
WHAT IS HOME INVASION?

There is no clear definition of 'home invasion'. While the use of the term has become common in recent times, it has no legal meaning. There also appears to be considerable variation in what 'home invasion' actually means for police, victims and the media.

According to one newspaper report (Sydney Morning Herald, 5/11/94) 'home invasion' was coined by New South Wales investigators working on Task Force Oak, a specialist Asian crime unit set up in 1991. The term referred to several home raids where Asian families were 'terrorised' for money by gangs of three or more people armed with shotguns and knives.

Today, references to 'home invasion' range from the general (ie any incident where a person is at home when another person enters unlawfully) to the highly specific (ie armed robbery in the home, with intent to confront the home owner). The various definitions used by victims, media and police are discussed below.

Victim Support Service definition

The Victim Support Service (VSS) of South Australia has a relatively broad definition for 'home invasion'. The Service currently maintains a database of all clients who are the victim of a criminal incident and who contact the Service seeking some form of advice or assistance. Since February 1998 the VSS has included the category of 'home invasion' in its database to describe incidents that involve some form of unlawful entry to a person's home (whether forced, coerced or under false pretences) and violence or the threat of violence. While theft or attempted theft may also have been involved, this is not necessary for the incident to be described as a 'home invasion'. Incidents of a domestic violence nature (see later discussion) were not included.

Media definition

Media references to 'home invasion' are similar to that recorded by the Victim Support Service, with slightly more emphasis on the removal of money or property. Between April 1998 and March 1999 there have been at least 10 articles in the Advertiser and the Sunday Mail regarding incidents referred to as 'home invasions'. While the reports do not attempt to define home invasion, they refer to 'violent break in' (Advertiser, 31/10/98 and 18/11/98), 'assault and robbery' and 'raid' (Sunday Mail, 15/10/98), emphasising the elements of illegal entry and violence. A brief survey of these incidents, as reported by the media, identified several defining elements:

- There was an intruder in the home;
- The occupant was deliberately beaten, or injured during a struggle (9 out of 10 reports);
- The occupant was restrained – usually handcuffed or tied (5 out of 10 reports);
- Money or property was removed from the house (7 out of 10 reports);
- Four of the 10 incidents involved more than one intruder (3 to 4 persons); and
- The intruders were armed (with firearms, a hammer or knife) in five of the 10 incidents reported.

Police definition – SAPOL

A more specific definition is that suggested by South Australia Police. For certain operational purposes they define home invasion as an incident where:

“A person enters a house for the purpose of committing an offence and deliberately seeks out the occupant”.

These criteria specifically exclude circumstances where the offender unintentionally confronts the occupant.

In practice, according to SAPOL personnel, this type of offending is characterised by;

- forced entry into a premises;

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- the use, or threat of, violence to the occupant;
 - the demand for property; and
 - the removal of property.

SAPOL considers the most appropriate offence category for these circumstances is *Robbery with Violence* under Section 158 of the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935*, which carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Police definition – Heads of Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence

In 1997 the Heads of Australian Criminal Intelligence Agencies agreed to the following definition of ‘home invasion’:

“Entry by force or coercion to occupied premises by one or more persons using violence or threat of violence to commit or attempt to commit an offence.”

The ABCI definition is less specific than that suggested by SAPOL. It does not require knowledge by an offender that premises are occupied at the time of entry but does require the use of or threat of violence in committing an offence consequent on entry. This definition also includes incidents where a confrontation between offender and victim was unintentional.

Police definition – individual Australian jurisdictions

An informal survey of interstate police personnel in 1998 indicated that no jurisdiction in Australia has a specific offence labelled *home invasion*. All states and territories currently rely on existing offences such as *robbery* (including armed robbery), *break and enter with intent* and *aggravated burglary* to prosecute criminal incidents involving the three elements listed above.

