



Data Snapshot

# Police Reported Adolescent Family Violence in Victoria

Family Violence Database



CRIME  
STATISTICS  
AGENCY

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# Key terms

## **Adolescent**

This report uses the term adolescent to describe any individual aged 18 years or younger.

## **Adolescent family violence (AFV)**

This data snapshot uses the definition of family violence provided in the *Family Violence Protection Act* (2008), which includes physical, sexual, emotional, verbal and other abusive behaviours directed at family members. Adolescent family violence refers to family violence involving an adolescent primary aggressor.

## **Affected family member (AFM)**

This term is used to describe the victim-survivor of a family violence incident.

## **Alleged offender**

A person who is alleged to have committed a criminal offence.

## **Complainant**

A person who is protected by a family violence intervention order or a family violence safety notice.

## **Family violence incident**

For the purpose of this report, a family violence incident refers to an incident reported to Victoria Police, where Police attended and completed a family violence Risk Assessment and Management Report (L17 form). Family violence incidents do not necessarily involve a criminal offence but can encompass a wide range of family violence behaviours as described under the *Family Violence Protection Act* (2008).

## **Intimate partner**

Intimate partner refers to any relationship recorded by police which suggests that the relationship is or has been a domestic or intimate partnership. This includes current or former girlfriends and boyfriends.

## **Other familial**

Family violence may impact a range of familial relationships including siblings, cousins, grandparents and other extended or familial like relationships, including kinship relationships. Not all relationship types are specified in police family violence data, and therefore cannot be singled out for analysis or reporting. Other familial is a term used in this report to categorise all relationships which are not between a parent and child or intimate partners.

**Primary aggressor**

This is a term used by Victoria Police to describe an individual who, by his or her actions in a family violence incident and through known history and actions, has caused the most physical harm, fear and intimidation (Victoria Police, 2019).

**Respondent**

The person against whom an application for an intervention order had been made against, or a family violence safety notice has been issued.

**Victim**

Refers to a person who has been recorded by Victoria Police as the victim of a criminal offence.

**Witness**

Refers to a person who has been recorded by Victoria Police as present at or 'otherwise affected by' a family violence incident. This can include children who were not physically present during a police reported family violence incident, but usually resided at the residence where the incident took place.

# Introduction

Violent or abusive behaviour by adolescents towards family members was first identified in domestic violence literature nearly 40 years ago (Harbin & Madden, 1979). However in the decades which followed, adolescent perpetrators have remained largely absent from discussions surrounding domestic and family violence. As such, there is a limited knowledge base about adolescent family violence (AFV), and characteristics concerning the primary aggressors and family members involved. In Victoria, the Royal Commission into Family Violence (RCFV) found that the family violence service system was struggling to juggle the competing needs and interests of young people, the safety of their families, and address the range of complex problems young people who use violence often experience (Victoria State Government, 2016). A recent Victorian study has similarly found that early intervention and non-punitive rehabilitation programs are especially needed to help identify and mitigate harm caused by adolescent aggressors towards their families (Fitz-Gibbon, Elliott & Maher, 2018).

This data report investigates Victoria Police, Family Violence Intervention Order and Victorian Youth Justice data to provide a summary about police reported AFV incidents and examine characteristics, risk factors and outcomes for the parties involved. Findings from this report aim to identify opportunities for early intervention efforts and examine historical and situational risk factors which may exacerbate an adolescent's propensity for family violence behaviour.

The following research questions are explored:

- What are the characteristics of AFV incidents in Victoria?
- Where does AFV occur?
- Does AFV differ from family violence perpetrated by adults?
- What are the characteristics and needs of affected family members of AFV?
- What are the characteristics and needs of adolescents who use family violence?
- What future interactions do adolescents who use family violence have with the justice system after their first police reported incident?

## What is adolescent family violence?

When investigating family violence incidents, Victoria Police draw upon the definitions outlined in *the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)* (FVPA) concerning family violence behaviours and relationships (Victoria Police, 2019). This Act defines family violence as behaviour towards a family member which is physically, sexually, emotionally, psychosocially or economically abusive, is threatening or coercive or in any way controls or dominates the family member and causes the family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person.

A family member can encompass a wide range of relationships including current or former partners, immediate or extended family members including a parent, sibling or grandparent, and a familial-like relationships such as kinship relationships.

In Victoria there is no standard accepted definition for adolescence, and as a result there are a variety of different age ranges used to describe adolescence across government departments and services. Drawing on the parameters set by the Victorian Adolescent Family Violence Program service model, this report examines family violence incidents associated with primary aggressors aged up to 18 years old (Department of Human Services, 2014).

## **Risk factors**

A recurrent theme throughout the literature surrounding adolescent family violence is that the association between risk factors and AFV is not deterministic (McKenna, O'Connor, & Verco, 2010; Moulds, Day, Mildred, Miller, & Casey, 2016). A multitude of risk and protective factors interact to mitigate or exacerbate an adolescent's risk of family violence aggression. Identified risk factors, including substance use or exposure to violence or maltreatment may form an important part of prevention or intervention efforts for identifying at risk adolescents and targeting their needs. The following risk factors have been identified to be associated with adolescent family violence, and inform analysis conducted in this snapshot to investigate their association with police reported AFV incidents and aggressors.

### **Child abuse and neglect**

The Australian Institute of Family Studies defines child abuse and neglect as a range of experiences faced by children, including physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect or exposure to family violence (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2018). Research surrounding family violence perpetration often notes childhood exposure to violence or maltreatment as a risk factor (Cottrell & Monk, 2004; Cochran, Sellers, Westbrook, & Palcious, 2011; McKenna, O'Connor, & Verco, 2010). This risk factor has also been identified for adolescents who engage in sexually abusive behaviour (Righthand & Welch, 2004; Hatch & Northham, 2005) and adolescents who offend criminally (Malvaso, Delfabbro, & Day, 2016; Hurren, Stewart, & Dennison, 2017). Although the association between maltreatment and adolescent offending is widely acknowledged, researchers have highlighted that not all maltreated children will engage in offending behaviours, and protective factors (e.g. a positive relationship with a primary caregiver) may be especially helpful in explaining why some young people go on to have negative outcomes while others do not (Howell, 2011; Heugten & Wilson, 2008). Recent studies also indicate that frequent maltreatment, maltreatment which spans long periods of time and an older age at maltreatment substantiation may additionally be useful in understanding the association between exposure to violence and maltreatment and adolescent family violence (Cashmore, 2011; Malvaso, Delfabbro, & Day, 2016).

### **Socio-economic status**

Socio-economic status (SES) is a well-documented correlate for adolescent criminal offending behaviour (Bjerk, 2007; Weatherburn & Lind, 1997; Jarjoura, Triplett, & Brinker, 2002), and noted in domestic violence literature (Renzetti & Larkin, 2009; Weatherburn, 2011). Consistent with this, results from the 2016 ABS Personal Safety Survey revealed that people living in the most disadvantaged areas of Australia are 1.5 times as likely to have experienced partner violence as those living in areas of least disadvantage (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019).



## **Regional or remote areas**

There is some evidence which suggests that regional and remote areas are disproportionately affected by family violence. As reported in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's report on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence, both the ABS Personal Safety Survey and the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health found that women living outside of major cities were more likely to have experienced partner violence than those in major cities, and people in remote and very remote areas were 24 times as likely to be hospitalised for domestic violence (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019). Similarly, research into youth offending has found that young people from geographically remote areas are over-represented in youth justice supervision (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2018). Theories for overrepresentation in these areas include the acceptance of more traditional gender roles and the normalisation of violence in rural communities, geographic isolation from supports or positive social influences (leisure, jobs), increased gun ownership increased exposure to natural disasters or other stressors (Campo & Tayton, 2015).

## **Drug and alcohol use**

Studies have noted a link between substance use and adolescents who use violence against family members or partners (Vagi, Rothman, Latzman, Tharp, & Breiding, 2013; Cottrell & Monk, 2004; McKenna, O'Connor, & Verco, 2010). Some researchers suggest that substance use may be a proximal risk factor for abusive behaviour in the home. Background risk factors for violence (e.g. witnessing family violence in the home) can be useful in identifying who is at risk, whereas situational risk factors (e.g. substance use) may be useful in identifying when violence is likely to occur (Vagi, Rothman, Latzman, Tharp, & Breiding, 2013).

