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Crime Victimization, Australia, 2017-18

EXPLANATORY NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 The statistics presented in this release were compiled from data collected in the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) 2017--18 Multipurpose Household Survey (MPHS). The MPHS is conducted each financial year throughout Australia from July to June as a supplement to the ABS' monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS) and is designed to provide annual statistics for a number of small, self-contained topics.

2 In 2017–18, the topics were:

- Patient Experiences in Australia
- Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events
- Participation in Selected Cultural Activities
- Home Security Measures
- Crime Victimization
- Income (Personal, Partner's, Household).

3 For all topics, general demographic information such as age, sex, labour force characteristics, education and income are also available.

4 This publication covers the Crime Victimization topic and presents details about the prevalence of a selected range of personal and household crimes, including the sociodemographic characteristics of persons experiencing the selected crimes, experiences of repeat victimisation, and the characteristics of the most recent incident of each crime type experienced. Some estimates from previous iterations of the Crime Victimization Survey are also included in this publication.

5 The Crime Victimization Survey is being conducted again as part of the MPHS for the reference period 2018–19, with results expected to be released in early 2020.

SCOPE

6 The scope of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) is restricted to people aged 15 years and over and excludes the following:

- members of the Australian permanent defence forces
- certain diplomatic personnel of overseas governments, usually excluded from census and estimated resident population counts
- overseas residents in Australia
- members of non-Australian defence forces (and their dependants).

7 In addition, the 2017–18 MPHS excluded the following from scope:

- people living in households in the Indigenous Community Strata (ICS)

- people living in non-private dwellings (e.g. hotels, university residences, students at boarding schools, patients in hospitals, inmates of prisons and residents of other institutions (e.g. retirement homes, homes for persons with disabilities).

COVERAGE

8 The coverage of the 2017–18 MPHS was the same as the scope.

9 In the LFS, rules are applied which aim to ensure that each person in coverage is associated with only one dwelling and hence has only one chance of selection in the survey. See *Labour Force, Australia* (cat. no. 6202.0) for more details.

DATA COLLECTION

10 The publication [Labour Force, Australia \(cat. no. 6202.0\)](#) contains definitions of demographic and labour force characteristics, and information about telephone interviewing that is relevant to both the monthly LFS and MPHS.

11 ABS interviewers conducted personal interviews during the 2017–18 financial year for the monthly LFS. Each month, one eighth of the dwellings in the LFS sample were rotated out of the survey. The dwellings that were rotated out of the survey were selected for the MPHS. In these dwellings, after the LFS had been fully completed for each person in scope and coverage, a usual resident aged 15 years or over was selected at random (based on a computer algorithm) and asked the additional MPHS questions in a personal interview. For more information refer to *Labour Force, Australia* (cat. no. 6202.0)

12 In the MPHS, if the randomly selected person was aged 15 to 17 years, permission was sought from a parent or guardian before conducting the interview. If permission was not given, the parent or guardian was asked the questions on behalf of the 15 to 17 year old (proxy interview). Questions relating to sexual assault and the involvement of alcohol or substances in the most recent incident of physical or face-to-face threatened assault were not asked of proxy respondents. Only persons aged 18 years and over were asked questions on sexual assault.

13 Data were collected using Computer Assisted Interviewing (CAI), whereby responses were recorded directly onto an electronic questionnaire in a notebook computer, with interviews conducted either face-to-face or over the telephone. The majority of interviews were conducted over the telephone.

SAMPLE SIZE

14 The initial sample for the crime victimisation topic was 48,480 private dwellings, from which one person was randomly selected. Of the 39,842 private dwellings that remained in the survey after sample loss (for example, dwellings selected in the survey which had no residents in scope for the LFS, vacant or derelict dwellings and dwellings under construction), 28,243 or 71.1% fully responded to the

questions on crime victimisation.

ESTIMATION METHOD

Weighting

15 Weighting is the process of adjusting results from a sample survey to infer results for the total in-scope population. To do this, a 'weight' is allocated to each sample unit, which, for the MPHS, can be either a person or a household. The weight is a value which indicates how many population units are represented by the sample unit. For the MPHS, the first step in calculating weights for each unit was to assign an initial weight, which is the inverse of the probability of being selected in the survey. For example, if the probability of a person being selected in the survey was 1 in 600, then the person would have an initial weight of 600 (i.e. they represent 600 people).

