimate’ and ‘non-intimate’ family members recorded by police in South Australia in 2000. While these data provide some insight into the types of ‘family assault’ offences dealt with by the criminal justice system, it is acknowledged that they do not necessarily reflect the actual prevalence and nature of victimisation experienced in the community. For these reasons other sources of data, such as provided by victimisation surveys, should be considered alongside official crime statistics.

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