## **Mental health**

A number of publications have identified that certain mental health conditions may be associated with an increased risk for adolescent family violence behaviours. Specific mental health conditions identified include post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety problems and suicidal ideation (Holt, 2015; Kennedy, Edmonds, Dann, & Burnett, 2010; Routt & Anderson, 2011). A recent study of police narrative data concerning adolescent family violence assaults taking place in NSW revealed that the mental health of an offender was raised as a factor that contributed to the assault in approximately a quarter of the incidents (Freeman, 2018). Other studies have noted the association between AFV and mental health in adolescent to parent violence (Cottrell & Monk, 2004; Kennair & Mellor, 2007; Kennedy, Edmonds, Dann, & Burnett, 2010; Routt & Anderson, 2011), adolescent dating violence (Vagi, Rothman, Latzman, Tharp, & Breiding, 2013), and adolescent family violence generally (Moulds, Day, Mildred, Miller, & Casey, 2016; Gebo, 2007).

# Methodology

## About the data

### Victoria Police

The Victoria Police Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) is a live operational crime recording system used by Victoria Police. It stores records about criminal offences, family violence incidents and related information including records of intervention orders and family safety notices. Data used in this report was extracted from LEAP on 18 July 2019.

### Youth Justice

To investigate adolescent primary aggressor interactions with the justice system, Victoria Police records were linked with Victorian Youth Justice Client Relationship Information System (CRIS) data. CRIS data was extracted on 4 October 2019, and contains Victorian Youth Justice Order records ranging from 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2018.

### SEIFA data

Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is a product developed by the ABS that ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. The indexes are based on information from the five-yearly Census. This report utilises the ABS 2033.0.55.001 socio-economic indexes publication for the index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) (Victorian ranking) to examine associations between AFV home and socio-economic factors. IRSAD summarises information about the economic and social conditions of people and households within an area, including both relative advantage and disadvantage measures, with a lower score denoting higher prevalence of disadvantage and lower prevalence of advantage indicators. The IRSAD quintiles used in this report assigns a 1-5 scale ranking of Victorian SA1 blocks by how advantaged / lacking disadvantage they are compared with the whole of Victoria.

In this report, IRSAD data is applied to police reported adolescent family violence incidents using the latitude and longitude coordinates where an incident was alleged to have taken place.

## Remoteness Structure

To categorise the geographical locations in which AFV takes place, this report utilised the ABS 1270.0.55.005 Australian Statistical Geography Standard for Remoteness Structure. This standard divides Australia into 5 classes of remoteness on the basis of a measure of relative access to services: major cities of Australia, inner regional Australia, outer regional Australia, remote Australia and very remote Australia. This report further consolidates these structures into major cities or remote or regional areas. Similar to the application of IRSAD ratings, remoteness structure was applied to an incident location at an SA1 area level.

## Population data

Estimate residential population (ERP) data by age is collected from 3101.0 Australian Demographic Statistics, September 2018 (Released 27 March 2019). ERPs for Local Government Area rates in 2018-19 are based on projected population estimates developed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. Population figures used to calculate rates for remoteness structures (Major cities and regional/rural areas) come from 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2017-18 and are based on population figures for 2018.

## Description of populations

Three populations of data are used in this report:

1. Adolescent family violence incidents
2. Unique aggressors and historical justice system contact (Aggressor characteristics and histories cohort)
3. Unique aggressors and justice system outcomes (Outcomes cohort)

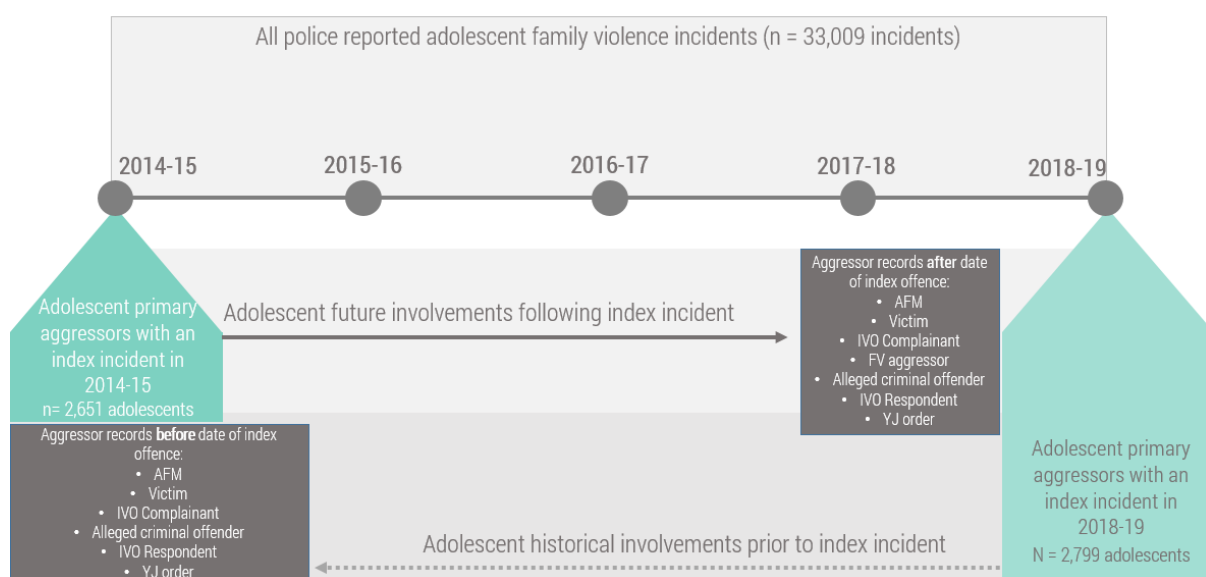


Figure 1: Overview of populations of data used in data snapshot

## Adolescent family violence incidents

Data contained within this report concerning the characteristics of police reported adolescent family violence incidents, including geographic data, is a count of all incidents recorded by Victoria Police between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2019 that involved a primary aggressor aged 18 years or younger. Incident level data contains demographic information about the parties involved in an incident, the types of violence observed or disclosed, and referral actions made by police, geographical attributes and more. Most data included in this report pertains to incidents taking place in the 2018-19 financial year, however some time series data has also been included.

## Aggressor characteristics and histories cohort

To examine attributes about adolescent primary aggressors and their historical involvements with Victoria Police and other Justice System entities, a cohort of unique adolescents who were involved in their first ever (index) family violence incident in the financial year 2018-19 were selected. Information about this cohort includes characteristics about unique primary aggressors and their index incident, as well as involvements they had with Victoria Police, Victorian Family Violence Intervention Orders and Youth Justice **before** the date of their index offence. 2,799 unique adolescents were identified to have an index incident in 2018-19, however four adolescents did not have sex information recorded were removed from the population.

## Outcomes cohort

To examine adolescent future involvements with the justice system following a family violence incident, a cohort of unique aggressors who were recorded with their index family violence incident the financial year 2014-15 were isolated, and incidents or orders involving these individuals after their index incident were queried.

LEAP data used in this report extends to 30 June 2019, and all Victoria Police and Intervention order records were queried for adolescent future involvements up to that date. Youth Justice CRIS data available to assess outcomes extends to 31 December 2018, and therefore outcomes about youth justice orders only pertains to orders up until that date. 2,651 unique adolescents were identified to have an index incident in 2014-15, however two adolescents did not have sex information recorded were removed from the population.

## Statistical analyses

Chi-square analyses were used throughout this report to statistically compare characteristics of adolescent family violence incidents and primary aggressors. Specifically, these analyses were used to identify key differences between:

- family violence incidents involving adult aggressors or adolescent aggressors,
- adolescent family violence incidents occurring in major cities or regional/remote areas,
- adolescent to parent violence involving mothers or fathers,
- male and female adolescent aggressors, and
- recidivist or non-recidivist adolescent aggressors.

Where the significance level (indicated by the symbol  $p$ ) is less than 0.05, this indicates that there was a statistically significant relationship. The closer the significance level is to zero, the less likely it is that the results of the statistical test could have occurred by chance, or conversely, the more likely it is that the results represent true relationships between the factors tested, as opposed to random variation in the data.

