Australian Bureau of Statistics

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DEFINING THE DATA CHALLENGE FOR

Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence, Australia

2013

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A CONCEPTUAL DATA FRAMEWORK

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Abbreviations

ABS – Australian Bureau of Statistics

ALRC – Australian Law Reform Commission

ANZSOC – Australian and New Zealand Standard Offence Classification

CALD – Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

COAG – Council of Australian Governments

FaHCSIA – Department of Families, Housing, Community Service and Indigenous Affairs

FDV – Family and Domestic Violence

LGBTI – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex

NCRVWC – National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children

NGO – Non-Government Organisation

NIDP – National Information Development Plan

NPIP – National Plan Implementation Panel

SCWI – Select Council on Women's Issues

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CHAPTER 1

Overview

Chapter 1 Overview

Introduction

As Australia's national statistical agency, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) plays a central role in the production of information that supports government decision and policy-making, and coordination of the evidence base within the national statistical system. In doing so, the ABS not only collects and publishes data that describe the wellbeing of individuals and of society as a whole, but also develops tools such as conceptual frameworks and information development plans to support the further development of data in particular areas of statistics.

In 2005 the ABS released its *National Information Development Plan for Crime and Justice Statistics (NIDP), 2005* (cat. no. 4520.0), developed in collaboration with key stakeholders in criminal justice. One of the agreed priorities specified in the NIDP was to develop an evidence base that would inform the criminal justice system response to family and domestic violence, and support the development of prevention and intervention strategies to decrease its incidence and prevalence.

This publication seeks to consolidate and update the work accomplished in two previous Information Papers; *The Sexual Assault Information Development Framework, 2003* (cat. no. 4518.0) and *The Conceptual Framework for Family and Domestic Violence, 2009* (cat. no. 4529.0). The creation of this publication provides the foundation for future work to build an evidence base for family, domestic and sexual violence.

Laying the foundations: Defining the data challenge for family, domestic and sexual violence

AIMS OF THIS PUBLICATION

Defining the data challenge for family, domestic and sexual violence is a tool for policy and data experts, as well as researchers and service providers with an interest in family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia. It presents statistical and conceptual information relating to family, domestic and sexual violence, describing the main concepts, sources and priorities in this field. It also incorporates strategies for information development to address priority information needs relating to family, domestic and sexual violence.

This is a supporting document for a long term project to improve the evidence base, outlined in the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2010-2022* (the National Plan) and aims to improve the information available to support research, policy development, operational decision-making, education and community awareness activities into the future.

Defining the data challenge outlines and describes the social phenomena of family, domestic and sexual violence and aims to translate it into a statistically measurable context by:

- explaining the definitional and collection challenges associated with family, domestic and sexual violence data;
- identifying and organising key statistically measurable elements of family, domestic and sexual violence; and
- highlighting the related research and policy information needs applicable to family, domestic and sexual violence.

It is expected that this publication will contribute to policy development and service delivery planning by facilitating a common language that accurately and reliably measures statistics in this field. The multi-dimensional nature of family, domestic and sexual violence, and the development of legal and service responses to the problem over time, have led to a variety of definitions and a lack of comprehensive quality data to support effective evidence-based policy, services and responses for victims and perpetrators.

The short to medium-term aim is to assist in the determination of the key information priorities and understand the current data environment. This involves undertaking environmental and data gap analysis exercises to more effectively understand where the data needs are, and determine a course of action to address these needs.

A long-term aim of the National Plan is to create nationally consistent data definitions and collection methods to provide a fit-for-purpose, rich and flexible evidence base to meet current and future needs across the field. These needs may relate to topics ranging from primary prevention, understanding prevalence and incidence, to responses and service provision.

Policy context: The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children

The Commonwealth established the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (NCRVWC) in May 2008 to advise government on measures to reduce the incidence and impact of violence against women and their children. In response, the National Council developed the report *Time for action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2009-2021* (NCRVWC 2009a). This report outlines the evidence-based plan, identifying six outcome areas and strategies for delivery, noting the crucial role of quality data to support evidence-based decision-making, and the need to further develop data in this field.

The Time for Action report and the Council of Australia Governments (COAG) National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children is comprised of a range of initiatives to address the report recommendations. This includes the establishment of a National Centre for Excellence which will bring together existing research and undertake new research on family, domestic and sexual violence. The report also recommends the development of a data collection and reporting framework, and a series of four three-yearly action plans with associated monitoring and reporting to drive the plan.

Building an evidence base

The plan to develop an improved evidence base will occur in concert with a range of other National Plan initiatives. The outcomes will assist a range of sectors with a remit to address family, domestic and sexual violence, such as health, education, civil and criminal justice, community services, housing and employment.

It is anticipated that many of the outcomes of the project, such as informing future policy questions and assisting in planning prevention, intervention and operational responses will be realised in the long-term. Short to medium-term outcomes of improved information and more streamlined data collection and presentation may be realised during the project, however, and in turn may influence other activities under the future National Plan action plans.

Phase one of this evidence base building project involves a range of activities to support strategic targeting of data development efforts throughout the life of the National Plan. This will enable a coordinated approach to information development effort across the Commonwealth, states and territories and the non-government sector. *Defining the data challenge for family, domestic and sexual violence* is the first deliverable in phase one, and will assist in forming future phases including the national data collection and reporting framework.

The national data collection and reporting framework will be comprised of the following:

- national data standards for key indicators and variables;
- shared understanding of data priorities and needs against a data collection framework and where to prioritise investment; and
- coordination of national and state/territory data collections (including existing surveys, and administrative by-product data sets) to improve coverage, reduce duplication, and comparability.

A coordinated and consolidated approach to data collection will guide the following:

- improved quality of priority areas of data: improved timeliness, accessibility, coherence, relevance, accuracy, interpretability;
- a strong collaborative network of data custodians in the fields of sexual assault, family and domestic violence and related areas;
- exploration of the feasibility of statistical data integration and sharing to efficiently meet priority needs, should there be data needs not easily met through a single dataset;
- improved description and presentation of the evidence base for family, domestic and sexual violence, including appropriate metadata, definitions and caveats to enable informed use of data; and
- ethical collection, storage and presentation of information relating to those who have experienced family, domestic and sexual violence as victims, perpetrators and witnesses.

Publication outline

This chapter has introduced the background and policy context in relation to family, domestic and sexual violence together with the aims and provides an outline of the publication. Chapter 2 discusses the complexities involved in defining family, domestic and sexual violence. Chapter 3 describes the nature and function of *Defining the data challenge* as a tool for statistical measurement of family, domestic and sexual violence. Chapters 4-9 individually scope each element in terms of its characteristics, related data, research and policy needs, measurement options and potential units for analysis. Chapter 10 provides a summary and discusses future developments.

CHAPTER 2

Defining Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence

Chapter 2 Defining Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence

Introduction

The terms 'family and domestic violence', and 'sexual violence' cover a wide range of abusive and controlling behaviours that aim to control others, and are among the most personal and intimate criminal acts. A key challenge in defining and measuring family, domestic and sexual violence lies in the complexity of the behavioural acts involved, and the relationships and situations in which these acts occur. This chapter discusses the challenges of terminology and definition, and outlines the potential scope of measurement and related statistical challenges in the measurement of family, domestic and sexual violence.

Definitional complexities

At time of publication there was no single, agreed definition for family, domestic and sexual violence. Definitions of family, domestic and sexual violence are shaped by the context of inquiry and informed by the perspective and understandings of researchers or organisations. For example support services tend towards a holistic approach that informs service planning to meet the needs of victims and/or perpetrators. Legal definitions are more prescriptive, and define family, domestic and sexual violence according to criminal law offences or civil law matters. The different Australian Commonwealth and state and territory jurisdictional legal definitions are discussed in *Domestic Violence Laws in Australia* (NCRVWC 2009b) which provides a comparative analysis of the laws relating specifically to family and domestic violence in Australia and New Zealand.

Defining the data challenge for family, domestic and sexual violence sets out the complexities of defining family, domestic and sexual violence but does not articulate a particular fixed definition. Rather it provides a foundation to support a common language used to measure family, domestic and sexual violence. The purpose of a definition in this context therefore is to assist in the collection of data. The next section discusses the elements that are appropriate to a definition for statistical purposes.

Definitional features

FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

There has been increasing recognition, especially since the 1970s, that domestic violence is a significant issue of public concern, not solely a 'domestic' or private matter (Murray & Powell 2008). Domestic violence is also often referred to as family violence when describing abuse of this nature because this term encompasses a broader range of aggressive behaviours that take place in family relationships (NCRVWC 2009c). The term 'family and domestic' violence is used throughout this publication.

The impacts of family and domestic violence are felt by all Australians, directly or indirectly, through their families, communities and the broader social and economic landscape, and are a significant cost driver across different systems including homelessness, child protection, health and justice. These terms encompass a wide range of abusive behaviours committed within intimate and familial relationships such as those involving family members, children, partners, ex-partners, or caregivers. It can also have severe negative impacts on the emotional and social well-being of whole families.

Violence can result in social, psychological, health and financial consequences that have profound impacts on the quality of life of people directly affected by it. For many the consequences of violence may be felt for many years and may require ongoing support. In addition to the direct effects on victims, their children, their families and friends, employers and co-workers, there are also significant flow-on effects that impact local communities and reach wider society. These effects may include direct or indirect economic costs, such as the costs to the community of bringing perpetrators to justice, the costs of medical treatment or support and housing services for victims, and productivity loss due to absence from work. However, given that a substantial proportion of family and domestic violence incidents go unreported, it is difficult to quantify the true extent of these impacts.

The components that form a definition of family and domestic violence for statistical purposes include behaviours and relationships. The types of behaviour vary and can include:

- physical violence;
- sexual abuse;
- emotional abuse;
- verbal abuse and intimidation;
- economic and social deprivation;
- damage of personal property; and
- abuse of power.

The types of relationships also vary and can include family and co-habitation, while some are specific to family violence legislation, such as spouse and de-facto relationships. These definitions can be extended to include other relationships such as cultural and kinship relationships, foster care relationships, blood relatives who do not co-habit or care situations, such as elder abuse. This publication includes recognition of these different facets of behaviour and relationships that comprise family and domestic violence.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence covers a wide range of behaviours perpetrated against adults and children. Persistent efforts over the last 30 years have resulted in increased awareness of sexual violence by challenging the idea that it is solely a private matter (Carmody 2009). Sexual assault is perhaps one of the most serious, core components of sexual violence. Sexual assault is a public health matter with potential human, economic and public health related costs (Carmody 2009) and attracts criminal justice sanctions (NCRVWC 2009b).

Sexual assault offences are often under-reported and may be unrecorded, making it difficult to statistically measure the prevalence of sexual assault in the community. It is also associated with other risks that are different from those experienced by people who have suffered other forms of physical violence. These include a greater risk of being killed by their partner (if within an intimate partner relationship or separation), stress-related symptoms, and increased detrimental health effects (physical, emotional, mental health) (Wall 2012). The available evidence suggests that most victims of sexual violence do not report the crime to police, and that many do not access the services available to provide support.

Sexual violence can include behaviours such as sexual harassment, stalking, forced or deceptive sexual exploitation (such as having images taken and/or distributed without freely given consent), indecent assault and rape. Evidence suggests that opportunities for sexual offending are deeply embedded in ordinary, everyday contexts and that women, men and children are primarily assaulted by people they know, such as by partners, friends, colleagues and acquaintances, and often in contexts of trust and familiarity (Clark & Quadara 2010). While there is an acknowledgement that sexual violence can occur in non-domestic settings perpetrated by individuals unknown to the victim, incidents perpetrated by strangers are less frequent than supposed.

In considering the components that form a definition of sexual violence it is helpful to differentiate between 'offence' and 'experience' based definitions. The 'offence' based definition is based on behaviours defined in the criminal law of states and territories (and to a lesser extent, Commonwealth law). For statistical purposes, these offences are described in the *Australian and New Zealand Standard Offence Classification (ANZSOC), 2011* (cat. no. 1234.0). Beyond the scope of offences detailed in the criminal law, broader conceptions of sexual violence may contribute to an 'experience' definition, which acknowledges a broader spectrum of behaviours.

FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

As previously discussed family and domestic violence and sexual violence share a range of characteristics, as well as some key differences. While sexual violence can overlap or be a feature of family and domestic violence, the dynamics of sexual violence incidents can be very different and occur in the context of a wider range of known relationships between perpetrators and victims, but can also occur where the victim and perpetrator are not known to one another. As such victims of sexual violence may require different formal responses and support to that of victims of family and domestic violence.

Defining the data challenge acknowledges the usefulness of considering these forms of violence in concert, given the commonalities in key research questions and information needs relating to these topics. While recognising the similarities it is important to note that there are specific differences between these concepts, and as such information, where possible, will be collected separately to allow for comparison in analysis.

Purpose and scope of the publication

The purpose of *Defining the data challenge for family, domestic and sexual violence* is to provide a structure that enables the routine recording, analysis and reporting of data about family, domestic and sexual violence. It is designed to accommodate occurrences of any form of family, domestic and sexual violence, whether it occurs in a familial or non-familial relationship, on a single occasion, or reoccurs over a long period of time.