Benchmarking

16 The initial weights were then calibrated to align with independent estimates of the population of interest, referred to as 'benchmarks', in designated categories of age by sex by area of usual residence. Weights calibrated against population benchmarks ensure that the survey estimates conform to the independently estimated distribution of the population rather than the distribution within the sample itself. Calibration to population benchmarks helps to compensate for over- or under-enumeration of particular categories of persons/households which may occur due to either the random nature of sampling or non-response.

17 For household estimates, the MPHS was benchmarked to independently calculated estimates of the total number of households in Australia. The MPHS estimates do not (and are not intended to) match estimates for the total Australian person/household populations obtained from other sources.

18 The survey was benchmarked to the Estimated Resident Population (ERP) in each state and territory at December 2017.

Estimation

19 Survey estimates of counts of persons or households are obtained by summing the weights of persons or households with the characteristic of interest.

Confidentiality

20 To minimise the risk of identifying individuals in aggregate statistics, a technique called perturbation is used to randomly adjust cell values. Perturbation involves a small random adjustment of the statistics and is considered the most satisfactory technique for avoiding the release of identifiable statistics while maximising the range of information that can be released. These adjustments have a negligible

impact on the underlying pattern of the statistics. After perturbation, a given published cell value will be consistent across all tables. However, adding up cell values to derive a total will not necessarily give the same result as published totals. Perturbation has only been applied to data from 2013–14 onwards.

21 For data from previous cycles (2008–09 to 2012–13), only cells containing small values were randomly adjusted to avoid releasing confidential information, a technique known as randomisation. One effect of randomisation is that totals may vary slightly across tables. These adjustments do not impair the value of the tables as a whole.

RELIABILITY OF ESTIMATES

22 All sample surveys are subject to error which can be broadly categorised as:

- sampling error
- non-sampling error.

Sampling error

23 Sampling error is the difference between the published estimates, derived from a sample of persons, and the value that would have been produced if the total population (as defined by the scope of the survey) had been included in the survey. For more information refer to the Technical Note.

Non-sampling error

24 Non-sampling error may occur in any statistical collection, whether it is based on a sample or a full count such as a census. Sources of non-sampling error include non-response, errors in reporting by respondents or recording of answers by interviewers, and errors in coding and processing data. Every effort is made to reduce non-sampling error by careful design and testing of questionnaires, training and supervision of interviewers, and extensive editing and quality control procedures at all stages of data processing.

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

25 Crime victimisation surveys are best suited to measuring crimes against specific individuals or households. Respondents need to be aware of and recall what happened to them and how it happened, as well as be willing to relate what they know to interviewers.

26 Not all types of crime are suitable for measurement by household surveys. No reliable information can be obtained about crimes without specific victims, such as trafficking in narcotics. Crimes of which a person may not be aware cannot be measured effectively through a household survey, for example crimes involving deception and attempted crimes. It may also be difficult to obtain information about

some crimes, such as sexual offences and assault committed by other household or family members, due to the sensitivity of the crime and an increased reluctance to disclose. Some of these crimes may not be fully represented in the data collected. Household survey data exclude crimes against commercial establishments or government agencies.

27 This survey covered only selected types of personal and household crimes and does not represent all crime in Australia. Personal crimes covered in the survey were physical assault, threatened assault (face-to-face and non face-to-face), robbery and sexual assault. Household crimes covered were break-in, attempted break-in, motor vehicle theft, theft from a motor vehicle, malicious property damage and other theft.

28 Information collected in this survey is essentially 'as reported' by respondents and hence may differ from that which might be obtained from other surveys or administrative data sources. This factor should be considered when interpreting the estimates and when making comparisons with other data sources.

Experiences of family and domestic violence

29 There is limited information available in this publication about family and domestic violence. The Crime Victimization Survey collects information about experiences of personal violence and the relationship between the victim and perpetrator, however this information alone is not sufficient to reliably measure the number of people who have experienced family and domestic violence.

30 The Crime Victimization Survey collects incident characteristics information, including relationship to the offender, only for the most recent incident of each type of personal crime experienced in the 12 months prior to interview. This means that not all experiences of personal violence by each relationship type - including current and previous partners - are captured in the survey. In addition, as interviews are conducted by telephone in the respondent's home, there is no requirement for a private interview setting for the Crime Victimization Survey (as is the case for the ABS's Personal Safety Survey). This non-private setting means respondents may be less likely to disclose any experiences of violence by their partner if their partner is present in the home at the time of interview. As a result, the statistics on relationship type available in this publication should be interpreted with caution and cannot be used to draw conclusions about the prevalence of family and domestic violence in Australia.