## Limitations

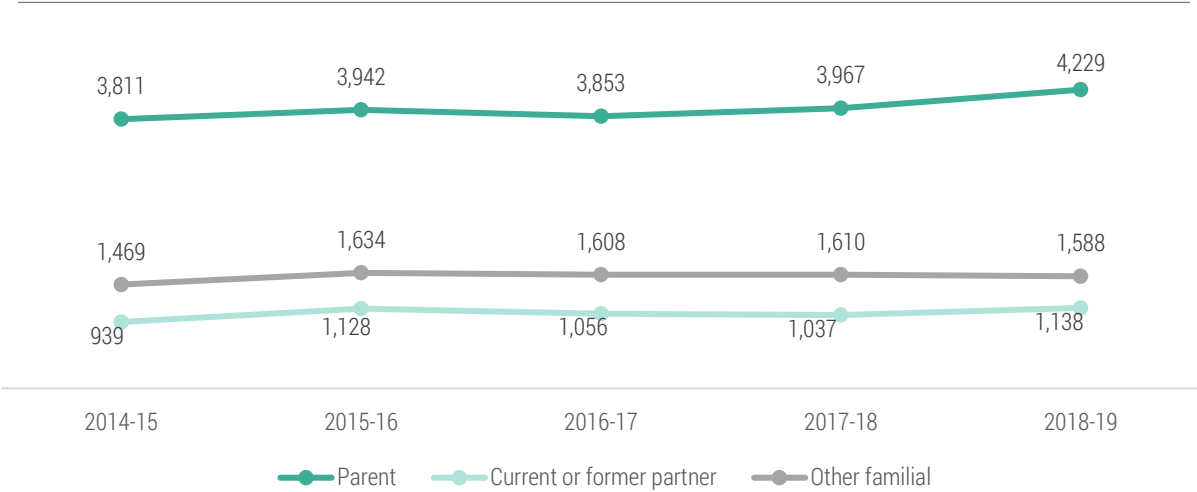
All forms of family violence are believed to be underreported to police, however the Royal Commission into Family Violence acknowledged that AFV may be especially underreported for a variety of reasons (Victorian Government, 2016). Incidents that do come to the attention of police are often reported as a last resort and may represent a pattern of behaviour that has been escalating over a long period of time (Howard & Abbot, 2013). For this reason and more, police reported data may not be well placed to gauge the prevalence of AFV in the community, and characteristics surrounding police reported AFV may represent incidents at the far end of the spectrum with respect to severity. Furthermore, police reported incidents represents a single event of family violence, rather than a pattern of escalating behaviour. Police data therefore will not capture the full range of experiences occurring within a relationship or family affected by family violence.

# Results

## Key findings:

- Adolescent family violence (AFV) accounts for less than ten percent of police reported family violence incidents occurring in Victoria, but the number of AFV incidents recorded increased 11.8% over the past five years.
- Partner violence was the fastest growing type of AFV reported, growing 21.2% from 2014-15 to 2018-19.
- Most AFV incidents involve parents, making up over 60% of all incidents reported to police 2018-19.
- Verbal abuse was the most common recorded type of violence for AFV incidents, however the frequency of this and other types of abuse varied across relationship types.
- Compared with adults, incidents involving adolescents were less likely to involve drug or alcohol use but were more likely to involve primary aggressor mental health problems or suicidality.
- Adolescent partner violence was more likely than adult partner violence to involve criminal offences (excluding breach of order offences) and nearly ten times more likely to involve sexual violence.
- The rate of adolescent family violence was twice as high in regional and rural Victoria compared to major cities. Incidents outside major cities were more likely to involve drug and alcohol use and mental health problems for both primary aggressors and AFMs.
- Nearly half of fathers who were a victim-survivor of an AFV incident had a history as an aggressor of family violence.
- Two in five mothers who were involved in an AFV incident had historically been a victim-survivor of police reported intimate partner violence.
- Two thirds of adolescent primary aggressors had previously had contact with the justice system before their first family violence incident. Over half of adolescent primary aggressors had historical contact with the justice system related to family violence.
- 80% of adolescent primary aggressors had future contact with the justice system following their first AFV incident, and more than half were recorded with future family violence incidents.
- Males were more likely to be recorded with future family violence incident, as was having prior recorded exposure to family violence (as a witness, AFM or complainant).
- Half of adolescent primary aggressors had subsequent involvement with police or courts as a victim of a crime, a victim-survivor of family violence or as a complainant on a family violence intervention order.

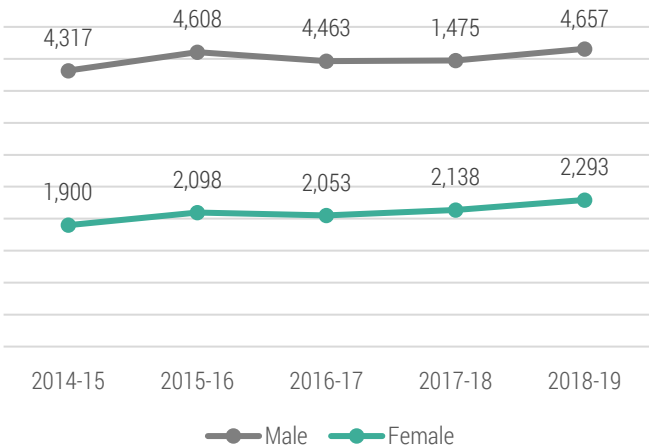
# Overview of adolescent family violence incidents in Victoria



The majority (60.8%) of AFV incidents recorded in 2018-19 involved an adolescent’s parents. Nearly one in four incidents involved a familial relationship other than a parent or a current or former.

Over the past five financial years, the number of police reported family violence incidents involving an adolescent primary aggressor rose 11.8%. The largest growth across relationship types was for incidents occurring between current or former partners, which rose 21.2% from 2014-15, compared with 11.0% for incidents involving parents and 8.1% for other familial relationships.

Over two thirds (67.0%) of AFV incidents in 2018-19 involved a male primary aggressor, however the number of incidents involving female primary aggressors has grown disproportionate to males. Since 2014-15 incidents involving female primary aggressors have grown 20.7%, compared with 7.9% for incidents involving male primary aggressors.



## Parent

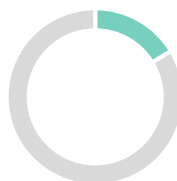
60.8%  
of incidents  
(4,229)



	# of incidents	% of total
<b>Sex of primary aggressor</b>		
Male	2,752	65.1
Female	1,473	34.8
<b>Age of primary aggressor</b>		
0-9	70	1.7
10-13	855	20.2
14-18	3,304	78.1
<b>Sex of affected family member</b>		
Male	930	22.0
Female	3,289	77.8
<b>Age of affected family member</b>		
0-18	≤3	0.0
19-24	5	0.1
25-29	40	0.9
30-34	281	6.6
35-39	736	17.4
40-44	847	20.0
45-49	1,185	28.0
50-54	705	16.7
55-59	271	6.4
60-64	86	2.0
65 and older	60	1.4

## Intimate

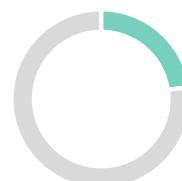
16.4%  
of incidents  
(1,138)



	# of incidents	% of total
<b>Sex of primary aggressor</b>		
Male	818	71.9
Female	320	28.1
<b>Age of primary aggressor</b>		
0-9	≤3	0.2
10-13	18	1.6
14-18	1,117	98.2
<b>Sex of affected family member</b>		
Male	285	25.0
Female	853	75.0
<b>Age of affected family member</b>		
0-9	≤3	0.2
10-13	41	3.6
14-18	696	61.2
19-24	304	26.7
25 and older	76	6.7

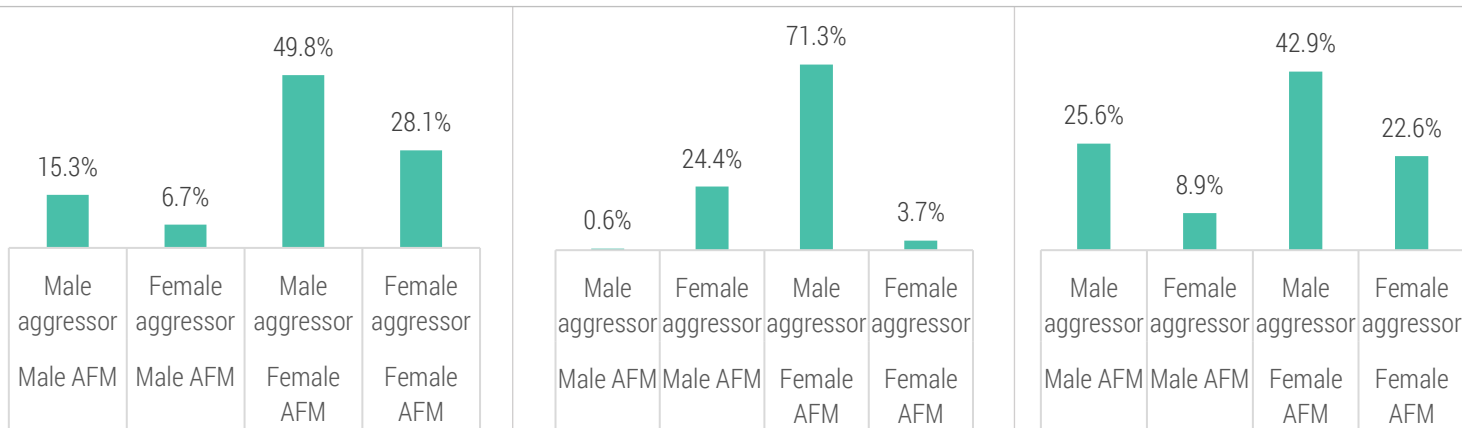
## Other familial

22.8%  
of incidents  
(1,588)



