



MEDIA RELEASE

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High 'drop-off' rate of sexual offences through the justice system revealed

Only one in seven incidents of sexual offending reported to police progress through the justice system to be proven in court, research released today by the Crime Statistics Agency shows.

The study found most alleged sexual offence incidents do not progress past police investigation, with police identifying an offender for half of incidents reported to them and charging an offender for one in four.

Crime Statistics Agency Chief Statistician Fiona Dowsley said the findings for this Victorian study were aligned with other studies on the attrition of sexual offences across the criminal justice system.

"Alleged incidents of rape and sexual assault are significantly under-reported and those that are reported have a low likelihood of resulting in a conviction," Ms Dowsley said.

"Our study found most incidents reported to police never reach court, and for those that do it can take years for matters to be finalised," she said.

"This issue is not unique to Victoria: most studies of sexual offence attrition through the criminal justice system find less than one-fifth of incidents reported to police result in a conviction in court."

The research showed one in five sexual offence incidents reported to police was withdrawn by the victim survivor prior to the conclusion of police investigation.

Rape incidents were the least likely to progress through the justice system, with 10% of rape incidents reported to police proven in court, compared with 15% of indecent assault incidents.

Overall, incidents where the perpetrator was a stranger, that involved other, non-sexual offences, and that occurred in regional Victoria, were more likely to progress through the justice system.

Background

The paper [Attrition of sexual offence incidents through the Victorian criminal justice system: 2021 update](#) was released today. The study examines all incidents of sexual offending reported to police between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2017.

For further information please contact:

Samantha Walker – Lead Data Analyst, Research & Analytics
Phone: (03) 8684 1833 Email: Samantha.j.walker@crimestatistics.vic.gov.au