In New South Wales there have been two main police investigations into ‘home invasion’ (‘Inglis’ and Task Force ‘Acacia’) in 1994 and 1995 respectively. For these operations, home invasion was defined as:

‘Robberies in occupied homes where one or more persons enter a home which they know is occupied, or take an occupant into a home, or enter a home and locate an occupant, and then use violence or threat of violence, to commit or attempt to commit a robbery.’

This definition of ‘home invasion’ is similar to that used by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research in a Crime and Justice Bulletin (Number 31) issued in August 1996. In this publication ‘home invasion’ was referred to as “armed robbery in the home”.

While there is no specific offence of ‘home invasion’ in New South Wales, it has been recognised indirectly in two New South Wales Acts. The *Crimes (Home Invasion) Act* of 1994 increased penalties for *robbery* and *break and enter* offences from 14 and 10 years respectively, to 20 years if it could be shown that the offences were aggravated. The *Home Invasion (Occupants Protection) Act 1998* states it is public policy that New South Wales citizens “have a right to enjoy absolute safety from attack within dwelling-houses from intruders”. The Act provides for occupants to act in self-defence or in defence of other people or property within the house if the occupant believes on reasonable grounds that it is necessary to do so. An intruder is defined in the Act as a person who makes an unlawful entry into a house and the occupant believes that the person has committed or is committing a crime in the house. The self-defence provisions in this Act are very similar to the 1997 amendments made to the South Australian *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935*.

In summary, ‘home invasion’ seems to be understood, at the very least, as an incident involving unlawful entry into a house with intent to commit a crime, when the occupants are at home. Most references to ‘home invasion’ also include one or both of the following elements:

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- some type of confrontation between offender(s) and occupant(s), possibly involving violence (or the threat of violence) against the occupant(s); and
 - removal (or attempted removal) of property from the home.

In addition, there appears to be a general public perception that ‘home invasion’ involves an intruder who is not known to the victim. Domestic violence incidents, where an estranged partner breaks in to retrieve contested matrimonial property while the other partner is present would generally not be perceived by the community as ‘home invasion’ (Goode, 1999, personal communication).

There are several questions in relation to ‘home invasion’ that are yet to be resolved. For instance, is an incident ‘home invasion’ if the confrontation between offender(s) and occupant(s) is unintentional? Should an incident where sexual assault occurs in conjunction with unlawful entry into a house be labelled as a ‘home invasion’?

WHAT IS THE EXTENT OF HOME INVASION?

Given the lack of a legal definition of ‘home invasion’ it is not possible to provide a single authoritative count of the number of reported incidents in South Australia. Information on ‘home invasion’ is available from two sources. The Victim Support Service collects data on ‘home invasion’ incidents based on contact with victims seeking assistance. There are also official crime statistics relating to offences reported to police. However, each source involves a different definition of ‘home invasion’ and a different methodology to count the number of incidents.

Methodological considerations

Official crime statistics

Official crime statistics detailing all offences reported or becoming known to police are more comprehensive than data from the Victim Support Service because they include all recorded crime. On the other hand, because there is no agreement on the type of offences that constitute an incident of ‘home invasion’ these events may be recorded in a number of ways. A ‘home invasion’ may be recorded by police as a single offence (eg *armed or unarmed robbery in the home* or *burglary* or *break and enter dwelling*) or as a combination of offences (eg *robbery* or *burglary* or *break and enter dwelling* combined with an *offence against the person*).

In contrast to the Victim Support Service data, official crime statistics have no definition of ‘home invasion’ to guide the information extraction process. Hence, the number of potential ‘home invasion’ incidents identified will vary substantially depending on the criteria used to define the term.

In deciding what offence or offence combinations recorded in official police statistics would be the most likely to constitute a ‘home invasion’ incident, the Office of Crime Statistics took as its conceptual guide a definition of ‘home invasion’ which involved the two elements of:

- Unlawful entry into a home with intent to commit an offence; and
- Some type of confrontation between the offender and the occupant, possibly involving violence or the threat of violence.