	# of incidents	% of total
<b>Sex of primary aggressor</b>		
Male	1,087	68.5
Female	500	31.5
<b>Age of primary aggressor</b>		
0-9	41	2.6
10-13	263	16.6
14-18	1,284	80.9
<b>Sex of affected family member</b>		
Male	546	34.4
Female	1,036	65.2
<b>Age of affected family member</b>		
0-9	98	6.2
10-13	176	11.1
14-18	318	20.0
19-24	271	17.1
25-29	58	3.7
30-34	43	2.7
35-39	43	2.7
40-44	59	3.7
45-49	74	4.7
50-54	62	3.9
55-59	79	5.0
60-64	82	5.2
65 and older	148	9.3

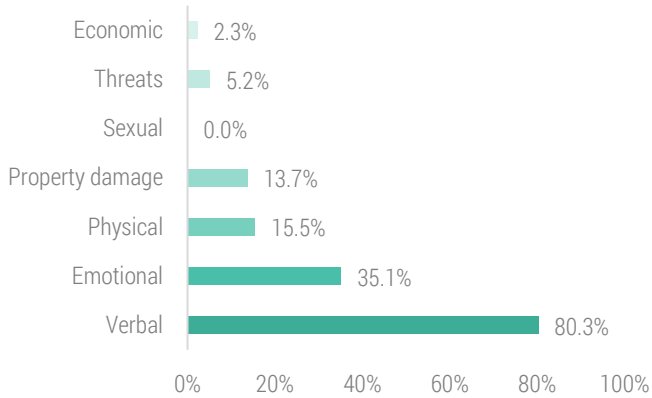
Proportion of total incidents by sex of primary aggressor and affected family member





# Parent

Proportion of total incidents involving the following types of violence



	# of incidents	% of total
<b>Types of violence recorded</b>		
Economic	99	2.3
Threats	219	5.2
Sexual	≤3	0.0
Property damage	580	13.7
Physical	656	15.5
Emotional	1,486	35.1
Verbal	3,394	80.3

<b>Location classification of incident</b>		
Major city	2,832	67.0
Regional or remote	1,397	33.0

<b>Victorian IRSAD quintile of incident location</b>		
1	1,584	37.5
2	967	22.9
3	649	15.3
4	559	13.2
5	447	10.6

Average IRSAD quintile ranking

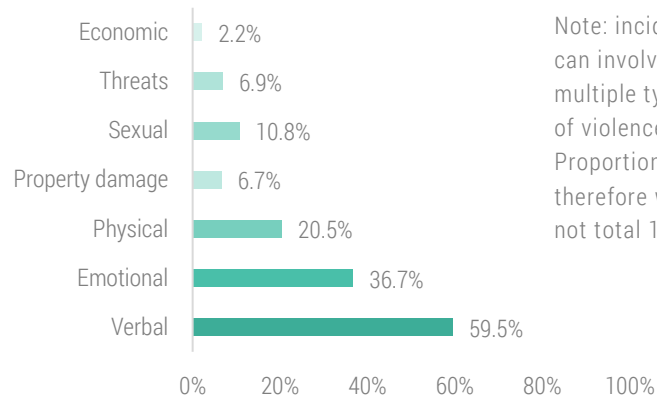
1 (most disadvantaged) 5 (least disadvantaged)



2.4

# Intimate partner

Proportion of total incidents involving the following types of violence



Note: incidents can involve multiple types of violence. Proportions therefore will not total 100%

	# of incidents	% of total
<b>Types of violence recorded</b>		
Economic	25	2.2
Threats	79	6.9
Sexual	123	10.8
Property damage	76	6.7
Physical	233	20.5
Emotional	418	36.7
Verbal	677	59.5

<b>Location classification of incident</b>		
Major city	642	56.4
Regional or remote	496	43.6

<b>Victorian IRSAD quintile of incident location</b>		
1	564	49.6
2	224	19.7
3	143	12.6
4	123	10.8
5	61	5.4

Average IRSAD quintile ranking

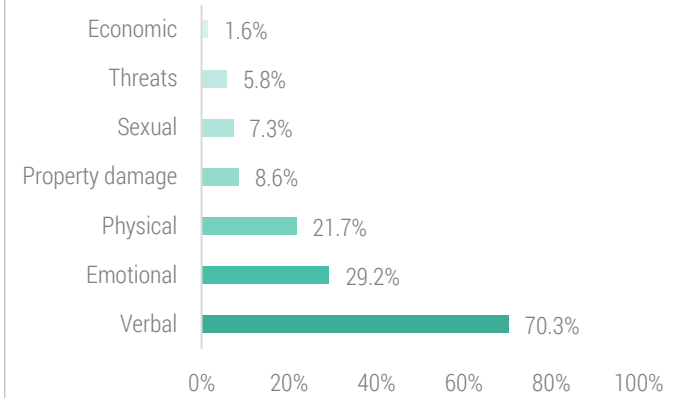
1 (most disadvantaged) 5 (least disadvantaged)



2.0

# Other familial

Proportion of total incidents involving the following types of violence



	# of incidents	% of total
<b>Types of violence recorded</b>		
Economic	25	1.6
Threats	92	5.8
Sexual	116	7.3
Property damage	136	8.6
Physical	345	21.7
Emotional	464	29.2
Verbal	1,116	70.3

<b>Location classification of incident</b>		
Major city	949	59.8
Regional or remote	639	40.2

<b>Victorian IRSAD quintile of incident location</b>		
1	690	43.5
2	389	24.5
3	235	14.8
4	171	10.8
5	95	6.0

Average IRSAD quintile ranking

1 (most disadvantaged) 5 (least disadvantaged)



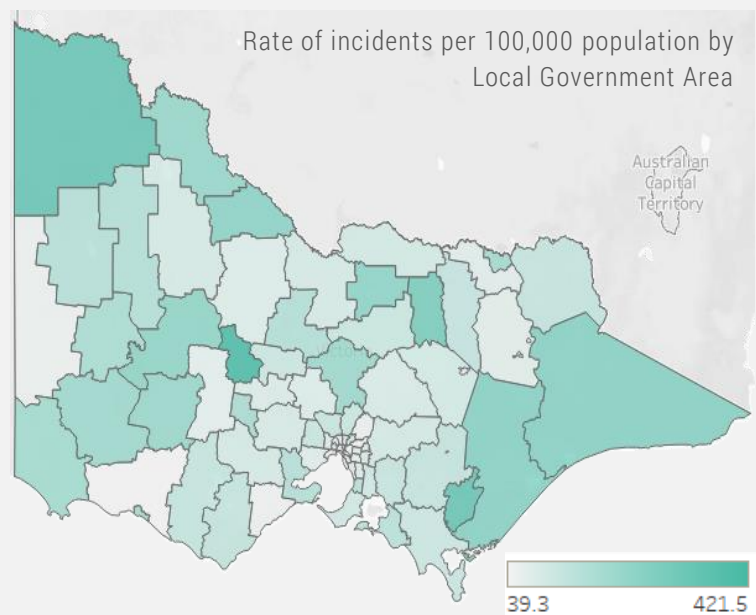
2.1

# Where does adolescent family violence occur?

The below data concerns 6,955 police reported AFV incidents which took place between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2019

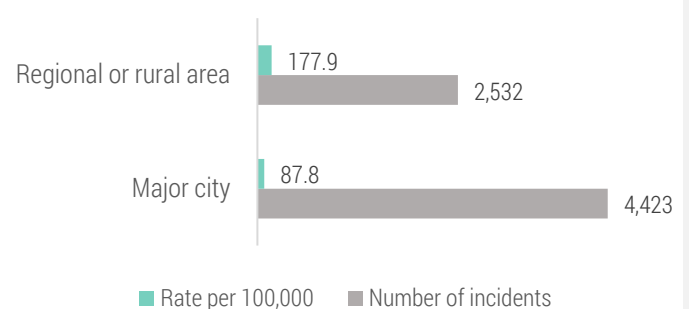
Top 40 Local Government Areas by rate per 100,000 population

Local Government Area	# of incidents	rate per 100,000
Central Goldfields	56	421.5
Mildura	195	348.4
Latrobe	262	346.5
Benalla	43	305.4
East Gippsland	126	266.3
Wellington	118	266.3
Gannawarra	27	256.5
Greater Shepparton	169	253.6
Northern Grampians	28	247.1
Swan Hill	48	231.6
Ararat	27	228.0
Mitchell	101	218.2
Southern Grampians	35	217.2
Wodonga	87	205.5
Glenelg	40	203.6
Warrnambool	70	199.2
Horsham	38	190.5
Ballarat	205	187.3
Greater Bendigo	202	170.9
Yarriambiack	11	166.7
Greater Geelong	421	162.8
Hindmarsh	9	161.2
Bass Coast	57	157.9
Frankston	219	152.9
Colac-Otway	29	134.8
Towong	8	131.7
Baw Baw	70	131.4
Corangamite	21	131.4
Wangaratta	38	129.8
Cardinia	142	126.3
Melton	204	123.9
Hume	285	122.3
Strathbogie	13	121.0
Whittlesea	279	120.8
South Gippsland	35	117.4
Mount Alexander	23	117.1
Casey	374	106
Mornington Peninsula	176	105.1
Moira	31	103.6
Mansfield	9	98.8