31 Due to the ongoing relationship between victim and perpetrator, family and domestic violence is often a recurring event, and the protracted nature of this violence cannot be reliably measured within the framework of the Crime Victimization Survey. Further information about defining and measuring family and domestic violence is available in [Defining the Data Challenge for Family Domestic and Sexual Violence, 2013 \(cat. no. 4529.0\)](#) and statistics are available in the [Personal Safety, Australia, 2016 \(cat. no. 4906.0\)](#) and [Recorded Crime -](#)

[Victims, Australia, 2017 \(cat. no. 4510.0\)](#).

Statistical measures of crime victimisation

32 The level of victimisation can be measured and expressed in more than one way. The most common measure derived from crime victimisation surveys is prevalence, that is, the number of the relevant population that have experienced a given crime at least once in the reference period. Victimization rates used in this publication represent the prevalence of selected crimes in Australia, and are expressed as a percentage of the total relevant population. Reporting rates used in this publication are expressed as the percentage of persons/households whose most recent incident of each type of crime had been reported to the police.

DATA COMPARABILITY

33 The 2017–18 Crime Victimization Survey is the tenth in a series of annual Crime Victimization Surveys conducted by the ABS. The nine previous surveys in this series included the majority of the questions asked in 2017–18. This has enabled some time series comparisons to be made in this publication.

34 The Crime Victimization Survey series replaced the previous Crime and Safety Surveys and was introduced because of a change to the collection methodology. The new method of collection mainly uses personal telephone interviews of selected respondents. Data collections between 1990 and 2005 required respondents to complete questionnaires by themselves and mail these back to the ABS. This difference in mode of collection and changes to survey content means that data collected using the MPHS are generally not directly comparable with data from Crime and Safety Surveys prior to 2008–09.

35 Since 1990, Crime and Safety Surveys were conducted by the ABS nationally and in specific states and territories at different times. Collections have taken place in the following years:

Region	Collection reference periods prior to the 2008–09 Crime Victimization Survey
New South Wales	2008, 2007, 2006, 2004, 2003, 2001, 2000, 1999, 1997, 1996, 1995, 1994
Victoria	1995, 1994
Queensland	1995
Western Australia	1999, 1995, 1991
South Australia	2000, 1995, 1991
Tasmania	1998
Australian Capital Territory	1995

Australia	2005, 2002, 1998, 1993, 1983, 1975
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Comparability with previous Crime Victimization Surveys

36 Most of the questions asked in the previous Crime Victimization Surveys have been repeated in 2017–18. As a similar methodology has been adopted for the surveys, data on the prevalence of personal and household crimes is comparable across the periods.

37 In the 2008–09 Crime Victimization Survey, data were not collected in July and August in New South Wales (to avoid overlap with the April 2008 NSW Crime and Safety Survey). From the 2009–10 survey onwards, data were collected for the full 12 months, however this change does not impact on the comparability of the data.

38 A significant change was made to the area of usual residence data item in 2010–11. In the 2008–09 and 2009–10 Crime Victimization publications, area of usual residence was classified as State Capital Cities and Balance of State/Territory. The Balance of State/Territory category comprised people usually resident in areas outside of the six state capital city Statistical Divisions (as defined in the [Australian Standard Geographical Classification \(ASGC\) \(cat. no. 1216.0\)](#)), including all residents of the Northern Territory (except those in very remote areas) and the Australian Capital Territory. For the 2010-11 publication onwards, the State Capital Cities category has been changed to Capital City and now includes all of the ACT and Darwin Statistical Division, while the Balance of State/Territory category now comprises people usually resident in areas outside of the eight capital city Statistical Divisions, excluding all residents in the ACT. The new definitions of Capital City and Balance of State/Territory, as published, result in area of usual residence not being comparable across the surveys. However, comparable Correspondences for these classifications are available on request (see Products and Services section below for further details).