Using this definition as a guide, it was decided that all incidents of *armed* and *unarmed robbery* which took place within a dwelling would have a high probability of being a ‘home invasion’. This assumption was justified on the grounds that robbery includes the elements of theft and violence or the threat of violence. While there is no certainty that all such robberies are ‘home invasions’, it is probable that a high proportion would be. Hence, extracting all incidents involving *armed* or *unarmed robbery in a home* provides a ‘core’ measure of ‘home invasion’ incidents which come to police attention.

It was also recognised that those incidents recorded by police as *burglary*, *housebreak* or *theft in dwelling*, if they were combined with an *offence against the person* could also constitute a ‘home

invasion' incident. Such a combination implies both forced entry into a dwelling and confrontation with the occupant. The dilemma, though, is that not all such incidents would constitute a 'home invasion'. At least some could potentially be domestic violence incidents where an estranged partner forces entry into the dwelling and assaults the occupant. For example, during the data extraction process, the Office of Crime Statistics identified one incident that involved a *break and enter dwelling* and a *common assault* (therefore meeting the two requirements for classifying it as a home invasion) but also included a *breach of restraining order* (thereby suggesting a non-home invasion incident such as domestic violence). There were also incidents where a *break and enter* was combined with a *sexual assault*. Without reading the detailed police description or narrative of each incident (an exercise not undertaken here) it was not possible to determine whether these events were actual 'home invasions' or not. Hence, although data were extracted using the combination of *burglary*, *break and enter* and *against the person offences*, it was recognised that this would encompass more than 'home invasion'. In effect then, this second set of figures provides a 'non-core' measure of 'home invasion' incidents that are **possible**, rather than **probable** 'home invasions'.

In extracting this 'non-core' measure of 'home invasions,' incident reports involving the single offences of *burglary*, *break and enter dwelling* or *steal in dwelling* were not included if there was no associated *offence against the person* which would indicate a confrontation between the offender and the occupant. For the purposes of data extraction, it was also assumed that where a *burglary*, *break and enter* or *steal in dwelling* was the only offence recorded, these incidents occurred when the occupants were not at home.

Under-reporting of home invasion in official crime statistics

There are some indications that home invasion incidents are under-reported to police, although the extent to which this occurs is difficult to quantify. While the majority of victims who contact the Victim Support Service in South Australia are referred by police, the Service is aware of a number of victims who do not report the incident. Non-reporting may occur due to:

- The victim's involvement in an illegal activity eg drug trafficking;
- The presence of contraband in the victim's residence;
- The property stolen is contraband or undeclared cash income;
- Fear of reprisal by offenders; and
- Lack of trust in police.

Victim Support Service

The data collected by the Victim Support Service is based upon a definition of 'home invasion' as an incident involving unlawful entry to a house and violence or the threat of violence towards the occupants. While it may include some incidents that are not reported to police, overall the data are not as comprehensive as those available from official crime statistics because they are based only on those victims who seek assistance from the Service. As a result, they may not include all such incidents nor be representative of all victims. In addition, for those victims who do contact the Service, the date of the incident is not always recorded. An analysis of those cases where the date of the incident is recorded indicates that victims do not always contact the Service immediately after the 'home invasion' and may wait from several days to several years before seeking assistance. Therefore it is not possible to draw conclusions about the prevalence of 'home invasion' over time from these data.

Results

Official Crime Statistics

Table 1 shows the number of incidents that, according to the definitions applied by the Office of Crime Statistics, probably constitute 'home invasion' incidents. These include all incident reports involving either:

- *Armed robbery* in the home; or
- *Unarmed robbery* in the home.

In 1998 there were 157 probable 'home invasion' incidents that met these 'core' criteria. This compared with 114 incidents in 1997.

A breakdown of the different types of charges recorded for these probable 'home invasion' incidents is outlined below.