The scope extends beyond that which becomes known to the criminal or civil justice system, or is addressed by formal services.

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) has considered the matters of a common interpretive framework and a common definition in relation to Commonwealth laws that affect people experiencing family and domestic violence (ALRC 2010). However these recommendations have not been implemented. While state and territory legal definitions continue to vary, difficulties will arise in classifying incidents of family and domestic violence. The legislative frameworks are continually being extended to deal with the issue of the treatment of family and domestic violence incidents, by widening the range of behaviours that constitute family and domestic violence and thus the legal definitions in the jurisdictions.

Describing behaviours and relationships

This section considers the list of extensive behaviours that are recognised, and the relationships between individuals, in a variety of settings, which can constitute family, domestic or sexual violence. Two key considerations that must be taken into account to arrive at a meaningful operational definition for statistical purposes are the specific behaviours to be included, and the relevant relationship of interest. These may vary in breadth or specificity according to the purpose of the measure used and may also lead to the incorporation of other relevant characteristics, such as the physical location.

DESCRIBING BEHAVIOURS

Behaviour-based definitions of family, domestic or sexual violence can be used to bridge the gap between objective and subjective definitions. They can also provide the basis for comparability by enabling definitions to be derived from behavioural descriptions, rather than legal definitions that can vary across states and territories.

Behaviour associated with family, domestic or sexual violence may range in intensity and frequency from relatively minor incidents to serious offences that may occur once or have a cumulative effect over the course of time. A central feature of family and domestic violence, noted in the National Plan, is the ongoing pattern of behaviour by one partner to control the other through fear, such as the use of violent and threatening behaviours, and occurs between people who are in, or have been in, an intimate relationship. While the behaviours outlined below list potential acts and behaviours relating to incidents of violence, it is acknowledged that these acts and behaviours can co-occur and that behaviours can overlap between violence definitions. It should also be noted that the behaviours described below do not provide an exhaustive list of all possible scenarios, as environmental factors, societal attitudes and legal definitions may shape these understandings which can change over time.

Physical assault and abuse: actual or threatened, causing pain, injury and/or fear that can be a single incident or a series of incidents that are located on a continuum of behaviours;

- direct assault on the body (strangulation or choking, shaking, eye injuries, slapping, pushing, spitting, punching, or kicking).
- actions leading to disablement or murder;
- use of weapons including objects;
- assault or neglect of children; and
- sleep and food deprivation.

Sexual assault and abuse: actual or threatened, including sexual assault and the sexual abuse of children, that can be a single incident or a series of incidents that are located on a continuum of behaviours from sexual harassment to life-threatening rape;

- any form of pressured and unwanted sex or sexual degradation by an intimate partner or ex-partner, such as sexual activity without consent;
- non-consensual sexual acts;
- causing pain during sex;
- assaulting genitals;
- forcing or coercing a person to have sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease;
- making the victim perform sexual acts unwillingly (including taking explicit photos);

- criticising, or using sexually degrading insults;
- forcing a person/child to take their clothes off or remain naked against their will;
- forcing a person to watch pornography or sexual activities;
- lewdness or stalking;
- indecent assault;
- date rape;
- drug-assisted sexual assault;
- child sexual abuse or incest;
- deliberate acts that groom children for sexual activity or exploitation; and
- exposure of a person/child to pornography, use of a person/child in the creation of pornography.

Psychological abuse: involving manipulative behaviour to coerce, control or harm;

- denying a person's reality;
- unfairly blaming a person for adverse events or making them feel they are a problem; or constant comparisons with other people, which work to lower confidence and self-worth;
- driving dangerously with the intent to incite fear or cause harm to another person;
- making threats regarding custody of, or access to, any children;
- acts intended to control an individual; and
- asserting that the police and justice system will not assist, support or believe the victim should they seek assistance or report abuse.

For individuals in same-sex relationships, abusive partners can rely on homophobia or heterosexism as a tool to control their partner. This type of abuse can involve 'outing' or threatening to 'out' their partner to friends, family, police, church or employer, telling their partner that:

- they will lose custody of their children as a result of being 'outed';
- the police or the justice system will not assist because the legal justice system is homophobic;
- the abusive behaviour is normal within gay relationships and convincing the abused partner that they do not understand lesbian or gay relationships and sexual practices because of heterosexism (Chan 2005).

Emotional abuse:

- blaming a person for all of the problems in the relationship;
- constantly comparing the victim with others to undermine self-esteem and self-worth;
- sporadic sulking, withdrawing all interest and engagement (such as periods of silence); and
- emotional blackmail.

Verbal abuse: actual or threatened, in private or in public (including through electronic means);

- designed to humiliate, degrade, demean, intimidate, or subjugate;
- threat of physical violence; and
- swearing and verbal attacks that focus on intelligence, sexuality, body image and capacity.

Economic abuse: actual or threatened, including;

- deprivation of basic necessities;
- seizure of income or assets;
- withholding or controlling, against a person's will, their access to money, food, clothes and personal items such as car keys or phone;

- unreasonable denial of the means necessary for participation in social life; and
- control of money or financial resources/information, including:
  - preventing access to bank accounts;
  - providing an inadequate 'allowance';
  - not allowing the victim to seek or hold employment; and
  - using all wages earned by the victim for household expenses.

Social abuse: actual or threatened, through forced isolation from family or friends;

- control of all social activity;
- deprivation of liberty;
- deliberate creation of unreasonable dependence;
- systematic isolation from family and friends through techniques such as ongoing rudeness to family and friends to alienate them;
- instigating and controlling the move to a location where a person has no established social circle or employment opportunities; and
- forbidding or physically preventing a person from leaving the home and meeting people.

Property damage: actual or threatened, including;

- damage to an individual's personal or shared property;
- damage to the property of children, friends and/or parents; and
- violence towards pets.

Harassment or stalking: actual or threatened, such as;

- constant phone calls/texting to a workplace or home;
- repeated visits to a workplace or home;
- bullying;
- monitoring and surveillance; and
- cyber-stalking.

Spiritual abuse: actual or threatened, denial and/or misuse of religious beliefs or practices to;

- force victims into subordinate roles; and
- misuse of religious or spiritual traditions to justify physical violence or other forms of abuse.

DESCRIBING RELATIONSHIPS

When considering the various meanings of the terminology used when discussing family, domestic or sexual violence, either broad or narrow definitions can be applied to the relationship, depending on the context of investigation, which may be legal, policy or research based. Relationships, including current and former partners that could be included in a definition are:

- married;
- defacto;
- intimate relationships, whether of a sexual nature or not;
- parent-child;
- sibling;
- domestic relationships;

- foster and guardian relationships;
- relatives through blood, marriage, or cultural, ethnic or religious beliefs, including kinship;
- relationships of dependency, or involving personal or financial commitment;
- persons who cohabit, such as an individual and their carer, persons living in a rooming house or shared accommodation or other non-familial domestic arrangements;
- other relationships including friendships, colleagues, peers, health and personal service providers; and
- individuals unknown to one another.

SPECIFIC POPULATION GROUPS OF INTEREST

The following population groups have been shown to experience higher incidences of family, domestic violence and sexual assault.

- **Children:**

  Living in an environment where violence occurs is extremely damaging to children, and negative outcomes can arise regardless of whether children witness or experience the violence or not (Carmody 2009). Infants exposed to family and domestic violence may experience negative developmental, social, emotional and behavioural consequences. Children and young people experience anger, sadness, shame, guilt, confusion, helplessness and despair. The consequences of this abuse can be felt for many years and have intergenerational effects.

- **Young women:**

  International and national studies demonstrate that the risk of violence by a male intimate partner can be three to four times higher for women aged 18-24 years than the risk for women across all age groups (Young, Byles & Dobson 2000).

- **Pregnant women and women with children:**

  Women may be at increased risk of family, domestic and sexual violence when pregnant, including susceptibility to the onset of violence. The frequency and severity of violence has been found to be higher among pregnant women and the onset of pregnancy has been found to increase the rate of psychological abuse among those women who had previously reported being abused (Carmody 2009). Women with children's experience of violent situations are more complex as the children can be used to control or confound efforts to escape violent situations or environments. Women are also at risk of pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease as a consequence of sexual violence.

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:**

  The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are over-represented as victims and as offenders of family, domestic and sexual violence, with victimisation rates estimated to be much higher than those of non-Indigenous women. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are as much as 35 times more likely than non-Indigenous women to sustain serious injury and require hospitalisation as a result of violence committed by a spouse or partner (Carmody 2009).

- **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities:**

  Research findings are mixed regarding the experience of violence in CALD communities. Some studies suggest that people from non-English speaking backgrounds experience higher levels of violence, whereas others suggest the rate of physical violence is lower than, or similar to, the rate among those people from English-speaking backgrounds. Other research shows that these individuals are less likely to report family and domestic violence to police or to access mainstream services because of a perception that their particular situation may not be fully appreciated (Carmody 2009).

- **People with disabilities:**

  People with disabilities may be particularly vulnerable to family, domestic and sexual violence in a number of relationships, such as from family members, carers or from people with whom they share a house or residence. People with intellectual disabilities are especially vulnerable, experiencing high rates of sexual assault (VicHealth 2011).

- **People living in rural and remote areas:**

  Geographical and social isolation may compound problems of sexual assault and family violence. This is mainly due to the reduction in access to support networks and services. Transport options are also limited and alternative accommodation restricted with fewer safe-crisis accommodation options available in rural and remote locations (Carmody 2009).

- **Older people:**

  Violence committed against older people is also referred to as 'elder abuse'. Over a fifth of elder abuse incidents are committed by the victim's spouse or partner. Evidence suggests that the majority of older people who are victims of physical, sexual or financial abuse are long term victims of abuse, often perpetrated by a partner who is in a duty of care relationship with the victim (Carmody 2009).

- **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people:**

  LGBTI people experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence may experience different behaviours, and require specific support services in response to their experience of violence.

Statistical measurement: prevalence and incidence

Defining the data challenge refers to 'prevalence' and 'incidence' as measures of family, domestic and sexual violence. Both terms are useful to measure the levels of victimisation in society in a range of different ways, depending on the definition/classification in use, and the context in which the measure is used.

- **Prevalence:**

  Prevalence estimates measure the extent of victimisation experienced within the community; defined as the number of people in the relevant population who have experienced family, domestic or sexual violence at least once within a specified reference period.

- **Incidence:**

  Incidence measures the extent of offending behaviour within a community; defined as the number of incidents of family, domestic or sexual violence that have occurred in the relevant population within a specified reference period. Incidence measures will be larger than prevalence measures because victims may experience more than one incident.

Statistical challenges

The scope and method of inquiry can influence how family, domestic and sexual violence is defined by shaping what behaviours and relationships are included or excluded. Different disciplines approach the subject matter from different perspectives and with varying requirements; for example researchers, service providers, legislative frameworks and other disciplines all have their own focus.

The main statistical challenges are to derive information and data elements that:

- appropriately represent the concepts, terminology, definitions and data items that support user-defined measures of family, domestic and sexual violence;
- appropriately represent the elements of jurisdictional legislation; and
- provide a tool for the representation of data as required by users for a variety of needs, such as policy development at all levels of government, research and evaluation, and service planning and delivery.

Once suitable data specifications have been determined, it is necessary to consider the methodological considerations in obtaining information about family, domestic and sexual violence. This includes the measurement issues and limitations encountered in data collection and use.

MEASUREMENT ISSUES

Family, domestic and sexual violence is multi-disciplinary in nature, and the various ways in which an incident can occur and be perceived by the parties involved can present difficulties in seeking to define and measure the incidences. Being able to classify an incident as family, domestic or sexual violence therefore presents difficulties.

Incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence are varied in nature and treated differently depending upon the disclosure of the incident. Disclosure may be made to authorities and classified as criminal under state or territory legislation. The incident may be disclosed to health personnel or other support services and, depending on the circumstances and the details of disclosure, the incident may or may not be perceived as family or domestic violence by the victim and/or perpetrator and/or support worker.

Incidents of sexual assault are classified as criminal acts under the offence-based definition. However this can also present problems in attempts to collect and classify reliable information related to a person's perception of the incident. For example the victim and/or the perpetrator may have difficulty in discerning that the incident was sexual assault and therefore a crime. Individual Perceptions like this can result in unclear or ambiguous recollection which affects the reporting and recording of incidents and results in under-reporting or hidden-reporting. These issues limit attempts to measure sexual assault and conversely perceptions of events can also result in occurrences where the reported incident is not considered to be sexual assault at law, and hence not recorded.

The ongoing nature of family and domestic violence as a pattern of behaviour can also present difficulties in classification and measurement. For example there may be a long history of incidents between the persons involved, incorporating different categories of family and domestic violence. Some of these may or may not be classified as criminal, be detected by the criminal or civil justice system or handled through a service agency.

Despite the ongoing pattern of behaviour and number of prior incidents, a civil or criminal justice system response may also be triggered by a single incident of assault. This one incident may be classified as family or domestic violence, recorded, processed and prosecuted in isolation. As a result the recorded incident may not clearly represent all that has occurred.

DATA LIMITATIONS

Incidences of family and domestic violence can occur in a variety of settings, such as private homes, private dwellings and within communities, often exposing others to violence. Attempts to collect reliable information will be moderated by perceptions of the incident as well as the circumstances of disclosure or recording.