92.1% (6,408) of incidents took place in a residential location

The rate of incidents per 100,000 was **two times higher** in regional or rural Victoria



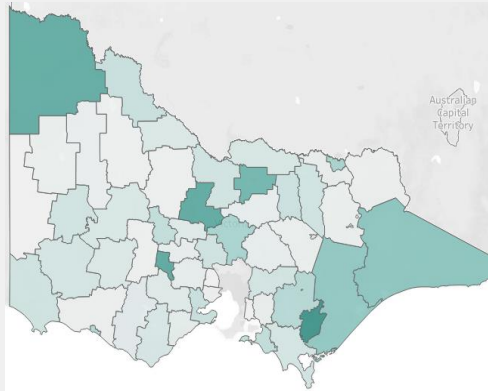
40.8% (2,838) of incidents took place in the lowest ranked locations for socio-economic advantage and disadvantage

SEIFA quintile	#	%
1	2,838	40.8%
2	1,580	22.7%
3	1,027	14.8%
4	853	12.3%
5	603	8.7%

# Incidents in regional and rural Victoria

The rate of police reported adolescent family violence was two times higher in regional or rural areas as major cities, supporting that non-urban areas are disproportionately impacted by AFV. Incidents taking place in regional or rural areas in 2018-19 were compared with those in major cities, and revealed that incidents outside major cities more often involved drug and alcohol use and mental health concerns for both the primary aggressor and AFM. Incidents taking place in rural or regional areas were also less often directed against a parent, and more likely to involve an intimate partner or a different familial relationship.

Number of incidents taking place in regional and rural Victoria in 2018-19



## Top 20 rural or regional towns by number of AFV incidents recorded

Town name	# of incidents
Mildura	148
Shepparton	112
Morwell	91
Traralgon	81
Warrnambool	69
Wodonga	62
Sale	61
Wendouree	50
Maryborough	48
Moe	45
Sebastopol	42
Bairnsdale	38
Benalla	38
Kangaroo Flat	36
Horsham	35
Swan Hill	35
Hamilton	33
Mooroopna	33
Wangaratta	29
Warragul	29

Incidents which took place outside of major cities also typically occurred in more disadvantaged neighbourhoods. 61.1% of incidents in regional or rural areas took place in the lowest ranked socio-economic quintiles, compared with 29.6% of incidents occurring in major cities.

Incidents in rural or regional areas less often involved verbal abuse, but had a higher occurrence of sexual violence, threats, property damage and criminal offences related to the family violence incident. Both affected family members and primary aggressors in regional or rural areas were less likely to receive a formal referral from police than for incidents which occurred in a major city.

	Regional/rural		Major city		Significance
	#	%	#	%	p
<b>Primary aggressor sex</b>					
Male	1,665	65.8	2,992	67.6	<i>N.S</i>
Female	866	34.2	1,427	32.3	<i>N.S</i>
<b>AFM sex</b>					
Male	636	25.1	1,125	25.4	<i>N.S</i>
Female	1,891	74.7	3,287	74.3	<i>N.S</i>
<b>Primary aggressor risk factors</b>					
Drug use	757	29.9	1,091	24.7	<0.0001
Alcohol use	345	13.6	517	11.7	<0.05
Mental health	927	36.6	1,371	31.0	<0.0001
Suicidality	199	7.9	308	7.0	<i>N.S</i>
<b>AFM risk factors</b>					
Drug use	314	12.4	353	8.0	<0.0001
Alcohol use	277	10.9	329	7.4	<0.0001
Mental health	456	18.0	572	12.9	<0.0001
<b>Relationship description</b>					
Parent	1,397	55.2	2,832	64.0	<0.0001
Current or former partner	496	19.6	642	14.5	<0.0001
Other familial	639	25.2	949	21.5	<0.001
<b>Referral actions taken by police</b>					
Formal referral for AFM	2,131	84.2	3,827	86.5	<0.01
Formal referral for primary aggressor	1,945	76.8	3,546	80.2	<0.001

## Average IRSAD quintile ranking – Major cities

1 (most disadvantaged) 5 (least disadvantaged)



2.6

## Average IRSAD quintile ranking – Regional and rural areas

1 (most disadvantaged) 5 (least disadvantaged)

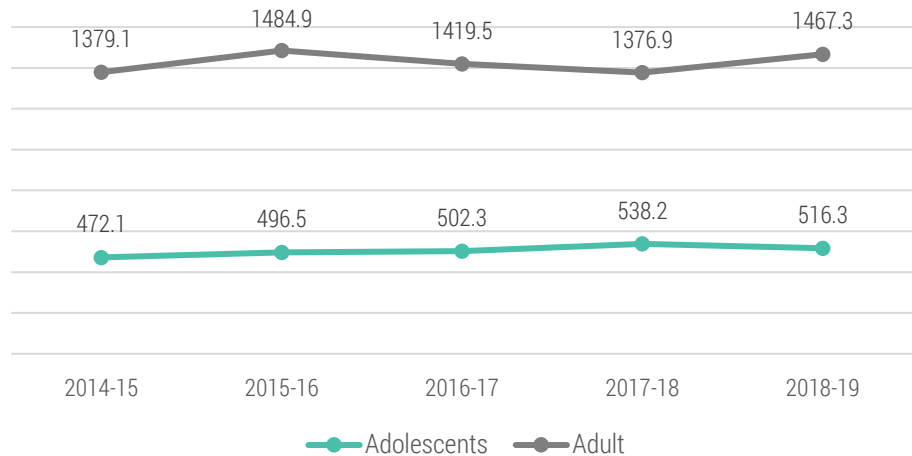


1.6

	Regional/rural		Major city		Significance
Types of violence	#	%	#	%	p
Economic	51	2.0	98	2.2	<i>N.S</i>
Threats	161	6.4	229	5.2	<0.05
Sexual	115	4.5	126	2.8	<0.001
Property damage	329	13.0	463	10.5	<0.05
Physical	446	17.6	788	17.8	<i>N.S</i>
Emotional	886	35.0	1,482	33.5	<i>N.S</i>
Verbal	1,805	71.3	3,382	76.5	<0.0001
Related criminal offence	1,102	43.5	1,604	36.3	<0.0001

# Does AFV differ from adult family violence?

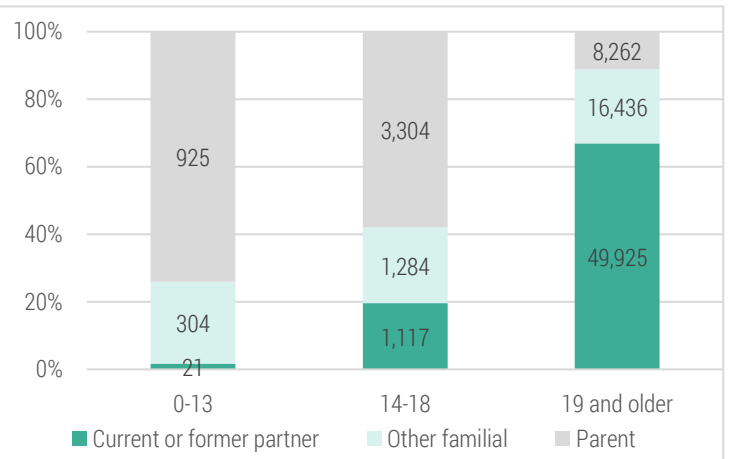
Family violence incidents involving an adolescent primary aggressor account for 8.4% of all family violence occurring between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2019. During this time period, the rate of incidents per 100,000 population was nearly three times higher for adults than adolescents.



		2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Adolescent	Number of incidents	6,220	6,708	6,517	6,616	6,955
	Rate per 100,000	472.1	496.5	502.3	538.2	516.3
Adult	Number of incidents	63,818	70,438	69,067	68,595	74,636
	Rate per 100,000	1379.1	1484.9	1419.5	1376.9	1,467.3

## Relationship between parties

The majority of incidents involving an adolescent primary aggressor were against a parent, but as the age of aggressors rose, so did in the proportion of incidents involving a current or former partner.



Proportion of total incidents occurring in 2018-19 by primary aggressor age and relationship to AFM

## Primary aggressor and AFM risk factors

AFV incidents were **less often** associated with known or suspected substance use by either the primary aggressor or AFM and less often involved AFM mental health concerns. However AFV incidents **more often** recorded primary aggressors with a mental health condition or suicidality than incidents involving adult aggressors.