Armed robbery in the home

- In 1998 *armed robbery in the home* accounted for 80 (or 51.0%) of the 157 probable 'home invasion' incidents. This compares with 42 (or 36.8%) of the 114 probable incidents in 1997.
- There was a substantial increase of 90.5% in the number of *armed robberies in the home* in 1998 (up to 80 from 42 in 1997).
- The single charge of *armed robbery* accounted for 66 probable 'home invasion' incidents in 1998 (or 42.0% of the total) compared with 36 incidents (or 31.6% of the total) in 1997.
- Four incidents in 1998 involved *armed robbery* and *assault causing grievous or actual bodily harm*; and
- Four incidents involved both *armed robbery* and *burglary* charges.

Unarmed robbery

- *Unarmed robbery* accounted for 77 or 49.0% of the probable incidents in 1998, compared with 72 or 63.2% in 1997.
- The single offence of *unarmed robbery* was the most dominant, accounting for 59 incidents in 1998 compared with 53 in 1997.
- Seven incidents in 1998 involved *unarmed robbery* in combination with *burglary*.

Table 1
Probable 'home invasion' incidents in 1997 and 1998

Offence Combination*	1997		1998	
	No.	%	No.	%
Armed robbery	36	31.6	66	42.0
Armed robbery + assault GBH/assault ABH	1	0.9	4	2.5
Armed robbery + sexual assault	0	0	1	0.6
Armed robbery + threaten life	0	0	1	0.6
Armed robbery + threaten person	1	0.9	1	0.6
Armed robbery + B&E dwelling	3	2.6	1	0.6
Armed robbery + burglary	1	0.9	4	2.5
Armed robbery + burglary + common assault	0	0	1	0.6
Armed robbery + B&E dwelling + assault ABH/assault GBH	0	0	1	0.6
Sub-total	42	36.8	80	51.0
Unarmed robbery	53	46.5	59	37.5
Unarmed robbery + assault GBH/assault ABH	1	0.9	2	1.3
Unarmed robbery + common assault	2	1.8	3	1.9
Unarmed robbery + threaten life	1	0.9	0	0
Unarmed robbery + B&E dwelling	9	7.9	5	3.2
Unarmed robbery + burglary	4	3.5	7	4.5
Unarmed robbery + B&E dwelling + common assault	0	0	1	0.6
Unarmed robbery + B&E dwelling + sexual assault	1	0.9	0	0
Unarmed robbery + burglary + sexual assault	1	0.9	0	0
Sub-total	72	63.2	77	49.0
TOTAL	114	100	157	100

*Includes only those robbery offences that took place in a dwelling.

Table 2 shows the number of incidents involving the following offences or offence combinations:

- *Burglary* and at least one *offence against the person*;
- *Break and enter dwelling* and at least one *offence against the person*; or
- *Steal in dwelling* and at least one *offence against the person*.

As noted earlier, these provide a 'non-core' measure of 'home invasion' incidents: while they undoubtedly include 'home invasion' events, they may also include an unknown number of incidents that do not accord with generally accepted definitions of 'home invasion' (such as those relating to forced entry by an estranged partner.) As a result, this 'non-core' figure identifies the number of **possible**, rather than **probable**, 'home invasions' reported to police.