The recording and reporting of family, domestic and sexual violence are affected by levels of:

- **Under-reporting:**

  Many crimes are not reported to police or other authorities, so neither the total number of victims nor the total number of perpetrators are captured in their data.

- **Hidden-reporting:**

  This may occur where a victim seeks services, or reports an incident, but does not disclose family, domestic or sexual violence as the reason for the contact.

- **Under-recording:**

  This can occur due to process and procedural variations in recording incidents by authorities or services. There is also the possibility that an incident may be classified incorrectly, such as when a victim presents as a general assault victim and a judgement is made by the individual making the record about the nature of the incident.

- **Counting/recording rules:**

  In some state and territories family and domestic violence related orders can also cover other types of disputes, which can lead to the number of orders handed down for family and domestic violence perpetrators being overstated.

  - In some states and territories an intervention order may be handed down for family violence and non-family violence related incidents, such as stalking. Conversely other states and territories use apprehended violence orders for domestic and family violence incidents. As a result, counts of intervention orders may overstate the numbers related to family violence incidents.
  - In the health system, treatment for specific injuries may be recorded without recording the cause of the injury, thus not recording the family violence or sexual assault nature of the injury.

Despite these data limitations, societal changes can provide opportunities to improve family, domestic and sexual violence data collection. State and territory legislative changes, an increased focus on family violence training for police, counsellors and other service providers and community awareness may all contribute to the level of reporting of incidents and quality of resulting data.

BARRIERS TO DISCLOSURE/REPORTING

Notwithstanding issues associated with data collection and recording, there may also be barriers that prevent victims from disclosing the incident and seeking help (Chan 2005). There are many reasons why individuals may find it difficult to seek help when experiencing violence. These include:

- fear of retaliation;
- economic dependence on the perpetrator;
- children or other family members suffering if the relationship breaks down;
- shame;
- fear of not being believed;
- fear/uncertainty of the criminal justice system;
- past experiences;
- cultural beliefs;
- fear of the perpetrator;
- lack of access to support networks due to age, cultural or language barriers; and
- not being able to frame the assault as criminal – the victim may not understand that they are entitled to protection from sexual violence even when in a relationship with the perpetrator.

Perceptions and notions of shared responsibility can also present victims with barriers when it comes to reporting incidences of family, domestic or sexual violence, such as:

- a perception that the incident is too minor to report to police;
- a lack of awareness that such action constitutes an offence;
- a desire to 'keep it private' and deal with it themselves;
- fear of the perpetrator;
- a sense of ongoing responsibility for the safety of other family members;
- a lack of awareness about, or lack of availability of, culturally responsive services; and
- previous experience of asking for help but feeling re-victimised by parts of the service response (such as having to re-tell one's story to multiple services, or being cross-examined) (Carmody 2009).

Although rates of reporting have increased over the past decade, recent estimates suggest that only a small number of victims reported the most recent incident of domestic violence to police (Carmody 2009). Different collection vehicles such as surveys or administrative by-product data collections using different scopes and definitions, often produce different levels of estimates. At the same time, the methodological issues that affect counts of criminal incidents are compounded by the complexities of constantly evolving definitions of family, domestic and sexual violence, as frameworks become more informed. As is the case with all types of crime a complete qualitative view of family, domestic and sexual violence may never be known.

Despite the data limitations mentioned above, currently available data does provide valuable estimates that are suitable for use as base indicators to develop a picture of family, domestic and sexual violence. Furthermore, the practice of employing common definitions and collection methods is important to assist the measurement of trends in the prevalence and incidence rates, despite the challenges of the variety of legal and other definitions used by authorities and agencies.

DATA SOURCES

Building a picture of family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia requires the inclusion of information from a number of sources and these sources can vary in quality. Some data sources that are potentially useful are under-utilised and not currently within the public domain. Administrative by-product and survey data are the two main types of data sources that can be utilised.

Administrative by-product data

Administrative data are compiled by various agencies, government and non-government organisations (NGOs) who respond to family, domestic and sexual violence, such as police, criminal and civil courts, child protection authorities, family relationship service programs and specialist homelessness services providers. Statistical information can be extracted from agency records, maintaining confidentiality, and compiled for secondary analytic and measurement purposes.

There are advantages and limitations in using administrative by-product data. The advantage is that data may be readily available and can be collated electronically, meaning that clients are not burdened by further disclosure. However administrative by-product data, by its nature, is limited because it accounts only for those people who have disclosed or reported an incident involving family, domestic or sexual violence, and who may have accessed related services. Also support services and agencies produce administrative by-product data as a by-product to their primary role as service providers.

A further limitation of administrative by-product data is the way in which it can be utilised. Agencies are unlikely to record information relating directly to the separate elements outlined in this publication in relation to an incident, and may use different classifications and categories that are not wholly comparable. For these reasons administrative by-product data needs to be supplemented by additional data sources, such as surveys.

Survey data

Surveys are a useful means of gathering information not otherwise captured by government agencies and NGOs. Survey respondents may be more likely to disclose incidents of family, domestic or sexual violence in an anonymous forum, including incidents not reported to the police or other agencies. Using standard definitions and questions, surveys are able to measure incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence that may or may not be classified as criminal or civil matters across all jurisdictions, or by all service providers.

Comparability of data becomes an issue when attempting to align victimisation rates for family, domestic and sexual violence obtained from different sources. Survey results can help overcome the difficulties presented by the variations that arise due to the different definitions and thresholds between service providers and the legislative environments in the jurisdictions. Survey information can also augment administrative by-product data by providing additional information about the take-up of services. For example, a victim may have used a service but not disclosed the family, domestic or sexual violence element to the service at the time, or this may not have been recorded by the service.

Surveys do however depend upon self-disclosure, self-reporting and memory of past events, which may not be wholly accurate with the passage of time. Thus the responses may be subject to difficulties of recall, disclosure and coverage. For example survey respondents may not recall the incident at all, or they may fail to classify it as an incident of family and domestic violence. Trauma can affect memory recall and respondents may also be uncomfortable relating an incident that was particularly upsetting or confronting when it happened. Therefore, although no single data source can provide a holistic picture of family, domestic and sexual violence, administrative by-product data and survey data together can provide the best picture available.

ASSESSING THE SUITABILITY OF DATA

Decisions about which data sources should be used to answer specific research questions, policy development and inform decision-making must be made on a case by case basis. Regardless of the source selected it is essential that all data is at a level of quality that ensures information is fit for purpose[1]. This process involves assessment of the quality and characteristics of data available to determine whether it is sufficient to meet the current requirement, as it is possible for data with some limitations to be suitable for a particular purpose but not another. For example, in the case where nationally comparable data are not available for analysis, a state-level alternative may be possible and be sufficient to inform decision-making. To assist in assessing the suitability it is possible to apply evaluative criteria[2] to the data source and information collected to determine suitability for use.

DATA TO SUPPORT THE NATIONAL PLAN

The vision of the National Plan is that, 'Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities,' however it is acknowledged that men's experience of family, domestic and sexual violence is included in the scope of this publication.

Four high-level indicators of change are specified in the National Plan to demonstrate progress and gauge whether outcomes are being achieved. The high-level indicators are:

1. Reduced prevalence of family and domestic violence and sexual assault.
2. Increased proportion of women who feel safe in their communities.
3. Reduced deaths related to family and domestic violence and sexual assault.
4. Reduced proportion of children exposed to their mother's or carer's experience of domestic violence.

The National Plan includes measures of progress which are high level indicators of change. Measuring progress against these indicators presents significant challenges as there are currently no nationally consistent datasets to build a robust and reliable evidence base. In the long-term, the National Data Collection and Reporting Framework will create nationally consistent data definitions and collection methods. *Defining the Data Challenge* is a first step towards establishing national data collection and reporting standards for family, domestic and sexual violence reporting.

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[1] More information about fit for purpose data may be found in the Data Awareness section of *A guide for using statistics for evidence based policy, 2010* (ABS cat. no. 1500.00).

[2] A free tool is available to assist in assessing data quality on the National Statistical Service website http://www.nss.gov.au/dataquality/.

CHAPTER 3

Defining the data challenge

Chapter 3 Defining the data challenge

Introduction

Defining the data challenge for family, domestic and sexual violence is a tool for policy and data experts, as well as researchers and service providers with an interest in data, in the fields of family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia. It maps the context and defines the scope of inquiry around the subject matter and identifies the elements for measurement.

It defines and describes the social phenomena of family, domestic and sexual violence and puts it into a statistically measurable context by identifying key statistically measurable 'elements'. These elements describe the types of data needed to:

- support the analysis of the current status of family, domestic and sexual violence as areas of social concern;
- support measurement of the activity and performance of the systems that provide responses to family, domestic and sexual violence; and
- support the measurement of changes over time.

This provides for a systematic and rigorous way of thinking about family, domestic and sexual violence, and promotes standards, consistency and comparability across the proposed data collections within and between jurisdictions and sectors.

Statistical elements

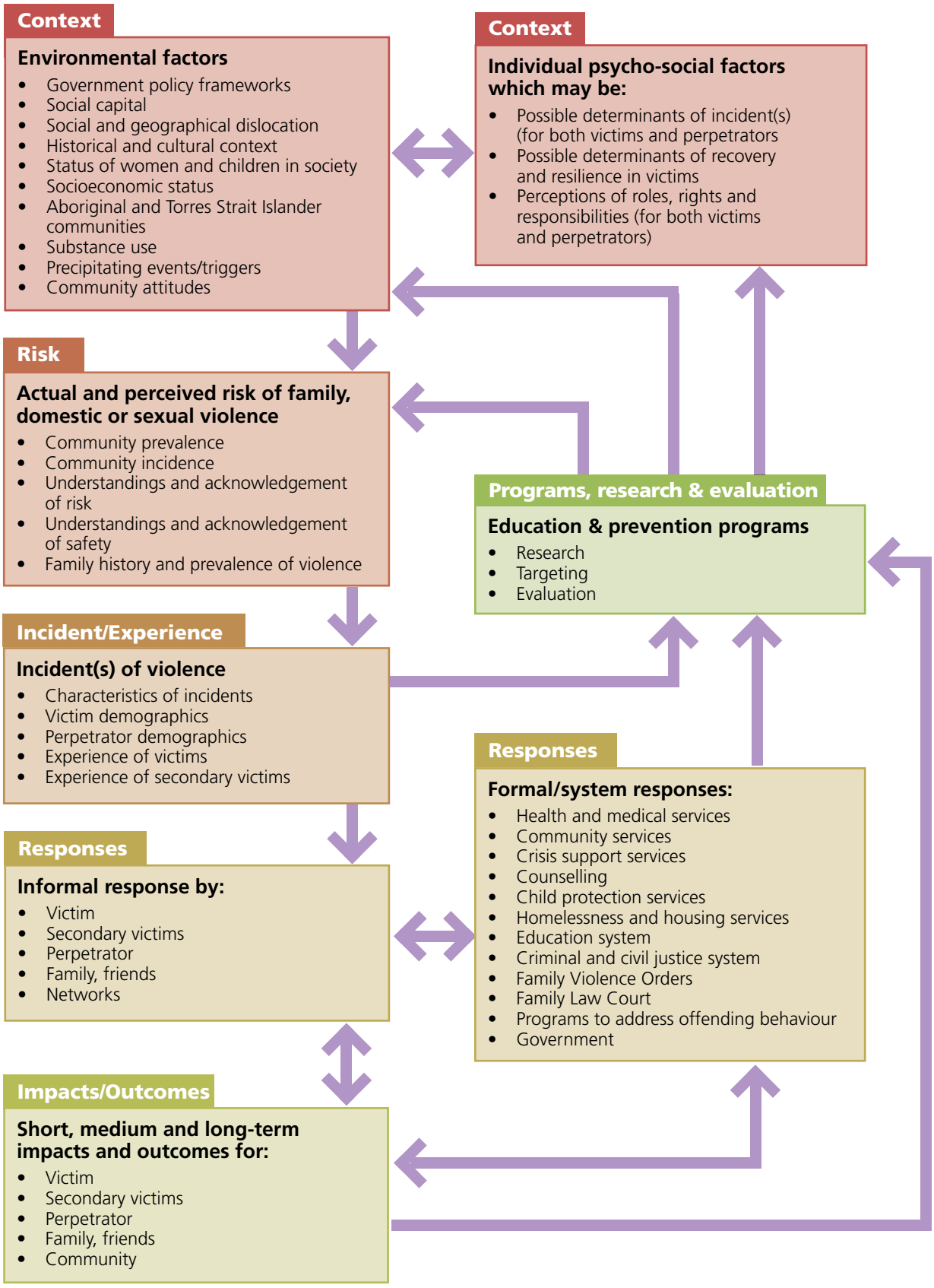
The system of social statistics presented here focuses on six elements as central organising principles. Each of these elements represents a specific area in which information is required:

1. Context,
2. Risk,
3. Incident/Experience,
4. Responses,
5. Impacts and Outcomes, and
6. Programs, Research and Evaluation.