Primary aggressor risk factors	Adolescents		Adults		Significance p
	#	%	#	%	
Drug use	1,848	26.6	21,679	29.0	<0.0001
Alcohol use	862	12.4	21,807	29.2	<0.0001
Mental health	2,298	33.0	17,504	23.5	<0.0001
Suicidality	507	7.3	3,682	4.9	<0.0001
AFM risk factors					
Drug use	667	9.6	10133	13.6	<0.0001
Alcohol use	606	8.7	11454	15.3	<0.0001
Mental health	1,028	14.8	12,510	16.8	<0.0001

## Primary aggressor and AFM sex

The majority of family violence incidents involving adolescent primary aggressors were perpetrated by males, however this dynamic was less pronounced in incidents with adult aggressors. AFV incidents were significantly more likely to involve a female primary aggressor. There were no observed differences in sex for affected family members.

AFM sex	Adolescents		Adults		Significance p
	#	%	#	%	
Male	1,761	25.3	18,656	25.0	N.S
Female	5,178	74.5	55,862	74.8	
Primary aggressor sex					
Male	4,657	67.0	57,414	76.9	<0.0001
Female	2,293	33.0	17,164	23.0	

## Does adolescent partner violence differ from adult partner violence?

AFV incidents involving a current or former partner have grown more than other familial violence in the past five years, yet there is limited information in Australia about the nature and extent of partner violence involving adolescents.

The table below compares incidents of partner violence in 2018-19 involving adolescents or adults to examine differences between the two populations.

	Adolescents		Adults		Significance
	#	%	#	%	p
<b>Primary aggressor sex</b>					
Male	818	71.9	40,506	81.1	<0.0001
Female	320	28.1	9,383	18.8	
<b>AFM sex</b>					
Male	285	25.0	9,584	19.2	<0.0001
Female	853	75.0	40,266	80.7	
<b>Primary aggressor risk factors</b>					
Drug use	336	29.5	13,542	27.1	N.S
Alcohol use	193	17.0	15,128	30.3	<0.0001
Mental health	239	21.0	10,786	21.6	N.S
Suicidality	85	7.5	2,862	5.2	<0.05
Controlling/Jealous behaviour	320	28.1	16,835	33.7	=0.0001
<b>AFM risk factors</b>					
Drug use	213	18.7	7,874	15.8	N.S
Alcohol use	138	12.1	8,739	17.5	<0.0001
Mental health	183	16.1	9,014	18.1	N.S
<b>Relationship description</b>					
Current partner	818	71.9	29,167	58.4	<0.0001
Former partner	320	28.1	20,758	41.6	
<b>Location attributes</b>					
Major city	642	56.4	34,192	68.5	<0.0001
Regional or remote area	496	43.6	15,726	31.5	
Residential location	856	75.2	43,585	87.3	<0.0001
Community location	225	19.8	4,611	9.2	
<b>Type of violence or abuse</b>					
Economic	25	2.2	2,970	5.9	<0.0001
Sexual	123	10.8	760	1.5	<0.0001
Physical	233	20.5	10,942	21.9	N.S
Emotional	418	36.7	20,775	41.6	<0.001
Verbal	677	59.5	31,580	63.3	<0.05
Related criminal offence <sup>1</sup>	486	42.7	17,472	35.0	<0.0001
<b>Referral actions by police</b>					
Formal referral for AFM	918	80.7	44,387	88.9	<0.0001
Formal referral for primary aggressor	822	72.2	40,215	80.6	<0.0001

<sup>1</sup> Excludes criminal offences related to breach of orders

**Results:** Unlike partner violence associated with adults, incidents involving adolescents are less likely to involve a male aggressor and a female affected family member, however these groups still characterise the majority of incidents. Incidents are also more likely to occur between current rather than former partners, and take place at a community location or in a rural or regional area. Incidents involving adolescents were **less likely** to involve alcohol use from either the primary aggressor or victim-survivor and less likely to involve aggressor controlling or jealous behaviour, but were slightly more often associated with primary aggressor suicidality. Incidents committed by adolescents were typically less often associated with non-physical violence (Economic abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse) but a much higher proportion of incidents involve sexual violence. Excluding breach of order offences, adolescent partner violence was also more often associated with related criminal offences. The most common criminal offences reported were **common assault** (152 incidents), **rape** (112 incidents) and **serious assault** (88 incidents). In adolescent partner violence, most incidents recorded a formal referral being made for both primary aggressors and AFM, however adolescents were less likely to receive a referral than incidents with an adult aggressor.

### Proportion of total AFV and adult family violence incidents occurring in 2018-19 by types of violence recorded

■ AFV ■ Adult

#### Physical

17.7%

22.7%

#### Sexual

3.5%

2.2%

#### Economic

2.1%

5.2%

#### Emotional

34.0%

38.8%

#### Verbal

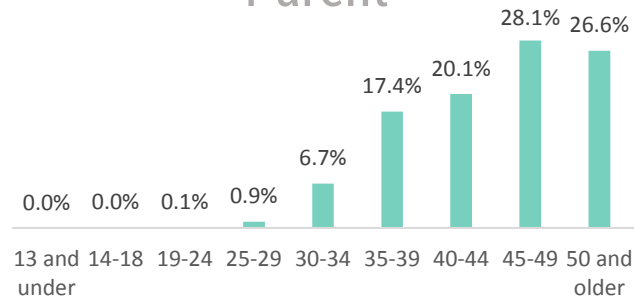
74.6%

63.2%

# What do we know about affected family members?

The below data counts affected family members for all AFV incidents taking place between July 2018 and 30 June 2019.

## Parent



	Males	Females	Total
Median age (years)	48	45	45
Number of unique AFMs	701	2,198	2,908
Number of incidents	930	3,289	4,229

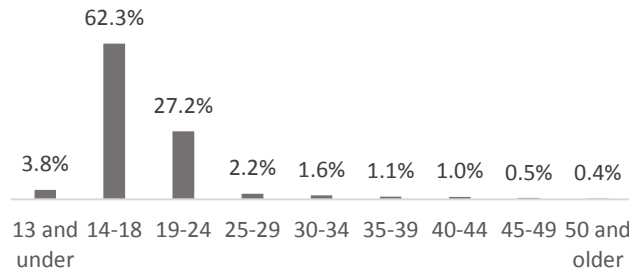
There were 2,891 parents who experienced a police reported AFV incident in 2018-19. The majority of unique affected family members were female (75.6%) and aged 45 or older (55.7%).

Female affected family members were typically younger than male AFMs, with the median age being 45, three years younger than the median age for males.

### Recorded risk factors

AFM risk factors	Parents	
	#	%
Drug use	327	7.7
Alcohol use	263	8.6
Mental health	653	15.4

## Current or former partner



	Males	Females	Total
Median age (years)	20	17	18
Number of unique AFMs	217	606	823
Number of incidents	285	853	1,138

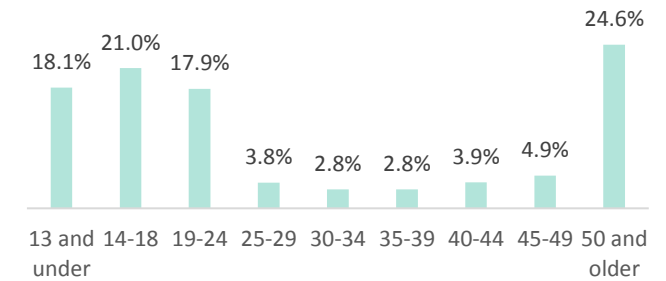
There were 808 current or former partners who experienced an AFV incident in 2018-19. The majority of unique affected family members were female (73.6%) and aged 14 to 18 (62.3%).

Female affected family members were typically younger than male AFMs, with the median age being 17, three years younger than the median age for males.

### Recorded risk factors

AFM risk factors	Current/former partner	
	#	%
Drug use	213	18.7
Alcohol use	138	12.1
Mental health	183	16.0

## Other familial



	Males	Females	Total
Median age (years)	20	23	21
Number of unique AFMs	486	880	1,371
Number of incidents	546	1,036	1,588

There were 1,308 unique individuals who experienced an AFV incident in 2018-19 and were not a parent or partner of the aggressor.

This group was the most heterogeneous demographically of all AFMs. Affected family members who were not a parent or partner of the aggressor were less often female (64.2%) and had a wider range of ages than the other groups, with most AFMs aged 19 or under or 50 and older.

### Recorded risk factors

AFM risk factors	Other familial	
	#	%
Drug use	127	8.0
Alcohol use	106	6.7
Mental health	192	12.1



# Parental abuse amidst other violence in the home

In its final report, the Royal Commission into Family Violence urged that “[a]ll parts of the family violence system need to recognise that young people can be both victims and users of violence in the home, sometimes at the same time” (Victoria State Government, 2016, p.165).