Table 2
Possible 'home invasion' incidents in 1997 and 1998

Offence Combination	1997		1998	
	No.	%	No.	%
Burglary + assault GBH/assault ABH	10	8.8	7	5.9
Burglary + common assault	15	13.2	13	10.9
Burglary + sexual assault	3	2.6	6	5.0
Burglary + threaten life	3	2.6	1	0.8
Burglary + threaten person	1	0.9	1	0.8
Sub-total	32	28.1	28	23.5
B&E dwelling + assault GBH/assault ABH	5	4.4	9	7.6
B&E dwelling + common assault	54	47.4	59	49.6
B&E dwelling + sexual assault	7	6.1	5	4.2
B&E dwelling + assault GBH/assault ABH + sexual assault	2	1.8	0	0
B&E dwelling + common assault + sexual assault	0	0	1	0.8
B&E dwelling + threaten life	9	7.9	10	8.4
B&E dwelling + threaten person	2	1.8	4	3.4
B&E dwelling + larceny from the person	1	0.9	0	0
B&E dwelling + steal in dwelling + common assault	0	0	1	0.8
Sub-total	80	70.2	89	74.8
Steal in dwelling + common assault	1	0.9	2	1.7
Steal in dwelling + threaten person	1	0.9	0	0
Sub-total	2	1.8	2	1.7
TOTAL	114	100	119	100

In 1998 there were 119 incidents that met the 'non-core' criteria for 'home invasion', compared with 114 in 1997. A breakdown of the different types of charges recorded for these incidents is outlined below.

Burglary

- There were 28 possible 'home invasion' incidents involving a charge of *burglary* in 1998, a slight reduction compared with the 32 recorded in 1997. This represents approximately one quarter (23.5%) of all 'non-core' or possible 'home invasion' incidents in 1998 (compared with 28.1% in 1997).
- Just under half (13) of the 28 *burglary* incidents in 1998 included the additional charge of *common assault* (compared with 15 in 1997).
- There were seven *burglary* incidents in 1998 that also involved a charge of *assault occasioning grievous or actual bodily harm* and six that also included a charge of *sexual assault*.

Break and enter dwelling

- There were 89 possible 'home invasion' incidents in 1998 that involved a charge of *break and enter dwelling* (compared with 80 in 1997). This represents approximately three-quarters (74.8%) of all 'non-core' 'home invasion' incidents recorded in 1998 (compared with 70.2% in 1997).
- Almost one half (59 or 49.6%) of possible 'home invasions' in 1998 involved the charge of *break and enter dwelling* in combination with *common assault* (compared with 54 or 47.4% in 1997).
- There were 10 incidents involving the combined charges of *break and enter dwelling* and *threaten life* and nine *break and enters* which also included the charge of *assault occasioning grievous or actual bodily harm*.

Steal in dwelling

- In both 1997 and 1998 there were two possible 'home invasion' incidents involving the charge of *steal in dwelling*.
- In 1998 both of these incidents also involved the charge of *common assault*. In 1997, in addition to the charge of *steal in dwelling*, one incident involved *common assault* and one involved the charge of *threaten person*.

'Core' and 'non-core' home invasion incidents

In total then, there were 276 potential 'home invasion' incidents in 1998 (made up of 157 'core' or probable, and 119 'non-core' or possible episodes). This compares with 228 in 1997 (ie 114 'core' and 114 'non-core' incidents).

'Home invasion' in the context of all reported crime

Despite the media attention on 'home invasion' it should be noted that this type of offending (as defined in the previous sections) makes up a relatively small component of all reported crime. Table 3 shows the total number of *armed* and *unarmed robberies*, *burglaries* and *break and enter dwelling* offences recorded by police in 1998, and the corresponding number of these offences that could potentially be classified as 'home invasion'. (It should be noted that, where an incident involved two or more offences (eg *armed robbery* and *burglary*), in Table 3 the incident was counted twice - once under *robbery* and again under *burglary*.)

Of the 639 *armed robberies* recorded by police in 1998 (which in itself makes up only a small number of the total 222,955 offences recorded) 80 or 12.5% constituted a potential 'home invasion' incident. *Unarmed robbery* in the home accounted for only 77 or 7.2% of the total of 1,067 recorded *unarmed robberies* in 1998. There were 761 *burglary* offences reported in 1998, of which a maximum of only 40 could possibly have been associated with a 'home invasion' incident. Finally, out of the 18,065 *break and enter dwelling offences* reported in 1998, only 97 (or 0.5%) were considered to be a possible 'home invasion' incident.