This publication delineates important concepts, and organises them into a logical structure that shows the key relationships, processes and flows that exist between the elements. It is comprehensive and flexible to allow for change, as well as being cognisant of other frameworks, classifications and standards where relevant.

The elements above break down each concept into component parts, and consider the appropriate unit of analysis for statistical measurement, such as victims, perpetrators, incidents, or the characteristics of incidents. Breaking down the data needs within each element allows for comparability over time, enabling the identification of change and recognition of trends.

Diagram 1: Representation of the links between the six statistical elements



Overview of the elements

The diagram on the previous page illustrates the elements and shows how the key concepts and processes are related. The diagram does not represent the flow of individuals or linear interactions with the system, as these can occur in many different orders or combinations depending on the individual and situation. Rather, the arrows joining the elements of enquiry represent the links or influences that can exist between each element and the many different relationships that can occur between these concepts when examining family, domestic and sexual violence.

CHAPTER 4

Context

ELEMENT 1

Chapter 4 Context

Element 1

Overview

The Context element is comprised of the environmental factors present at societal and community levels, and the relationships, daily events, and situations that shape individuals, their family unit or partnerships. Contextual factors relate to both potential victims and potential perpetrators and include the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, the dynamics of families and communities, and the situations in which violence can arise. Previous experiences can influence the nature of the context in which family, domestic and sexual violence may occur, including the personal histories and values that individuals bring to the context of that interaction.

The two major components of the Context element are environmental factors and psycho-social factors, both of which need to be considered together to create a holistic picture of the context in which family, domestic and sexual violence occurs.

Environmental factors

The social and physical environment in which people live can affect them in different ways, one of these being the formation of attitudes. Attitudes may be a reflection of a person's historical and cultural background, sex or socioeconomic status. Data about environmental factors are required to inform this element, which then may feed into the development and targeting of education and prevention policies that influence these factors. To gain a comprehensive understanding of these forms of violence both qualitative and quantitative data are required.

EXAMPLES OF ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Socioeconomic Status

Family, domestic and sexual violence affects individuals across all socioeconomic levels; however research suggests that there is a correlation between low socioeconomic household status and increased risk of interpersonal violence (WHO 2004). Low socioeconomic status is a recurring factor in the incidence and prevalence of crime generally and the extent of violence in the community. It can also be a determining factor in the perpetration of family, domestic and sexual violence.

Low socioeconomic household status can place considerable strain on relationships and on communities, resulting in impaired functionality. Aspects of socioeconomic disadvantage which may affect the likelihood of an individual's propensity to use violence include unemployment, homelessness, poverty and marital relationship status. These aspects may be used as an indicator of 'connectedness' between individuals, their family and community.

Social and Geographical Isolation

Isolation compounds problems of family, domestic and sexual violence because it may reduce access to formal and informal support networks (Carmody 2009). In rural and remote communities there are fewer professional support workers to service the local population and distance itself can be a barrier, with fewer transport options and pathways to safety. In urban areas, victims may also experience isolation from family and friends, which may be a result of deliberate acts to isolate by an abusive or controlling partner, or a symptom of broader social and economic disadvantage. Economic abuse can also contribute by not permitting people to access money for their own personal use or restricting people's ability to seek or hold employment.

Substance use

The presence of substance use or abuse has been linked to family, domestic and sexual violence and to other crimes, both at the time of specific violence and through a pattern of use over a longer period of time. The environment within which alcohol and other drugs are used is therefore of interest to researchers wishing to study family, domestic and sexual violence. Relevant research issues may include community attitudes to the use of alcohol and drugs, community usage patterns, awareness of risks associated with alcohol and drug use and protective behaviours.

Psycho-social factors

Personal experience, history and biological factors have an influence on how individuals behave. These psycho-social factors can affect the behaviour of potential victims and potential perpetrators by influencing the experience of victimisation and offending, victims' experiences of recovery and resilience, and the overall perceptions of rights and responsibilities. These factors can influence the prevalence of family, domestic and sexual violence, for both victims and perpetrators.

Psycho-social factors also align with general criminal risk factors and protective factors and may influence perpetrators motivation and their propensity to either rehabilitate or re-offend. They may also influence the recovery prospects of a victim. The psycho-social factors that may influence individual experiences include the following.

- Perceptions of risk / safety
- Networks
- Mental health
- Coping skills/support
- Expectations
- Childhood exposure
- Demand/strain
- Self-esteem
- Isolation
- Attachment
- Control
- Anger/hostility

EXAMPLES OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL FACTORS

Perceptions of risk/safety:

Perceived threats of family, domestic and sexual violence generate fear of violence which can have a deleterious effect on individual and community wellbeing. Research shows that perceptions of risk or safety can cause individuals to change their routine activities and lifestyle, restrict participation in society, the political system and the economy (AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness 2008). The effects of abuse can also have a cumulative impact on the mental health of the victim. Victims of family, domestic and sexual violence can experience various forms of mental trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety.

Childhood exposure:

Experience of sexual abuse as a child can affect later adult offending or victimisation. For example, a study that examined the relationship between child sexual abuse and subsequent criminal offending and victimisation found that both male and female child sexual abuse victims were significantly more likely than non-abused people to be charged for all types of offences, in particular violence and sexual offences. It also found that experiencing sexual abuse as a child impacts negatively on mental health outcomes, increases the risk of suicide and increases rates of re-victimisation (Ogloff, Cutajar, Mann & Mullen 2012). Witnessing family and domestic violence as a child is also an experience that can be linked to more negative later life outcomes[3].

[3] The *Personal Safety Survey, 2005* (ABS cat. no. 4906.0), reported that 49 per cent of men and women who reported experiencing violence by a current partner had children in their care at some time during the relationship and approximately 27 per cent reported that these children had witnessed the violence.

Data needs

Contextual data needs include information about factors relevant to systematic, community or individual characteristics, as well as the formation and effects of attitudes.

The following contextual factors may influence the vulnerability of individuals as both victims and perpetrators:

- socioeconomic status;
- social dislocation;
- social and geographical isolation;
- criminal histories;
- recurrence of abuse or violence;
- mental health;
- patterns of substance use and abuse in the general community;
- age-groups and population groups of interest (for example, children and youth); and
- gender.

Contextual factors may also contribute towards the formation of attitudes about subpopulations and the use of violence, as well as the attitudes held within particular groups. Attitudes of particular interests that emerged in consultation with experts, key stakeholders and users were those about:

- women, children and elders;
- those within particular sub-populations (such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people with disabilities); and
- those within specific ethnic or religious groups.

Measuring 'Context'

Attitudinal data are necessary to inform a description of environmental contextual factors. Individual psycho-social factors may be best described by qualitative information. Various research methodologies such as community attitude surveys or smaller focus groups can be used to measure attitudes, and can provide an indication of changes over time through longitudinal studies. Measurement of the differences in attitudes across the general community, in age groups and population groups of interest, and by gender are of particular interest in understanding contextual factors.

Data on the following can inform the context in which family, domestic and sexual violence takes place:

- general social environment, attitudes and norms;
- geographical location;
- social capital;
- historical and cultural context;
- socioeconomic status;
- substance use;
- mental illness;
- family composition; and
- relationship between victim and perpetrator

POTENTIAL UNITS FOR ANALYSIS

In exploring the contextual factors that can influence the life experiences of those affected by family, domestic and sexual violence, and the attitudes held within the community, the contextual factors above may be considered for the following subpopulations of interest:

- women;
- men;
- children and youth;
- elderly people;
- people with disabilities (intellectual, physical);
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- ethnic and religious groups; and
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

QUESTIONS TO SUPPORT RESEARCH AND POLICY PRIORITIES

- What are the environmental factors that influence the societal and community context within which family, domestic or sexual violence occurs?
- What are the characteristics of communities that have a higher incidence of family, domestic and sexual violence?
- What are the factors that influence community attitude formation and change? What are the most effective mediums to influence community attitudes?
- Where might there be opportunities to influence or change this environment?
- What environmental factors are most predictive of prevalence of family, domestic and sexual violence?

CHAPTER 5

Risk

ELEMENT 2

Chapter 5 Risk

Element 2

Overview

'Risk' represents the likelihood of an individual becoming a victim or a perpetrator of family, domestic and sexual violence. The identification of risk factors is critically important for informing strategies and programs to ameliorate against risk, and ultimately to guide prevention policy (Carmody 2009). This element describes the actual and perceived level of risk or likelihood of family, domestic or sexual violence occurring.

In order to develop a general community level indicator of current risk, data that measures past prevalence and incidences of family, domestic and sexual violence can be useful. At an individual or sub-population level, the risk or likelihood of being a victim or perpetrator can be examined in the context of factors that increase or reduce the risk of family, domestic and sexual violence.

Community factors

VICTIMISATION RISK

The level of family, domestic or sexual violence victimisation in the community can be measured by both incidence and prevalence.

- *Community incidence* is defined as the number of incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence in the relevant population within a specified reference period. Incidence estimates are measures of the extent of offending behaviour within the community.
- *Community prevalence* is defined as the number of people in the relevant population who have experienced family, domestic and sexual violence at least once. This may be recorded or estimated for a given period, since a person reaches a certain age, or as lifetime experience. Prevalence estimates are measures of the extent of victimisation within the community.

Both incidence and prevalence may be expressed as a percentage, or a rate of the specified population for a specified reference period, to give the level of risk of victimisation.

OFFENDING RISK

The likelihood of an individual being a perpetrator of family, domestic and sexual violence is also of interest. Measurement of this risk is more challenging as reliable information about perpetrators is scarce. Many incidences of family, domestic and sexual violence go unreported and unrecorded, thus perpetrators may not be detected and not counted in official agency records, either within the justice system or through services related to health and welfare. It is also the case that, even when a perpetrator does come into contact with the civil or criminal justice system or other formal process, the incident may not be identified and recorded as family and domestic violence and therefore the perpetrator is not identified.

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL RISK FACTORS

At the individual level, personal history and biological factors influence how individuals behave and their likelihood of becoming a victim or a perpetrator of family, domestic or sexual violence. These factors include maltreatment as a child, psychological or personality disorders, alcohol and/or substance abuse, and a history of behaving aggressively or having experienced abuse (Chan 2005). Personal relationships such as those with family, friends, intimate partners and peers may also influence the risks of becoming a victim or perpetrator of family, domestic or sexual violence.

The contextual factors outlined in the previous chapter can increase or decrease an individual's risk of being a victim or perpetrator. The risk and protective factors are also aspects of the Impacts and Outcomes element discussed in Chapter 8.

Risk profiles

The risk or likelihood of being a victim or perpetrator of family, domestic or sexual violence may be increased through previous exposure to family, domestic or sexual violence or other forms of violence. Information about previous exposure, for example, can feed into the formal risk assessment tools that are often utilised by agencies when determining the level of response and support required for clients. As a result, interventions can be planned to reduce the risk in individual situations.

Additionally, profiles of high-risk categories of potential perpetrators and victims may be constructed using data about known perpetrators and victims. Such data may be collected through victimisation surveys, or administrative data held by service providers. These profiles may then be used to target education campaigns and programs to influence attitudes and behaviour, and raise the awareness of people in these categories.

CHANGES OVER TIME

The risk or likelihood of being a victim or perpetrator of family, domestic or sexual violence may change over time, or as a result of mediating factors. Such factors may include routine activities and lifestyle changes; age and gender; increased levels of support through informal networks; or engagement with programs or formal interventions to support individuals, partnerships or families to target gender based violence or supportive attitudes and relieve stressors.

Measurement of key indicators and determinants of family, domestic or sexual violence can reveal changes in incidence and prevalence such as:

- the level of reporting of family, domestic or sexual violence may change over time, independently of any change in incidence and prevalence rates, e.g. through awareness campaigns;
- the processes for translating reported incidents into recording systems may change; and
- the timing of reporting does not necessarily correspond to the timing of incident(s), e.g. current figures may be inflated by reporting of past incidents.

Data needs

Current levels of risk of family, domestic and sexual violence can be estimated through analysis of data on past levels or past exposure. The key measures that are required to estimate current levels of risk are outlined below. This information is required in terms of a defined population, over a defined time period and from a certain age. Key measures required for a defined population, per defined time period, since defined age, are as follows.

- Number of people who have experienced family, domestic or sexual violence
- Prevalence rates for victimisation
- Number of people who have perpetrated family, domestic and sexual violence offences
- Prevalence rates for offending
- Number of incidents
- Incidence rates for victimisation/perpetration
- Relationship between victims and perpetrators (i.e. partners, child/parent, siblings, strangers)
- Prevalence rates for people with different characteristics who may have been exposed to some mediating effects

Measuring risk

A number of data sources can be utilised to estimate the incidence and prevalence of family, domestic and sexual violence, such as police, child protection agencies and housing and support services. However, measurement of the 'size of the problem' is problematic with administrative data due to the different pathways a reported offence may take through the civil or criminal justice system, and attrition in the numbers of incidents and prevalence counted at several points in a sequence of events.

Developing an accurate measure using administrative by-product data to indicate risk through the take up of services can prove challenging as an incident may come to the attention of more than one agency or service provider, so that a victim or perpetrator appears in more than one database in relation to the same incident. The services could be accessed either within a sector, such as through the use of multiple health service providers, or across sectors, such as when a perpetrator is dealt with by the criminal justice system and the civil justice system.