39 Crime Victimization Survey data for 'Capital City' and 'Balance of State/Territory' areas in 2008–09, 2009–10, 2010–11, 2011–12 and 2012–13 were based on Capital City and Balance of State/Territory boundaries contained in the [Australian Standard Geographical Classification \(ASGC\) \(cat. no. 1216.0\)](#). The [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\) \(cat. no. 1270.0.55.001\)](#), introduced in 2011, contained new boundaries for Greater Capital City Statistical Areas and Balance of State/Territory areas. Crime Victimization Survey data for 'Greater Capital City Statistical Areas' (GCCSA) and 'Balance of State/Territory' in 2013–14, 2014–15, 2015–16, 2016–17 and 2017–18 were based on the relevant boundaries contained in the ASGS. Users should note that these boundaries differ from the 'Capital City' and 'Balance of State/Territory' boundaries contained in the ASGC.

40 Some minor changes to the survey questions have been made in recent cycles. For the 2011–12 survey, questionnaire content testing revealed that some respondents were including verbal threats in the physical assault module despite

the question specifically referring to physical force or violence. From the 2011–12 survey onwards, respondents were specifically instructed to exclude verbal abuse. Testing also found that some respondents were including bicycles and caravans in motor vehicle theft, which are not defined as motor vehicles for the purposes of the survey. In response, from the 2011–12 survey onwards, respondents are asked explicitly to exclude theft of caravans, trailers, bicycles, and vehicles used mainly for business purposes when answering questions relating to motor vehicle theft. Due to the increase in ownership of iPads and other tablets, from the 2013–14 survey onwards, respondents were asked to include these items in the "personal electronic equipment" category for robbery, theft from a motor vehicle, and other theft, and the "computer equipment" category for break-in and attempted break-in.

41 For the 2017–18 reference period, robbery and sexual assault data have not been published at the state and territory level. A review of data quality has indicated that due to the low prevalence of these offences, estimates below the national level are too volatile and unreliable for general use. National estimates for both robbery and sexual assault are still available in the Summary data cube. Users are advised to exercise caution when using state and territory level data for these offences from previous iterations of the survey.

Comparability with police statistics

42 Data for selected crimes reported to and recorded by police agencies are available in [Recorded Crime - Victims, Australia \(cat. no. 4510.0\)](#). The Crime Victimization Survey provides an additional source of data on crime victimisation for the selected crimes, including crime not reported to or detected by police. This survey identifies the nature of this unreported crime, as well as giving information about experiences of repeated victimisation. The information from the survey should be viewed as complementary to police recorded crime statistics.

43 The terms used for the crimes (such as robbery and physical assault) may not necessarily correspond with the legal or police definitions used. This is because responses obtained in this survey are based on the respondent's perception of the behaviours they experienced. The definitions of terms used in the publication are based on the wording of the questions asked of the respondent and specifications provided to interviewers. Definitions of crime types included in this survey can be found in the Glossary.

44 The Crime Victimization Survey collects information on crimes that were reported to police, as well as crimes that went unreported. In this publication, reporting rates are based on whether or not the most recent incident of each crime type experienced by respondents in the 12 months prior to interview was reported to police. Interviews were conducted over a 12 month period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018. The actual reference period for a particular respondent was determined by the date of their interview. There is no way of verifying that a crime was reported to police, where the respondent indicated that police were informed.

45 Another source of variation between the survey results and crimes recorded by police relates to differences in scope. This survey collects information on the personal crimes of physical assault, threatened assault (face-to-face and non face-to-face), and robbery for all persons aged 15 years and over, and sexual assault for persons aged 18 years and over. In contrast, police statistics include victims of all ages, and any comparisons should take this into consideration. Furthermore, police statistics for a given reference period may include criminal incidents that came to the attention of police during the reference period, but did not occur during it.

46 Due to differences between collections, caution should be taken when comparing data from surveys and administrative by-product collections that relate to crime and justice issues. For more information on comparisons between sources, please refer to [Measuring Victims of Crime: A Guide to Using Administrative and Survey data, June 2011 \(cat. no. 4500.0.55.001\)](#).

Comparability with monthly LFS Statistics

47 Due to differences in the scope and sample size of the MPHS and that of the LFS, the estimation procedure may lead to some small variations between labour force estimates from this survey and those obtained from the LFS.

Other methodological issues

48 When interpreting data from the 2017–18 MPHS, consideration should be given to the representativeness of the survey sample in relation to the entire in-scope population. This is affected by the response rate and scope and coverage rules. For example, people living in boarding houses, refuges or on the streets are excluded from this survey and may experience different levels of victimisation than those surveyed who live in private dwellings.