To investigate the extent to which adolescent to parent violence may co-occur with other violence in the home, the following indicators were assessed using a population of 1,682 unique primary aggressors who were recorded with an index incident against a parent in 2018-19.

## Indicators of violence within the home

### • History of family violence:

- Historical records of parents were assessed to determine if they had been recorded as a primary aggressor of family violence, a victim survivor of partner violence or a complainant on an intervention order **before** experiencing adolescent to parent violence.
- Primary aggressors of AFV were assessed to determine if they were recorded as a witness to family violence, an AFM in a family violence incident or a complainant on an FVIO or safety notice prior to their index incident.

### • Bi-directional violence:

- Bi-directional violence refers to relationships where both parties use violence against one another.
- A bi-directional violence flag was applied to parent-child relationships to identify relationships where parents had also been recorded by police for family violence incidents perpetrated against their child.

### Active Family Violence Intervention order or safety notice involving third party

- To gauge recency of violence and disruption in the home, incidents of violence against parents were assessed to determine if the parent, adolescent aggressor or both were a protected person on an FVIO against a third party that was active at the date of the incident.

Sex of parent	Mothers		Fathers		Significance
	#	%	#	%	p
<b>Historical involvement with family violence</b>					
As a primary aggressor	381	29.3	178	46.7	<0.0001
As an affected family member of intimate partner violence	511	39.3	54	14.2	<0.0001
As a complainant on a family violence intervention order or safety notice	553	42.5	60	15.7	<0.0001
<b>Adolescent historical involvement with family violence</b>					
As a witness to a family violence incident	452	34.7	112	29.4	N.S
As an affected family member	308	23.7	100	26.2	N.S
As a complainant on a family violence intervention order or safety notice	510	39.2	123	32.3	<0.05
<b>Indication of bi-directional violence between parties</b>					
Yes	166	12.8	73	19.2	<0.01
<b>Active FVIO or safety notice involving third party</b>					
Parent as complainant	223	17.1	16	4.2	<0.0001
Primary aggressor as complainant	219	16.8	41	10.8	<0.01
Both parties as complainant	162	12.5	9	2.4	<0.0001

## Findings

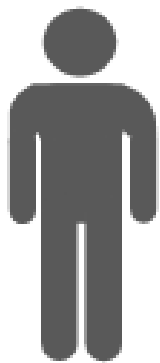
Many parents and primary aggressors of adolescent to parent violence had historical involvement with police reported family violence incidents. Overall, fathers were significantly more likely to have a history as a primary aggressor of family violence (46.7% of fathers, compared with 29.3% of mothers), and mothers were more like to have been recorded as victim-survivor of police reported intimate partner violence or having been a complainant on a FVIO or safety notice.

Roughly a third of adolescent primary aggressors with an index incident against their parent had historically been recorded as a witness to a family violence incident, and many also had a history as an affected family member of a family violence incident. 14.2% of adolescent primary aggressors were found to have evidence of bi-directional violence within their parental relationship, and one in five incidents involving a father had evidence of bi-directional violence.

19.5% of index incidents took place while either a parent or primary aggressor (or both) were a protected person on an active family violence intervention order involving a third party respondent. Over ten percent of incidents involving mothers took place while both the adolescent and their mother were protected persons on an intervention order, compared with roughly two percent of incidents involving fathers.

# What do we know about primary aggressors?

The below data concerns 2,795 adolescent primary aggressors who committed their first ever family violence incident between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2019



65.9% of primary aggressors were male (1,841)



34.1% of primary aggressors were female (954)

There were **2,795** adolescents who were recorded with their first ever police reported AFV incident in 2018-19

## Demographics

Age group	Males	Females
0-9	71	15
10-13	361	234
14-18	1,409	705
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,841</b>	<b>954</b>

## Recorded risk factors

The majority of adolescent offenders did not have any of the listed risk factors recorded by police, with males being slightly more often, but not significantly, associated with no recorded risk factors. Adolescents who did have a recorded risk factor were more likely to experience **mental health related issues**, with females in particular being significantly more likely to experience mental health concerns and suicidality.

Primary aggressor risk factors	Males		Females		Significance
	#	%	#	%	p
Drug use	308	16.7	150	15.7	<i>N.S</i>
Alcohol use	162	8.8	92	9.2	<i>N.S</i>
Mental health	453	24.6	301	31.6	=0.0001
Suicidality	96	5.2	84	8.8	>0.001
Controlling behaviour	261	14.2	127	13.3	<i>N.S</i>
No risk factor recorded	1,004	54.5	483	50.6	<i>N.S</i>

## Types of violence used

Overall AFV incidents were most often associated with non-physical violence, in particular **verbal** and **emotional abuse**. Most types of violence **did not vary significantly** across sexes, however males were more likely to be associated with **sexual abuse**, and females with **verbal abuse**. The overwhelming majority of female aggressor AFV incidents involved verbal abuse.

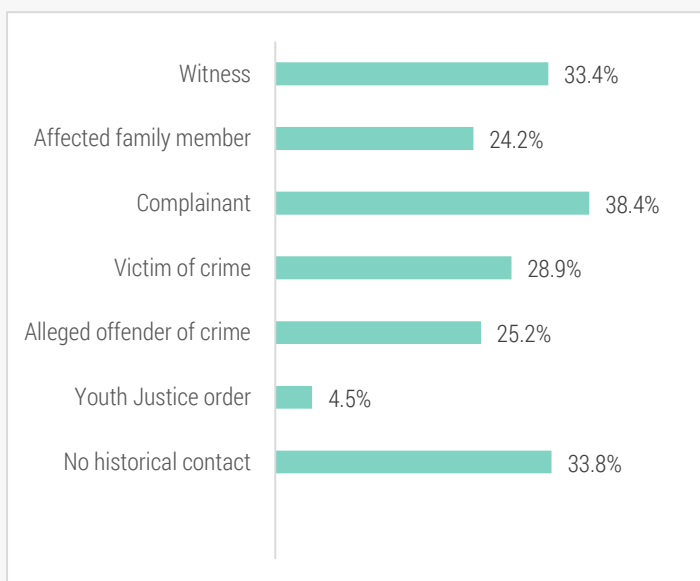
Types of violence recorded	Males		Females		Significance
	#	%	#	%	p
Economic	26	1.4	16	1.7	<i>N.S</i>
Emotional	587	31.9	327	34.3	<i>N.S</i>
Physical	283	15.4	121	12.7	<i>N.S</i>
Sexual	158	8.6	14	1.5	<0.0001
Verbal	1,283	69.7	783	82.1	<0.0001



## Historical contact with the justice system

Nearly two thirds (1,838) of 2,795 adolescent aggressors recorded with their first police reported AFV incident in 2018-19 had historical contact with the justice system, and of those with historical contact, a further two thirds (1,254) were recorded as having multiple types of contact prior to their index incident. Over half (1,470) of adolescents had been recorded as a witness, affected family member and/or protected person prior to their first family violence incident.

When comparing male and female adolescent aggressors, females were more likely to be associated with direct or indirect victimisation, including having witnessed family violence, been a victim-survivor of family violence (AFM), been a protected person on a FVIO or safety notice, or been a victim of a crime. Males were more likely than females to be associated with criminal conduct or having received a youth justice order. Overall most adolescent primary aggressors did not have a history of criminal offences or punitive orders.