It is recognised that gaining a measure of the prevalence and effects of these risk enhancing or protecting attributes is complex, and identification of specific target groups that are at risk is difficult as family, domestic and sexual violence affects all cross-sections of society. Despite these difficulties, it remains important from a research and service provider perspective to maximise data about key groups to better target interventions, education programs and support services.

Victimisation surveys provide the most comprehensive measure of the prevalence of family, domestic and sexual violence. They can capture information about a victim's past experiences regardless of whether they have reported the incident or incidents to police or other services. Some information about perpetrators can also be collected with this method. However, these surveys may be less useful in identifying the specific risk-enhancing or mitigating factors; instead case studies, which could inform this area, may be appropriate. Official surveys generally only ask questions about family, domestic and sexual violence of adults, and some are more comprehensive sources of information than others due to differences in sample and methodology.

Development of these data sources may result in a better understanding of risk, enabling the identification of risk factors that have the strongest correlation with family, domestic and sexual violence, and those which may have a lesser influence. An understanding of the interaction between risk factors would be useful in developing targeted prevention, intervention and support strategies.

DATA LIMITATIONS

A number of issues make it difficult to estimate the incidence and prevalence of family, domestic and sexual violence:

- under-reporting and under-recording;
- hidden-reporting and the effects of counting or recording rules;
- the amalgamation of multiple or serial victimisations in single statistics or records;
- the loss of information about offenders in victim-based records;
- timing of recording;
- false reporting;
- pathways of reported offences through the civil or criminal justice system;
- complexities in the way referrals to child protection for family, domestic and sexual violence-related incidents are made, resulting in double-counting where information is not shared between service providers;
- not being able to frame the assault as criminal – the victim may not understand that they are entitled to protection from sexual assault even when in a relationship with the perpetrator;
- difficulties in linking data to see patterns in offending or escalations in violence;
- comparability between states and territories, across different data sources, and through the use of different recording rules; and
- a lack of data recording on specific risk factors.

POTENTIAL UNITS FOR ANALYSIS

'Risk' is primarily concerned with understanding the likelihood of involvement in family, domestic or sexual violence incidents.

The potential units of analysis are:

- people – victims and perpetrators; and
- incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence.

Investigations of risk can also focus upon particular sub-populations, such as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, or people with a disability, who may have different risk profiles, or be susceptible to multiple risk factors. Risk can also be measured at different levels of analysis, such as population level, community level, relationship level or individual level.

QUESTIONS TO SUPPORT RESEARCH AND POLICY PRIORITIES

- How big is the problem of family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia?
- Does the size of the problem vary across different populations groups or communities?
- Does the risk or likelihood of being a victim/perpetrator of family and domestic violence increase or decrease significantly through engagement with services, programs and support?
- How likely is it that Australians will be a victim of family, domestic or sexual violence?
- How likely is it that Australians will be a repeat victim of family, domestic or sexual violence, and who is likely to experience repeat victimisation?
- How likely is it that Australians will commit family, domestic or sexual violence related offences?
- How likely is it that Australians will be a repeat offender of family, domestic or sexual violence, and who is likely to re-commit these offences?
- What are the characteristics of particular sub-populations that place them at more or less risk of family, domestic or sexual violence?
- Is there change over time?
- Are victims or perpetrators more likely to repeatedly form relationships that are characterised by violence?
- Are victims and witnesses of family and domestic violence more likely to become future victims or perpetrators?

CHAPTER 6

Incident/Experience

ELEMENT 3

Chapter 6 Incident/Experience

Element 3

Overview

The 'Incident/Experience' element provides information about the event by describing the characteristics and experience of incidents, victims and perpetrators. This provides the type of data necessary to inform the development of programs, policies and services that seek to reduce incidences of family, domestic and sexual violence.

The issues set out below have been compiled in order to identify the type of data required to meet the information needs of researchers, policy-makers and service providers. Detailed information about every incident is not necessarily required, nor is it possible to collect data with this level of coverage and detail.

Characteristics of incidents

To address major policy priorities, it is necessary to develop a better understanding of the nature of family, domestic and sexual violence. The characteristics of an incident or a series of incidents convey important information about the circumstances in which the violence occurs. This information helps to build greater understanding about the dynamics of these incidents and the interaction between the perpetrator and victim. Gaining greater understanding assists in the effective development and deployment of appropriate services, education and prevention programs.

It is recognised that family, domestic and sexual violence may occur as a single or relatively sporadic series of incidents for some people, be they victims or perpetrators, and may be a long-term or 'chronic' enduring experience for others. These differences introduce statistical measurement challenges when attempting to record details of victimisation such as, whether individual incidents are recorded, or whether the record is primarily based on the occurrence of incidents within a particular relationship. There is interest in the context within which sexual violence takes place, beyond the actual location of an assault or any existing relationship between perpetrator and victim. Sexual violence may occur in a work or social context, within a context of family and domestic violence or in other public settings such as in an institution. Measurement of different counting units at different points of the system's processes (incidents, victims, offenders) and different reference periods (financial year, calendar year or other reporting periods) also introduce issues for measurement of incidents.

Information about an incident may also be collected differently across agencies and at different points in time, adding complexity to the analysis of incidents. Furthermore, due to matters of privacy and security, it may be difficult for agencies and services to exchange information, affecting the ability to build a comprehensive picture of incidents. There are also some aspects of family and domestic violence, such as financial deprivation, that may not be easily identifiable through counts of specific incidents.

Experience of victims and perpetrators

Information relating to the experience of victims and perpetrators can be used to identify population groups that are over-represented in both categories, and to profile high-risk groups. Information can also inform the needs of individuals and communities so that programs can be differentiated, as necessary, based on culture, socioeconomic status, gender and sexuality, place or location and other relevant individual attributes. Information can also be used to inform and educate the general public.

Another area for which an understanding of family, domestic and sexual violence incidents, victims and perpetrators is needed is the planning and provision of appropriately targeted services through various government and private systems. These services include:

- police response;
- court support services;
- services dealing specifically with family, domestic and sexual violence;
- health, medical, disability and community services;
- treatment and rehabilitation programs;
- child protection services; and
- education and prevention programs.

Interactions between individuals and services take place within the context of perceptions and beliefs about family, domestic and sexual violence as well as the fear and possibility of recurrence of violence. Specific services may be required for different groups of people affected by family, domestic and sexual violence, and the ability to appropriately recognise these people is essential for providing appropriate services to reduce violence and other negative outcomes.

Data needs

Many potential data sources are useful in relation to the element of 'Incident/Experience'. These include crime and justice sources, health and welfare sectors, child protection authorities (in relation to child sexual abuse, and as a source of information regarding children witnessing violence) and sources of administrative by-product data from service providers as well as targeted telephone help lines (such as 1800 RESPECT).

A basic set of socio-demographic information about victims and perpetrators may include:

- gender;
- age, at time of incident/time of reporting;
- marital status;
- family type, household type;
- membership of population groups of interest;
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status;
- ethnicity, identified through proficiency in spoken english, ancestry, country of birth, and/or year of arrival in Australia;
- employment status;
- socioeconomic status;
- living arrangements at time of incident; and
- educational attainment.

Other information related to an incident and common to understanding of both victim and perpetrator, include:

- substance use/abuse associated with incident;
- mental health;
- disability;
- previous family, domestic and sexual violence victimisation;
- location of the violent event;
- prior offence history of perpetrator; and
- nature of the relationship between victim and perpetrator.

Measuring incident/experience

POTENTIAL UNITS FOR ANALYSIS

In answering questions about the incident, information may be sourced from administrative records or surveys about the following counting units:

- people – victims/perpetrators experience of family, domestic and sexual violence;
- behaviours – in relation to incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence; and
- characteristics of family, domestic and sexual violence incidents.

QUESTIONS TO SUPPORT RESEARCH AND POLICY PRIORITIES

- What is the nature of family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia? What are the characteristics of incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence?
- What are the characteristics of victims of family, domestic or sexual violence? What are their experiences and their perceptions of family, domestic or sexual violence?
- What are the characteristics of perpetrators of family, domestic or sexual violence? What are their experiences and their perceptions of family, domestic or sexual violence?
- Are some population groups and age groups over-represented in incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence (as victims or as perpetrators)?
- In what circumstances does family, domestic or sexual violence occur?
- Are these changing over time? In what way?
- Are there any common trigger events? If so what are they, and in what proportion of cases are they a factor?
- Is there a common trajectory with family, domestic and sexual violence incidents; do they tend to escalate over time or do behaviours remain relatively stable?
- Do some victims respond to a period of abuse with violence, thereby becoming a perpetrator themselves?
- What proportion of family, domestic or sexual violence incidents involve secondary victims, e.g. children as witnesses?
- What is known about incidents involving parents and children? Is there a correlation between these incidents, and those in which children are witnesses to abuse between parents?

CHAPTER 7

Responses

ELEMENT 4

Chapter 7 Responses

Element 4

Overview

Responses are actions that may be taken following an incident of family, domestic and sexual violence, and can be classified as formal or informal. Formal responses involve reporting to, or engaging services provided by various formal systems, such as police, government services or other targeted services. Informal responses or disclosures[4] are actions that do not involve reporting to, or utilising services provided by formal systems. The distinction between informal and formal responses lies mainly in the service transaction, or the requirement that payment be exchanged or records of service be maintained; and in the potential for codes of professional conduct to be involved, for example in mandatory reporting.

Formal services will generally require that reporting and record-keeping functions be administered, whereas informal responses will not. As an example, both a friend or family member and a psychologist might be a source of support for a victim or perpetrator; on the one hand as an informal source of support the friend or family member would not be expected to take notes regarding the interaction or seek payment for their time, however the psychologist, as a formal support, would do both of these.

Informal responses on the other hand may be actions taken by the victim, the victim's family and friends, a witness to the incident, or other networks available to the victim. Informal responses may also be actions taken by the perpetrator. There are linkages and interactions between formal and informal responses, and between the 'response' and 'impacts and outcomes' elements.

Information about formal responses are necessary to evaluate and assess systems and services. Formal responses to family, domestic and sexual violence can include an array of services that operate at a number of levels from prevention to intervention. Measures are needed to assess how well these system responses are performing in delivering quality actions to reduce incidences of family, domestic and sexual violence.

Measures can be used to inform improved outcomes for clients of government and non-government services by assessing the types of services provided, accessibility, awareness of services, and whether services meet the particular needs of populations and groups of interest.

Characteristics of responses

Responses are actions that may be taken following an incident of family, domestic or sexual violence. These actions may be taken by:

- the victim, family and friends, or other networks associated with the victim;
- a witness to the incident;
- the perpetrator; or
- service providers and the civil or criminal justice system.

Any responses by people other than the victim, perpetrator or witness depend on disclosure of the event to them. There may be situations where no action is ever taken.

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[4] Disclosure refers to the victim's revelation of the incident. The disclosure can be spontaneous or prompted, and does not necessarily mean that a formal response is set in motion (Wall 2012).

Any actions taken are influenced by the characteristics of individual people and the perceptions they and their community hold; for example, the degree to which family, domestic or sexual violence is accepted as 'something that happens', or the perceived utility of reporting incidents to formal systems or accessing formal services. Events such as changes in policies and the funding of services and the widespread publicising of these may change a victim's willingness to come forward and report crimes. Perceptions of the seriousness of an incident of family, domestic or sexual violence and the perception of whether or not the incident was a crime will also influence any actions taken.

Much of what is known empirically about the behaviour of perpetrators following the incidence of family, domestic or sexual violence comes through the operation and analysis of perpetrator programs. Other evidence about perpetrators is known as a result of disclosure by victims. However there are still gaps in the understanding of responses and it would be useful to know more about the actions a perpetrator might take following incidents of family, domestic or sexual violence.

INFORMAL RESPONSES

Informal responses may involve talking to someone, such as a family member, friend, neighbour, work colleague or religious advisor. Perceptions of the seriousness of an incident of sexual assault or family violence, and the perception of whether or not the incident was a crime will also influence the response and the course of action taken. Prevention responses such as public education campaigns can help to advise friends and family to respond in more constructive ways.

FORMAL RESPONSES

Formal responses encompass the actions that are undertaken by a formal system following a report of an incident of family, domestic and sexual violence. Once reported the organisation may undertake actions on behalf of the victim, either from a self-directed report or by referral from another agency. Actions may also be taken against the perpetrator particularly when the event is identified as a criminal act.

Government and non-government agency and service responses fall into three main groups.

- **Detection and prosecution:** including processes of the criminal and civil justice systems and associated agencies and professionals.
- **Treatment and support:** including health service responses, child protection services, crisis support services, community services, services specific to family and domestic violence and services specific to sexual violence.
- **Prevention:** including education programs, public health campaigns and treatment and rehabilitation programs. Education and prevention programs are covered later in this publication.

One example of an action taken by a formal system in response to family and domestic violence is the utilisation of Family Violence Orders, which are generally made under prescribed laws of the states and territories to protect a person from family and domestic violence. They can be referred to by different names across different jurisdictions, e.g.:

- Protection Orders (QLD & ACT);
- Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (NSW);
- Intervention Orders and Family Violence Safety Notices (VIC);
- Restraining Orders (NT, SA & WA); and
- Family Violence Orders / Police Family Violence Orders (TAS).