EQUIVALISED WEEKLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME

49 Equivalence scales are used to adjust the actual incomes of households in a way that enables the analysis of the relative well-being of people living in households of different size and composition. For example, it would be expected that a household comprising two people would normally need more income than a lone person household if all the people in the two households are to enjoy the same material standards of living. Adopting a per capita analysis would address one aspect of household size difference, but would not address compositional difference (i.e. the number of adults compared with the number of children) nor the economies derived from living together.

50 When household income is adjusted according to an equivalence scale, the equivalised income can be viewed as an indicator of the economic resources available to a standardised household. For a lone person household, it is equal to income received. For a household comprising more than one person, equivalised

income is an indicator of the household income that would be required by a lone person household in order to enjoy the same level of economic well-being as the household in question.

51 The equivalence scale used in this publication was developed for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and is referred to as the 'modified OECD' equivalence scale. It is widely accepted among Australian analysts of income distribution.

52 The scale allocates 1.0 point for the first adult (aged 15 years and over) in a household; 0.5 for each additional adult; and 0.3 for each child. Equivalised household income is derived by dividing total household income by the sum of the equivalence points allocated to Australian household members. For example, if a household received combined gross income of \$2,100 per week and comprised two adults and two children (combined household equivalence points of 2.1), the equivalised gross household income would be calculated as \$1,000 per week.

53 For more information on the use of equivalence scales, see [Household Income and Wealth, Australia \(cat. no. 6523.0\)](#).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDEXES FOR AREAS (SEIFA)

54 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.

55 SEIFA is a suite of four summary measures that have been created from 2011 Census information. Each index summarises a different aspect of the socio-economic conditions of people living in an area. The indexes provide more general measures of socio-economic status than is given by measures such as income or unemployment alone.

56 SEIFA uses a broad definition of relative socio-economic disadvantage in terms of people's access to material and social resources, and their ability to participate in society. While SEIFA represents an average of all people living in an area, it does not represent the individual situation of each person. Larger areas are more likely to have greater diversity of people and households.

57 For each index, every geographic area in Australia is given a SEIFA number which shows how disadvantaged that area is compared with other areas in Australia.

58 The Crime Victimisation Survey includes two SEIFA indexes – the Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage; and the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage. These can be found in the publication data item list available for download from the Downloads tab. The 2017-18 survey uses 2011 SEIFA data.

59 Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage data are available in the 2016–17 and 2017–18 editions of the Crime Victimization publication. These data are presented in Tables 13 and 21, alongside other socio-demographic characteristics data. The Index is divided into five discrete quintiles, with lower quintiles indicating greater levels of disadvantage and a lack of advantage in general, and higher quintiles indicating lower levels of disadvantage and greater advantage in general.

60 For more detail, see the following:

- [SEIFA Basics: Information on Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas \(cat. no. 2033.0.55.001\)](#)
- [Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas \(SEIFA\) - Technical Paper, 2011 \(cat. no. 2033.0.55.001\)](#)

CLASSIFICATIONS

61 Australian geographic data are classified according to the [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\): Volume 1 - Main Structure and Greater Capital City Statistical Areas, July 2011 \(cat. no. 1270.0.55.001\)](#).

62 Country of birth data are classified according to the [Standard Australian Classification of Countries \(SACC\), 2011 \(cat. no. 1269.0\)](#).

63 Educational attainment data are classified according to the [Australian Standard Classification of Education \(ASCED\), 2001 \(cat. no. 1272.0\)](#).

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Data Cubes

64 All data tables are available in Excel spreadsheet format and can be accessed from the Downloads tab. The data tables contain number and proportion estimates, and their corresponding relative standard errors.

Data available on request

65 A further option for accessing data from the Crime Victimization Survey is to contact the [National Information and Referral Service](#) on 1300 135 070, or email client.services@abs.gov.au. A range of additional data not available in the standard spreadsheets may be provided on a fee-for-service basis through an [ABS Information Consultancy](#) (subject to confidentiality and data quality constraints). A spreadsheet containing a complete list of the data items available from the Crime Victimization Survey can be accessed from the Downloads tab.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

66 ABS surveys draw extensively on information provided freely by individuals, businesses, governments and other organisations. Their continued cooperation is very much appreciated. Without it, the wide range of statistics published by the ABS would not be available. Information received by the ABS is treated in strict confidence as required by the [Census and Statistics Act 1905](#).

RELATED INFORMATION

67 The Related Information tab associated with this release contains links to a selected range of ABS Crime and Justice publications.