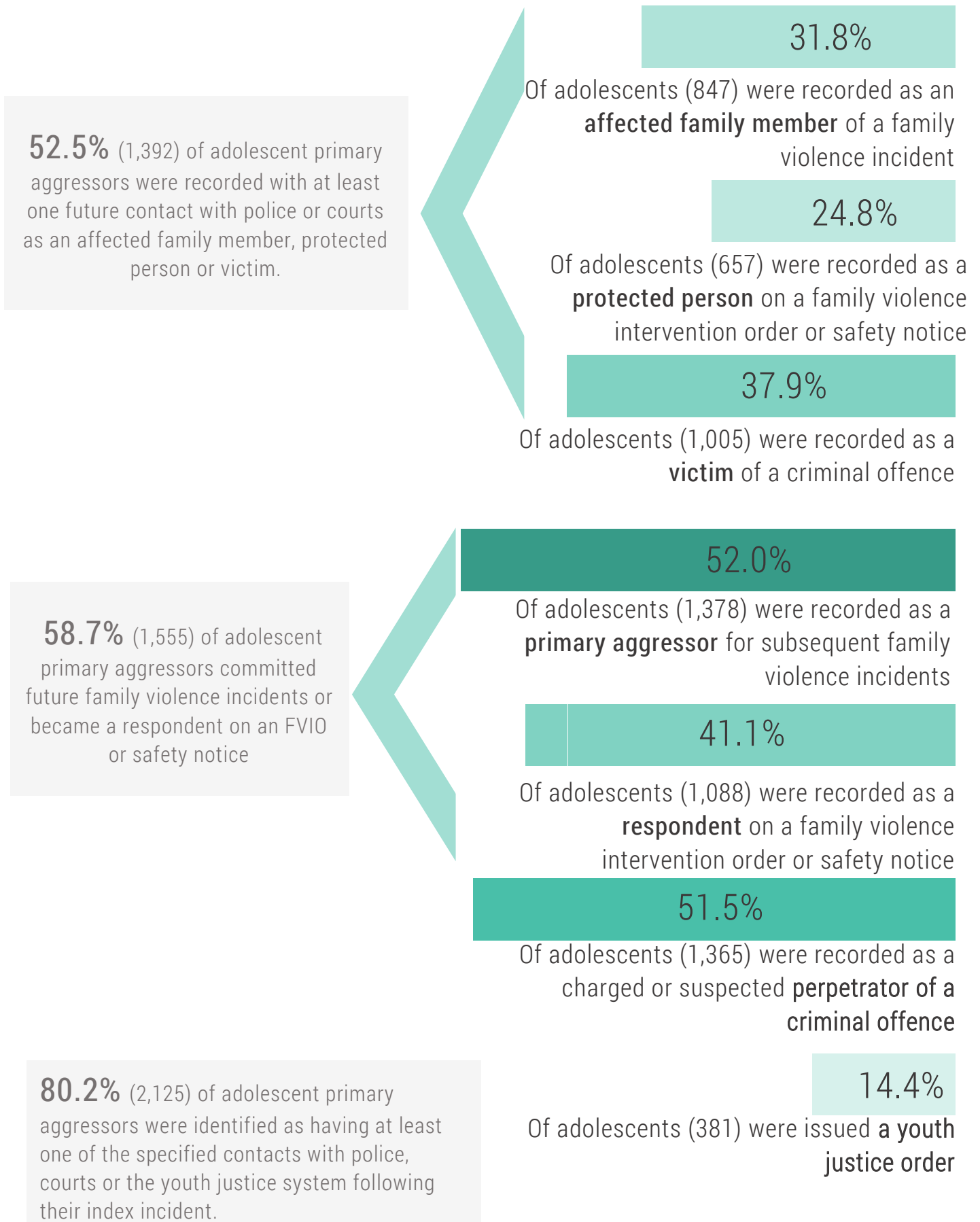
Historical involvements	#	%
Witness	933	33.8
Affected family member	677	24.2
Victim of crime	807	28.9
Complainant on FVIO or safety notice	1,074	38.4
Alleged offender of a criminal offence	703	25.2
Youth justice order	126	4.5

Number of involvement types	#	%
0 (No contact)	957	34.2
1	584	20.9
2	507	18.1
3	364	13.0
4 or more	383	13.7

Recorded contact with Justice System prior to first AFV incident	Males		Females		Significance p
	#	%	#	%	
Witness of a family violence incident	585	31.8	348	36.5	<0.05
Affected Family Member of a family violence incident	347	18.8	330	34.6	<0.0001
Complainant on a Family Violence Intervention Order or Safety Notice	658	35.7	416	43.6	<0.0001
Victim of a criminal offence	479	26.0	330	34.6	<0.0001
Alleged offender of a criminal offence	516	28.0	193	20.2	<0.0001
Youth justice order	107	5.8	19	2.0	<0.0001
No identified contact with justice system	654	35.5	303	31.8	N.S

# Primary aggressor outcomes

The below data concerns 2,649 adolescent primary aggressors who committed their first ever family violence incident between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2015. Outcomes are assessed based on future justice system involvements which took place **after** their index incident



# Family violence recidivism

1,378 (52.0%) adolescent primary aggressors who had an index incident in 2014-15 went on to be recorded as an aggressor during future family violence incidents. Demographic details concerning recidivist adolescent family violence aggressors are outlined in the table below:

Sex	Age at index	#	%
Male	0-9	18	1.9
	10-13	205	21.2
	14-18	742	76.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Female	0-9	≤3	0.5
	10-14	109	26.4
	15-18	303	73.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Most recidivist aggressors (65.3%) went on to be associated with more than one family violence incident within 5 years following their index incident. The number of incidents recorded following their index incident are broken down in the below table:

Number of recidivist incidents recorded	#	%
1	478	34.7
2	262	19.0
3	159	11.5
4	117	8.5
5 or more	362	26.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,378</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Results also found that adolescents who received a formal referral from police following their index incident were more likely to have future incidents recorded, although the reasons for this require further exploration.

Adolescents with any kind of historical exposure to family violence were more likely to be recidivists. This included adolescents who witnessed family violence, had a history as an AFM prior to their index offence, or who were a protected person on an FVIO or safety notice. Adolescents whose index offence involved in a bi-directionally violent relationship were also more likely to become recidivists.

	Recidivism		No future incidents		Significance
	#	%	#	%	p
<b>Primary aggressor sex</b>					
Male	965	70.0	817	64.3	<0.0001
Female	413	30.0	454	35.7	
<b>Location of incident</b>					
Major city	850	61.7	784	63.6	<0.001
Regional or rural area	528	38.3	398	31.3	
<b>Primary aggressor risk factors</b>					
Drug use	360	26.1	164	12.9	<0.0001
Alcohol use	206	14.9	142	11.2	<0.01
Mental health	371	26.2	282	22.2	<0.05
<b>Relationship description</b>					
Parent	848	61.5	6718	56.5	<0.01
Current or former partner	201	14.6	184	14.5	N.S
Other familial	329	23.9	368	29.0	<0.01
<b>Aggressor history and outcome factors</b>					
Formal referral made for primary aggressor after index incident	1,012	73.4	833	65.5	<0.0001
History as witness of FV	368	26.7	238	18.7	<0.0001
History as AFM of FV	370	26.9	217	17.1	<0.0001
History as complainant on FVIO or safety notice	541	39.3	351	27.6	<0.0001
Indicator for reciprocal violence	324	23.5	175	13.8	<0.0001

Recidivist and non-recidivist adolescent aggressors were assessed to identify differences between these populations.

Overall, recidivists were more likely to be male, and were more likely to have an index incident which noted primary aggressor substance use or mental health problems. Adolescent aggressors whose index incident took place in a regional or rural area were also more likely to be recidivists, as were adolescents who index incident involved their parents.

Results also found that adolescents who received a formal referral from police following their index incident were more likely to have future incidents recorded, although the reasons for this require further exploration.

# Discussion

## Policy Implications

### Opportunity for early interventions

One of the most striking findings from this study was that the majority of primary aggressors and victim-survivors of AFV had prior contact with the justice system before an adolescent's first family violence incident. 52.5% of primary aggressors were recorded by Victoria Police as a witness or victim-survivor of a family violence incident, or as a protected person on a family violence safety notice or intervention order. This supports existing literature linking exposure to family violence with later offending behaviour, but it also reveals that the justice system has direct contact with roughly half of adolescent primary aggressors before their behaviour escalates to a police reported family violence incident. Child witnesses, affected family members and protected persons on FVIOs therefore represent an opportunity for early intervention efforts to mitigate eventual re-engagement with the justice system as an adolescent aggressor of family violence.

### Poor outcomes and familial needs

A recent study examining Victorian service responses to adolescent family violence aggressors found that the current response system does not 'offer opportunities for early intervention or pathways for non-punitive rehabilitative responses', and that direct engagement with the justice system 'rarely offered long-term solutions or increased security for families or the young people themselves' (Fitz-Gibbon, Elliott, & Maher, 2018). Data included in this report supports that most adolescent perpetrators re-engage with the justice system following AFV perpetration, and the majority go on to have contact as both victim-survivors and offenders.

Over half of adolescent aggressors went on to commit future family violence incidents and criminal offences, and half of aggressors were also recorded as affected family members, victims of crime or protected persons on an FVIO following their index incident. The range of outcomes experienced by adolescents therefore reveals a more complex picture than a linear victim to offender pathway. It suggests that an adolescent's risk for victimisation and abuse is not alleviated upon their transition to aggressor, and that there is a need for system responses that effectively mitigate an adolescent's risk of re-engagement both as an aggressor and as a victim-survivor.

This report also found evidence that some types of AFV, in particular adolescent to parent violence, may be taking place amidst a broader atmosphere of familial conflict. Nearly half of fathers involved in an AFV incident had a history as a primary aggressor at a police attended family violence incident, and nearly 40% of mothers had been a victim-survivor of intimate partner violence. Adolescents who had historical exposure to family violence, including as a witness, affected family member or protected person were more likely become recidivist aggressors than those without prior documented exposure. The results suggest that adolescent re-engagement with the justice system is impacted by dynamics which exist within their familial environment.

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