These orders are protective functions of the justice system that seek to prevent one person from being physically located within the vicinity of an individual or a specified premises, or stalking or harassing another person and can remove a perpetrator from their home. Generally the order itself is a civil justice order, but if breached, the matter then becomes criminal. Children may be included on a parent's application for an order. In some Australian jurisdictions there is specific provision for the making of orders to protect a child from exposure to domestic violence. Some jurisdictions go further, so that exposing a child to domestic violence against another person is itself domestic violence perpetrated against the child. Furthermore, if there are allegations that a child is being abused, state or territory child welfare authorities have a statutory responsibility for the child's protection. This may involve intervening in a family in order to prevent further abuse, notifying police of activity which may constitute a crime, or bringing proceedings in state or territory courts that have jurisdiction to make orders about the welfare of children (Clark & Quadara 2010).

Child Care and Protection Orders are made by a state or territory Children's Court Magistrate when it is believed that a child is in need of protection from harm. There are a number of different types of Child Care and Protection Orders, which may direct a parent or guardian to do specific actions, or may grant supervision of the child to a government department or other family member or person. They can also involve removing a child from the family situation. Orders may be short or long-term, possibly lasting until the young person turns 18 years of age. For a magistrate to grant a Child Protection Order, they must be sure that the child or young person is in need of protection and that the order is not more intrusive than what is needed for the child to remain safe.

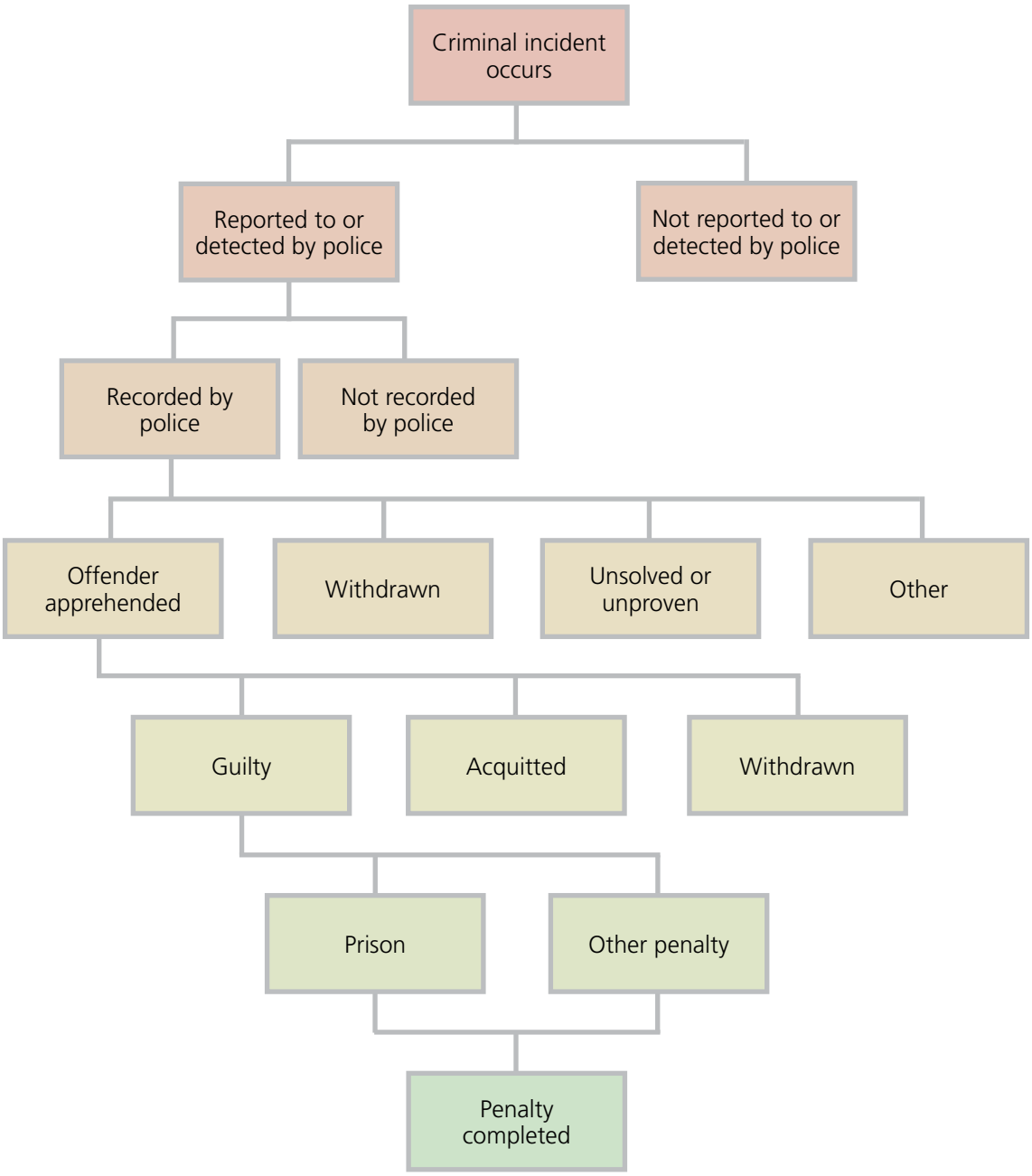
Finally, some people resolve or address issues of family and domestic violence through the family or other courts.

Police are usually the first point of contact with the criminal justice system in the reporting of sexual assault and often for cases of family and domestic violence. The processes that follow a report to police may include investigation, evidence-gathering, apprehension and charging of an alleged offender, bail, remand, trial and imprisonment (see diagram 2). It is important to understand victims' reasons for reporting or not reporting incidents of sexual assault to police, as sexual assault is believed to be one of the most under-reported of all crimes.

Where formal, non-justice system responses are concerned, a range of services and agencies are available at the local level. Referral to these services may come from a range of sources and can be self-initiated, court-initiated or as a result of mandatory reporting requirements (covering professionals such as teachers suspecting cases of child abuse). These agencies, and the services they provide, include:

- family violence services – provide case management, emergency accommodation options and community education supports;
- legal services;
- Specialist Homelessness Services – transitional supported accommodation and related support services for women and children escaping domestic violence, or for those at risk of homelessness;
- counselling support programs – provide individual and group counselling for women and children;
- family relationships centres – information, support, referral and dispute resolution;
- telephone help lines – confidential counselling and a referral service for victims and perpetrators; and
- perpetrator behaviour change programs – group programs for perpetrators that address violent behaviour, prioritising the safety of the victim and encouraging the perpetrator to take responsibility for their violence and end it; or programs for victims that empower and build confidence.

Diagram 2: Representation of the flow of cases through the criminal justice system



It should be noted that some behaviour that would qualify as family and domestic violence under relevant legislation might, in some service sectors, be directed to alternative formal complaints processes. For instance, incidents of abuse by carers who may also be in a familial or domestic relationship with the victim may be referred to state or territory Child, Disability, Health or Aged Care Commissioners.

For each of the systems that provide responses to family, domestic or sexual violence two areas of analysis are required. The first focuses on the services provided and the utilisation of those services. The second focuses on the performance and cost of the system, of which the five major ones are:

- criminal justice system;
- health services;
- community services (including child protection and crisis support);
- services dealing specifically with family, domestic or sexual violence; and
- ancillary support services required in addition to family, domestic or sexual violence services, for instance personal care.

For these major systems, information is needed relating to the provision and utilisation of services and the performance and cost of the system providing those services. For such analysis a count of family, domestic or sexual violence cases, rather than incidents, would more appropriately measure the demand for services. This would need to be considered in the context of a broad, system-wide approach that additionally included analysis of outcomes.

It is also very important to understand the usage of multiple services, in particular whether a victim or perpetrator might approach or use multiple services, and if so, whether they disclose to each of these services that the incident is family, domestic or sexual violence related.

One further area would include an examination of the way in which these systems interact with each other. Given the existence of multi-agency responses to family, domestic or sexual violence, an understanding of the degree to which agencies and systems operate in a co-ordinated and integrated fashion is fundamentally important to best practice.

Reporting and disclosure

Evidence from victimisation surveys indicates that many people who experience family, domestic and sexual violence do not report the crime to police, and do not seek professional or other support services. It is possible that many others never disclose such incidents to anyone. Some may only ever seek the informal support of friends and family, while others may only seek more formal types of support and/or medical treatment. A victim may make use of informal or formal support soon after an incident occurs, or may not do so until years afterwards. The service or support needs will therefore depend on the timing of the disclosure or report of the incident.

Information is required about the responses of both victims and perpetrators, especially when they have not reported to, or had contact with, any systems or services.

It is important to understand why some victims do not report to police or access other services, particularly if there is a fear of repercussions or of not being believed, a lack of knowledge about services, a difficulty in accessing the services that were needed, or perception that the incident is not sufficiently serious to warrant action by authorities. If a victim's response was to talk to

someone, then information about who that person was and the degree of support provided may be related to the outcome. If no action was taken and no-one was told, information is needed about the reasons why, and about the relationship to outcomes.

Additionally, a key obstacle to disclosure is self-identification. If a victim does not interpret the events that have occurred as violence, nor wish to identify as a victim, then it is likely that events may never come to the attention of others. Exceptions to this may include instances where the violence is witnessed by another person not directly involved in the violent incident, or the severity of the violence or injury draws the attention of medical or other professionals.

PERPETRATORS AND PREVENTION

In relation to perpetrators, it is important to understand the types of intervention or other support that may assist in the prevention of further offending. If perpetrators accept responsibility for their actions, they may voluntarily seek counselling or other assistance to help avoid development (or maintenance) of this pattern of behaviour. The effectiveness of justice system interventions, such as court-ordered counselling and other programs is also important to assess. If perpetrators do not seek, or are not exposed to, this type of assistance, then information about whether they tell other people, change their routines, or respond in other ways would be useful.

Data needs

By definition, informal responses do not involve reporting to services or systems providing formal responses to family, domestic and sexual violence. The only opportunity to collect data on the informal responses of victims is through victimisation or other surveys where victims of family, domestic and sexual violence are randomly sampled from the community. Surveys may ask about victims' reliance on family, friends and other networks for support through disclosure after an incident. Currently, there is little information collected through surveys in Australia about informal responses to family, domestic or sexual violence by or for a perpetrator.

Surveys also provide estimates of the proportion of respondents who have accessed more formal responses such as reports to police and through the utilisation of professional and other services. This provides an indication of the total demand for, and utilisation of these services.

Administrative by-product data is the chief source of information about formal system responses. These data are obtained from the formal agency systems providing services in response to these incidents. These agencies, such as the criminal justice system, health services, and child protection services, keep records of their clients, services provided and outcomes which provides opportunities to source information about the workloads, resourcing and performance of the systems. Confidentiality and privacy considerations apply to the appropriate use of administrative data.

Together, administrative by-product data and survey data provide an indication of potential under-reporting and under-utilisation of services, through comparison of the volume of cases known to the system and those detected via direct surveys that have never otherwise been reported. This information can inform the development of policy measures, deployment of resources and the evaluation of service provision.

Measuring responses

POTENTIAL UNITS FOR ANALYSIS

While there are many potential avenues that victims and perpetrators may pursue in response to experiences of family, domestic and sexual violence, information about these interactions with informal and formal support services may be reflected through the following primary counting units:

- people: victims/perpetrators of family, domestic and sexual violence;
- incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence; and
- transactions: services provided in relation to family, domestic and sexual violence.

It should also be noted that one of the major limitations of administrative by-product data are that the counting units used are transactions. As a result, deriving person counts across multiple transactions to obtain multiple victimisation counts may be difficult and in some cases may not be possible.

QUESTIONS TO SUPPORT RESEARCH AND POLICY PRIORITIES

There are a number of research/policy questions for systems responding to family, domestic and sexual violence.

About victims:

- What actions are likely to be taken by a person who has experienced family, domestic or sexual violence?
- Why do some victims seek professional services or support while others do not?
- Are victims who do not come into contact with or report to any formal system different from those who do? In what ways?
- What services and support are needed by victims of family, domestic and sexual violence?
- What additional supports and services are required by specific population groups?
- Does the type of response to family, domestic and sexual violence differ between particular population groups?
- Are special supports required for child victims of/witnesses to family and domestic violence?
- What is the rate of co-presentation of cases of family, domestic or sexual violence and child abuse?
- What risks are associated with tailoring services and support around the needs of the people who currently use these services?
- How best might these services and support be provided?
- How effective are programs and services in preventing victims from being subjected to family and domestic violence and sexual violence in the future?
- Why do some victims report family, domestic or sexual violence to police while others do not?
- Do specific policies, such as pro-arrest policies, have positive or negative effects on the number of family, domestic or sexual violence reports made?
- What data are available about discretionary decision-making in arrests, where police attend family, domestic or sexual violence incident call-out?
- Where family, domestic or sexual violence related matters proceed to court, do victims have legal representation?

About perpetrators:

- What actions might be taken by a perpetrator in response to incident(s)?
- What services might be needed by a perpetrator? How might they be accessed?
- How likely is it that a perpetrator of family, domestic violence or sexual violence will re-offend?
- How effective are programs and services in preventing perpetrators from engaging in family, domestic violence or sexual violence in the future?
- Are perpetrators who do not come into contact with any formal system different from those who do? In what ways?
- How likely is it that a perpetrator will be dealt with through the criminal justice system? What is the outcome likely to be?
- Is there a difference in the outcome for perpetrators depending on whether the sexual violence occurred in a domestic/family context or not?

About family, friends and community:

- How well-equipped are family, friends, and the community in providing effective support to a person who has experienced family, domestic or sexual violence?
- How well-equipped are family, friends, and the community in dealing with a perpetrator of family, domestic or sexual violence?
- What support do families and friends need to fulfil these social roles in relation to informal family, domestic or sexual violence responses?
- What sort of response do family, friends and the community have towards victims and perpetrators of family, domestic or sexual violence?
- Are informed responses effective in preventing the re-occurrence family, domestic and sexual violence?

About systems and services:

- How do the responses to family, domestic or sexual violence vary across jurisdictions?
- What impact do the various public policy approaches towards family, domestic or sexual violence have upon outcomes for victims and perpetrators of family, domestic or sexual violence across jurisdictions?
- What kinds of services are most effective?
- To what extent do systems for victims and perpetrators co-refer their clients and/or have formal systems in place to co-ordinate their service delivery?
- To what extent do these systems share information to ensure victims' safety and perpetrator accountability?
- To what degree are system interactions monitored and reviewed to ensure victim safety and perpetrator accountability?
- Will formal system agencies and services providing responses be able to deal with any increased demand?
- In what types of cases and what situations does there end up being statutory involvement?
- What proportion and types of family and domestic violence cases end up with Family Law Court proceedings?

About disclosure:

- When is disclosure made by a victim of family, domestic or sexual violence and in what context?
- What factors impact on the likelihood of a victim's disclosure?
- To whom is disclosure made? How well equipped are people to support a victim of family, domestic and sexual violence?
- How does the type of support needed change with the time elapsed?
- Is fear for safety, or of other repercussions, preventing victims from disclosing incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence?
- Do rates or types of disclosure differ across population groups?
- Do perpetrators tend to disclose the incident(s) to others?
- What factors impact on the likelihood of a perpetrator's disclosure?
- To whom is disclosure made?
- In what ways does disclosure differentially impact on children, young people and adults?

CHAPTER 8

Impacts and Outcomes

ELEMENT 5

Chapter 8 Impacts and Outcomes

Element 5

Overview

The impacts and outcomes of family, domestic and sexual violence can vary in duration from short, to long term, affecting victims, perpetrators, their respective families, friends and the broader community. These can affect a wide range of areas of wellbeing, including:

- population;
- community;
- family;
- individual;
- physical and mental health;
- education;
- employment;
- economic resources;
- housing;
- crime and justice; and
- culture and leisure.

Potential impacts and outcomes also vary according to the time-frame under consideration. Impacts are classified as short to medium term effects, while outcomes are generally medium to long term effects, particularly those that follow formal interventions. The type of abuse and the length of time of victimisation, as well as the age of the victim at the time of the incident, also affect the nature of impacts and outcomes following family, domestic and sexual violence.

Impacts and outcomes

Some impacts and outcomes may apply to victims and perpetrators alike. The nature of the relationship may also be a factor, such as whether or not the victims and perpetrators are in an ongoing relationship or whether the perpetrator was a stranger, in the case of some sexual violence. Data related to different types of victims is important because there will be varying impacts and outcomes for different populations such as children, older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people with a disability.

VICTIMS

Gathering data for this element requires information that is relative to all time-frames – short, medium and long-term. Although impacts and outcomes for victims of family, domestic and sexual violence can be similar there is also divergence. The short-term impacts for victims can be the indirect physical, social and psychological costs of violence (Laurence & Spalter-Roth 1995).

Medium and long-term outcomes for victims may include changes in physical and mental health, low self-esteem, psychological wellbeing, relationship status, social and other relationships, living arrangements, work/study activities, day-to-day activities, income loss (from time off work), other economic costs related to health care, possible relocation and changes in financial status.

Victims can find themselves labelled by an event or events in ways which influence the perceptions of others and the treatment they receive. Subsequent involvement in the justice system can also result in victims experiencing further trauma.

Victims of family, domestic and sexual violence are not a homogeneous group and therefore information is needed on the diverse nature of impacts and outcomes for various populations. Children and the elderly will be impacted by these forms of violence in different ways to other victims. For young children, exposure to family violence can have serious implications for their cognitive, social and emotional development (WHO 2004). For an older person subjected to elder abuse, the vulnerabilities associated with medical conditions and the progression of age could compound the abuse being experienced.

Longitudinal data about outcomes for each of these sets of victims would assist in monitoring long-term outcomes and evaluation of interventions and outcomes related to disclosure and support. Health sector and community services datasets also provide a potentially rich data source of information. Indirect information may also be 'hidden' in case records where the incident is not for instance, identified as an incident of family or domestic violence, such as in police administrative datasets.

PERPETRATORS

Information about the impacts and outcomes for perpetrators can be generated from the health, welfare and justice sectors. Pathways for perpetrators in the health and welfare sectors may involve the identification of outcomes from services and supports, such as counselling and treatment programs.

Impacts and outcomes are currently documented best when perpetrators move through the criminal justice system. Justice system data can be limited however, due to difficulty in identifying perpetrators as they move through the system and the restriction of coverage to reported incidents that result in a perpetrator becoming known to the justice system. These issues are exacerbated in relation to perpetrators of family and domestic violence, as many types of criminal acts can be committed in a family and domestic violence context. The justice system does not however, effectively or consistently identify this family and domestic violence context in recording (e.g. assault charges may not usually identify that this occurred in the family violence context). As a result, there is currently minimal information publicly available about outcomes for perpetrators.

Victimisation surveys are a potential source of information about perpetrators together with information collected at the point of contact with systems and services, although information is collected from the victim. Self-reported surveys on offending could also be potential sources of information about perpetrators, but these are not currently conducted in Australia. Longitudinal data about outcomes for perpetrators would provide data for intervention evaluations; however such collections are difficult to conduct.

FAMILY, FRIENDS AND THE COMMUNITY

The impacts and outcomes of family, domestic and sexual violence are felt within families, extended family and social networks, the wider community, economy and society. Information is therefore required on the ways in which family, domestic and sexual violence affect these different areas for analysis.

The immediate impacts for family members, especially children who witness and are affected by the incident, can include fear as well as physical and psychological impacts, which can interfere with wellbeing and quality of life. These impacts extend to outcomes that affect family cohesion and interpersonal relationships. Services that provide support for family and friends of victims are potential data sources.

The usefulness of data on impacts and outcomes relates to potential analysis in community perceptions, attitudes and behaviours and monitoring change. Over time the data would report on and contribute to public health and safety campaigns that seek to create environments conducive to increasing the reporting of family, domestic and sexual violence incidents and creating communities able to support victims in constructive ways.

Data on the impacts and outcomes for the community would provide for an analysis of the way in which family, domestic and sexual violence may affect changes in community perception, attitudes and behaviours, or where highly prevalent, contribute to breakdown in community supports and overall wellbeing. Both direct and indirect costs are incurred by the community in relation to family, domestic and sexual violence. Direct costs include the costs of funding the systems that provide responses to these forms of violence, such as funding community prevention and education programs and the costs to individuals accessing services.

Indirect costs include the costs to businesses and to the economy of lost time and reduced productivity and the opportunity cost of using resources to provide services in response to family, domestic and sexual violence.

Data needs

A range of data may be required to inform the short, medium and long-term impacts and outcomes of family, domestic and sexual violence. The following summarises these data needs.

VICTIMS

Health and other psycho-social supports

Information on the range and severity of the physical and mental health impacts, and the long-term outcomes of family, domestic and sexual violence, would inform understanding of victims' experiences and assist policy measures to provide appropriate support and services. Potential data sources include general practitioners, maternal and child health clinics, hospitals and counselling services.

Experience of the justice system

An understanding of victim experiences of the civil or criminal justice system would provide information for evaluating and improving system responses, processes and outcomes. Measuring perceptions of these experiences and responses is equally important as they may influence the propensity to report crime generally and family, domestic and sexual violence in particular.

Economic costs

The ability to measure the direct or tangible economic costs relating to family, domestic and sexual violence helps to quantify the overall impacts and outcomes and assists in estimating the costs of violence. Direct costs that are quantifiable include crisis services, accommodation services, legal services, income support, child welfare and family support programs, health care and medical services, loss of income, and loss of productivity.

Further economic impacts for victims and secondary victims may be felt through costs associated with moving house, relocating, and losses to income involved in the dissolution of a relationship. Employment, education and productivity impacts can be measured by changes in work patterns and income due to victimisation, including sick days or leave days taken as a result.

PERPETRATORS

Health and other psycho-social supports

Outcomes of treatment programs, rehabilitation programs and other interventions and supports provide an evaluation of their effectiveness. An understanding of positive or negative intervention outcomes (rehabilitation or recidivism) is important in determining best practice. This can result in more effectively targeting programs that support behavioural change for perpetrators. Information about the effectiveness of such programs may potentially be elicited from those involved.

Criminal justice outcomes

Outcomes for perpetrators are well-documented and recorded when their crime is reported and dealt with through the criminal justice system. For perpetrators who are given a custodial penalty, their experience in prisons may lead to other outcomes that are unrelated to their original crime. There is also a need to understand the outcomes for those perpetrators who do not progress beyond key points in the criminal justice system. Information about outcomes may improve public confidence in the system's ability to deal with these perpetrators, and increase the likelihood of reporting to authorities.

FAMILY, FRIENDS AND THE COMMUNITY

Information about the impacts and outcomes for family, friends and the community provides data about the costs to the wider community, including the type of support provided and how this affects outcomes for the victim/perpetrator. Information about changed relationships and activities as a result of an incident of family, domestic and sexual violence and details of costs incurred (emotional, financial) are useful to quantify community impacts.

Measuring impacts and outcomes

POTENTIAL UNITS FOR ANALYSIS

Incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence involve direct and indirect costs to the individuals involved. These costs can spread to their families, friends, local communities and ultimately to wider society. Information about the various outcomes and impacts may be reflected through the following counting units:

- people: victims/perpetrators of family, domestic and sexual violence;
- incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence; and
- transactions: services provided in response to impacts of family, domestic and sexual violence.

QUESTIONS TO SUPPORT RESEARCH AND POLICY PRIORITIES

- What are the impacts and outcomes of family, domestic and sexual violence for victims? How do these vary for different population groups?
- Are there impacts on victims of violence resulting from their interactions with other legal processes, e.g. relocation orders in instances of family and domestic violence?
- Do rates of accessing services or seeking criminal justice protection vary across different population groups? If so, why?
- What are the impacts and outcomes of family, domestic or sexual violence for perpetrators, both those within the civil or criminal justice system and those who do not come into contact with the system?
- What are the outcomes for perpetrators who attend behavioural change programs?
- Does arrest reduce the likelihood of recidivism, with current or future partners?
- What are the impacts and outcomes for perpetrators of family, domestic or sexual violence with a criminal conviction?
- What are the impacts and outcomes of family, domestic and sexual violence for children and other witnesses to violence?
- What are the impacts and outcomes of family, domestic and sexual violence for family, friends and the community?
- Who are the indirect victims?
- What are the social costs of family, domestic and sexual violence?
- What are the economic costs for responding to family, domestic and sexual violence through the health, welfare and civil or criminal justice system?
- What are the impacts of the changed economic contribution made by individuals affected by family, domestic or sexual violence?

CHAPTER 9

Programs, Research and Evaluation

ELEMENT 6

Chapter 9 Programs, Research and Evaluation

Element 6

Overview

This final element is informed by analysis of information from the other elements – context, risk, incident/experience, response and impact/outcome – which will determine the targeting, content and resourcing of programs, such as public health education, counselling, treatment and rehabilitation. Implementing education and prevention programs can influence the future status of the 'context' and 'risk' elements, and over time, these changes provide a measure of the effectiveness of these programs, aiding program evaluations.

Evaluation can also be applied to the activities of the criminal and civil justice systems in order to measure the effectiveness of system responses through sentencing and other measures that may be applied to perpetrators. The evaluation of programs and services can also help to improve formal responses to family, domestic and sexual violence and improve the willingness of victims to report incidents. Information generated from evaluations provides organisations with a measure of their effectiveness and responsiveness to family violence as well as informing improvements to intervention strategies (Carmody 2009). Evaluation is a vital component that contributes to improved and best practice responses to family, domestic and sexual violence, which affects both the 'responses' and 'impacts and outcomes' elements described earlier in this publication.

A strong research base is fundamental to the understanding of all elements described in order to inform policy responses to family, domestic and sexual violence. Research further informs best practice principles to support victims and rehabilitate perpetrators.

Development and operation of specialised programs

Family, domestic and sexual violence education and prevention programs draw on information from all other elements of this publication. The broad aim of these types of programs is to bring about behavioural change as a part of cultural change at the community level. Information about the incident, and impacts and outcomes for victims and offenders, feeds into the development of education and prevention programs. Education and prevention programs can therefore be seen as having a strong relationship to the formal system responses element.

There are differences between general awareness and education programs, and specific programs aimed at victims, perpetrators or high risk individuals. For example, some prevention programs are framed specifically for family and domestic violence or sexual offenders and delivered with a focus on rehabilitation; these are usually court-mandated and aim to prevent further offending.

Programs can be focussed on education or prevention. Further distinctions can be made between education programs that aim to generally:

- inform the general community about the occurrence of family, domestic and sexual violence;
- inform the professional community about the occurrence of family, domestic and sexual violence;
- identify the circumstances in which it may occur; and
- attempt to influence attitudinal and behaviour change;

and those prevention and intervention programs that are:

- targeted at specific victims or offenders;
- targeted at specific services, sectors or disciplines; and
- designed to deliver early intervention in high risk relationships.

The effectiveness of the above types of programs depends on appropriate messages reaching the right 'audiences' in order to change attitudes and influence behaviour.

Success of education and prevention programs can also be mediated by a range of contextual and individual factors. For example, different family structures and support networks can provide positive and negative influences, which impact upon the level of engagement with services and programs.

Research and evaluation

The availability of a strong evidence base is a key factor in the development of evidence-based policy and can involve different approaches across disciplines. A number of disciplines have an interest in researching various aspects of family, domestic and sexual violence. Research can be performed on a general level, exploring community attitudes, identifying risk factors and the prevalence of family, domestic and sexual violence. It can also be performed at a specific level where detailed characteristics of family, domestic and sexual violence are sought, or where program efficacy is a major goal.

Evaluating interventions is essential to determine the efficacy and utility of campaigns and programs. Specialised formal interventions, conducted by health professionals, counsellors or other service providers, may be more readily evaluated than broad based campaigns where the influence of other environmental factors cannot be ruled out. Evaluations help policy-makers and service-providers identify what works and assists with future funding opportunities to continue intervention programs and develop further programs. Collating evaluation data over time enables changes to be monitored and contributes to building the evidence-base that informs future investigations, policy and programming.

Evaluation can be facilitated as an integral aspect of service delivery. For example an evaluation might examine activity through data about program or service type, clients, and program take-up or utilisation. Subsequently, performance can be evaluated by analysing outcomes, client satisfaction and the cost to run the program/service. Evaluation results support continuous improvement not only of the service or program under examination, but also add to the knowledge base for evaluation processes themselves.

Data needs

In order to plan for program content and the effective targeting of education and prevention programs a sound information base is necessary. Data needs include information to identify and analyse high risk groups (potential victims/perpetrators), their attitudes and their behaviour patterns. All elements outlined in this publication come together by contributing data to inform program planning and service delivery of public education and awareness messages and specialised treatment programs. Accordingly, all of the data sources listed in previous elements may be considered relevant.

Measuring intervention

POTENTIAL UNITS FOR ANALYSIS

In conducting research and evaluation, and developing and delivering programs, information about the following units of analysis may be useful:

- people – victims and perpetrators (including re-entry to the criminal justice system);
- behaviours – in relation to incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence; and
- programs:
  - participants – attitudes/satisfaction;
  - type of program;
  - type of activity;
  - cost of the program; and
  - outcomes.

QUESTIONS TO SUPPORT RESEARCH AND POLICY PRIORITIES

- What are the determinants of family, domestic and sexual violence?
- How can family, domestic and sexual violence be prevented?
- How can the risk (prevalence and incidence) of family, domestic and sexual violence be reduced?
- Where should attempts be made to intervene to reduce the risk of family, domestic and sexual violence?
- How can the formation of individual and community attitudes be influenced?
- What are the perceptions held in the community now and how can these existing attitudes be changed?
- How can unacceptable behaviours be changed?
- How can behaviours in specific population groups or settings be influenced?
- Which formal interventions from the health, welfare or justice systems reduce the occurrence of family, domestic and sexual violence incidents?
- Which supportive interventions for victims are most effective in assisting recovery?
- What is the effectiveness of education programs aimed at reducing family, domestic and sexual violence and changing community attitudes generally?
- How effective are specific prevention and intervention programs that are available to victims and perpetrators, in terms of cost, utilisation and outcome?
- What effects does the presence of or lacks of family and community support have on engagement with programs, and successful intervention?

CHAPTER 10

Conclusion

Chapter 10 Conclusion

Summary

Defining the data challenge for family, domestic and sexual violence is the foundational stage in forming an evidence base for family, domestic and sexual violence. It has noted the nature of these significant social and policy matters and the physical, psychological and financial impacts on individuals, their friends and family, the community and society.

This publication describes family, domestic and sexual violence, and provides a conceptual model for data to be collected in support of policy and service development to address these forms of violence. It has also discussed the challenges of definition and terminology and provides a basis to develop a nationally agreed definition for the creation of consistent and comparable data, relating to prevalence, incidence and victimisation.

The data elements required to describe and measure family, domestic and sexual violence are conceptualised and outlined as:

1. Context
2. Risk
3. Incident/Experience
4. Responses
5. Impacts and Outcomes
6. Programs, Research and Evaluation

Future development

Defining the data challenge for family, domestic and sexual violence will contribute to the development of a National Data Collection Framework for family, domestic and sexual violence by mapping the field of interest and identifying key research questions and information needs. Subsequent processes will compare the information outlined in this publication with information holdings that currently exist in relation to family, domestic and sexual violence, identify priority information gaps and identify actions required to build an effective and coherent evidence base.

Building the evidence base is vital to support and inform the research, policy-development and evaluation activity mandated by the National Plan. The National Plan is driven by a series of four three-year Action Plans which will be evaluated to monitor the success of the plan in achieving the six specific national outcomes. The intention is for these measures of success to be monitored using national surveys and new sources of data as they become available. An effective evidence base is a key resource for decision-makers, policy developers, researchers, service providers and the community to inform attitudes, legal directions, development of best practice and effective and appropriate responses to these forms of violence in Australia.

APPENDIX 1

Questions to support research and policy priorities

Appendix 1 Questions to support research and policy priorities

Context

- What are the environmental factors that influence the societal and community context within which family, domestic or sexual violence occurs?
- What are the characteristics of communities that have a higher incidence of family, domestic and sexual violence?
- What are the factors that influence community attitude formation and change? What are the most effective mediums to influence community attitudes?
- Where might there be opportunities to influence or change this environment?
- What environmental factors are most predictive of prevalence of family, domestic and sexual violence?

Risk

- How big is the problem of family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia?
- Does the size of the problem vary across different populations groups or communities?
- Does the risk or likelihood of being a victim/perpetrator of family and domestic violence increase or decrease significantly through engagement with services, programs and support?
- How likely is it that Australians will be a victim of family, domestic or sexual violence?
- How likely is it that Australians will be a repeat victim of family, domestic or sexual violence, and who is likely to experience repeat victimisation?
- How likely is it that Australians will commit family, domestic or sexual violence related offences?
- How likely is it that Australians will be a repeat offender of family, domestic or sexual violence, and who is likely to re-commit these offences?
- What are the characteristics of particular sub-populations that place them at more or less risk of family, domestic or sexual violence?
- Is there change over time?
- Are victims or perpetrators more likely to repeatedly form relationships that are characterised by violence?
- Are victims and witnesses of family and domestic violence more likely to become future victims or perpetrators?

Incident/Experience

- What is the nature of family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia? What are the characteristics of incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence?
- What are the characteristics of victims of family, domestic or sexual violence? What are their experiences and their perceptions of family, domestic or sexual violence?
- What are the characteristics of perpetrators of family, domestic or sexual violence? What are their experiences and their perceptions of family, domestic or sexual violence?

- Are some population groups and age groups over-represented in incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence (as victims or as perpetrators)?
- In what circumstances does family, domestic or sexual violence occur?
- Are these changing over time? In what way?
- Are there any common trigger events? If so what are they, and in what proportion of cases are they a factor?
- Is there a common trajectory with family, domestic and sexual violence incidents; do they tend to escalate over time or do behaviours remain relatively stable?
- Do some victims respond to a period of abuse with violence, thereby becoming a perpetrator themselves?
- What proportion of family, domestic or sexual violence incidents involve secondary victims, e.g. children as witnesses?
- What is known about incidents involving parents and children? Is there a correlation between these incidents, and those in which children are witnesses to abuse between parents?

Responses

About victims:

- What actions are likely to be taken by a person who has experienced family, domestic or sexual violence?
- Why do some victims seek professional services or support while others do not?
- Are victims who do not come into contact with or report to any formal system different from those who do? In what ways?
- What services and support are needed by victims of family, domestic and sexual violence?
- What additional supports and services are required by specific population groups?
- Does the type of response to family, domestic and sexual violence differ between particular population groups?
- Are special supports required for child victims of/witnesses to family and domestic violence?
- What is the rate of co-presentation of cases of family, domestic or sexual violence and child abuse?
- What risks are associated with tailoring services and support around the needs of the people who currently use these services?
- How best might these services and support be provided?
- How effective are programs and services in preventing victims from being subjected to family and domestic violence and sexual violence in the future?
- Why do some victims report family, domestic or sexual violence to police while others do not?
- Do specific policies, such as pro-arrest policies, have positive or negative effects on the number of family, domestic or sexual violence reports made?
- What data are available about discretionary decision-making in arrests, where police attend family, domestic or sexual violence incident call-out?
- Where family, domestic or sexual violence related matters proceed to court, do victims have legal representation?

About perpetrators:

- What actions might be taken by a perpetrator in response to incident(s)?
- What services might be needed by a perpetrator? How might they be accessed?
- How likely is it that a perpetrator of family, domestic violence or sexual violence will re-offend?
- How effective are programs and services in preventing perpetrators from engaging in family, domestic violence or sexual violence in the future?
- Are perpetrators who do not come into contact with any formal system different from those who do? In what ways?
- How likely is it that a perpetrator will be dealt with through the criminal justice system? What is the outcome likely to be?
- Is there a difference in the outcome for perpetrators depending on whether the sexual violence occurred in a domestic/family context or not?

About family, friends and community:

- How well-equipped are family, friends, and the community in providing effective support to a person who has experienced family, domestic or sexual violence?
- How well-equipped are family, friends, and the community in dealing with a perpetrator of family, domestic or sexual violence?
- What support do families and friends need to fulfil these social roles in relation to informal family, domestic or sexual violence responses?
- What sort of response do family, friends and the community have towards victims and perpetrators of family, domestic or sexual violence?
- Are informed responses effective in preventing the re-occurrence family, domestic and sexual violence?

About systems and services:

- How do the responses to family, domestic or sexual violence vary across jurisdictions?
- What impact do the various public policy approaches towards family, domestic or sexual violence have upon outcomes for victims and perpetrators of family, domestic or sexual violence across jurisdictions?
- What kinds of services are most effective?
- To what extent do systems for victims and perpetrators co-refer their clients and/or have formal systems in place to co-ordinate their service delivery?
- To what extent do these systems share information to ensure victims' safety and perpetrator accountability?
- To what degree are system interactions monitored and reviewed to ensure victim safety and perpetrator accountability?
- Will formal system agencies and services providing responses be able to deal with any increased demand?
- In what types of cases and what situations does there end up being statutory involvement?
- What proportion and types of family and domestic violence cases end up with Family Law Court proceedings?

About disclosure:

- When is disclosure made by a victim of family, domestic or sexual violence and in what context?
- What factors impact on the likelihood of a victim's disclosure?
- To whom is disclosure made? How well equipped are people to support a victim of family, domestic violence and sexual violence?
- How does the type of support needed change with the time elapsed?
- Is fear for safety, or of other repercussions, preventing victims from disclosing incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence?
- Do rates or types of disclosure differ across population groups?
- Do perpetrators tend to disclose the incident(s) to others?
- What factors impact on the likelihood of a perpetrator's disclosure?
- To whom is disclosure made?
- In what ways does disclosure differentially impact on children, young people and adults?

Impacts and outcomes

- What are the impacts and outcomes of family, domestic and sexual violence for victims? How do these vary for different population groups?
- Are there impacts on victims of violence resulting from their interactions with other legal processes, e.g. relocation orders in instances of family and domestic violence?
- Do rates of accessing services or seeking criminal justice protection vary across different population groups? If so, why?
- What are the impacts and outcomes of family, domestic or sexual violence for perpetrators, both those within the civil or criminal justice system and those who do not come into contact with the system?
- What are the outcomes for perpetrators who attend behavioural change programs?
- Does arrest reduce the likelihood of recidivism, with current or future partners?
- What are the impacts and outcomes for perpetrators of family, domestic or sexual violence with a criminal conviction?
- What are the impacts and outcomes of family, domestic and sexual violence for children and other witnesses to violence?
- What are the impacts and outcomes of family, domestic and sexual violence for family, friends and the community?
- Who are the indirect victims?
- What are the social costs of family, domestic and sexual violence?
- What are the economic costs for responding to family, domestic and sexual violence through the health, welfare and civil or criminal justice system?
- What are the impacts of the changed economic contribution made by individuals affected by family, domestic or sexual violence?

Programs, research and evaluation

- What are the determinants of family, domestic and sexual violence?
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