Table 3
Potential 'home invasion' offences as a percentage of reported crime – selected offences

Offence category	Number recorded in 1998	Number of potential 'home invasion' incidents	%
'Core'			
Armed robbery	639	80	12.5
Unarmed robbery	1,067	77	7.2
'Non-core'			
Burglary	761	40	5.3
Break and enter dwelling	18,065	97	0.5
All offences recorded	222,955	276*	0.1

*Note: The above categories are not mutually exclusive for 'home invasion' incidents. As a result, the sum of the incidents recorded in each offence category is greater than the total number of potential 'home invasion' incidents.

Victim Support Service data

From February 1998 to April 1999, the Victim Support Service recorded 103 incidents of 'home invasion' involving 129 victims. These were made up of 86 incidents with a single victim, 13 involving two victims, three with three victims and one involving eight victims. The actual date of the 'home invasion' was only recorded for 43 incidents. Where the date was recorded it was found that the majority of victims (80.3%) contacted the Service within one month of the incident. A further 8% made contact within two months, with 93% approaching the service within one year of the 'home invasion'. One victim reported an incident that occurred in 1994, some four years before making contact with the Victim Support Service.

Are 'home invasions' increasing?

There are some indications that these incidents may be increasing. Official crime statistics show a noticeable increase in the number of potential 'home invasion' incidents from 228 in 1997 to 276 in 1998. In particular, reported incidents involving *armed robbery in the home* rose from 42 in 1997 to 80 in 1998. Anecdotal evidence provided by the Victim Support Service also suggests that the incidence of 'home invasion' is increasing. However, this may be due to an upswing in the number of victims seeking assistance rather than an increase in the actual incidence of 'home invasion'. It is also possible that increases in the recorded number of 'home invasions' may be, in part, the result of greater publicity given to this issue in recent times.

Some commentators have suggested that 'home invasion' is simply a new name for an existing problem. Alternatively, others believe that it is a new type of offence that has occurred as a result of the 'hardening' of other targets, such as banks, through the use of more sophisticated security. This may have caused offenders to search for 'softer' targets, including people in their homes (Weatherburn, Sydney Morning Herald, 5/11/94). If this is the case, and if service stations and shops become increasingly difficult targets, then it is possible that home invasion incidents will increase.

SEX AND AGE CHARACTERISTICS OF VICTIMS OF POTENTIAL 'HOME INVASION' INCIDENTS

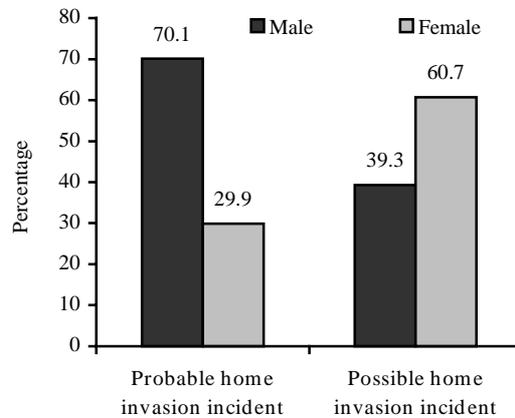
Some information on the sex and age of victims of potential 'home invasion' incidents is available from both official crime statistics and victims of crime data.

Official crime statistics

Sex

As shown in Figure 1, of the 157 victims of 'core' or probable 'home invasion' incidents recorded in 1998 (ie those involving a *robbery in the home*) the majority (110 or 70.1%) were male and 47 (29.9%) were female. In contrast, for the victims of incidents extracted using the 'non-core' measure (ie where a *burglary* or *break and enter* was found in combination with an *offence against the person*) there was a higher proportion of female victims (71 or 60.7%) while conversely 46 or 39.3% were male. This difference between 'core' and 'non-core' incidents in the sex breakdown of victims tends to indicate that, as originally predicted, offences defined as 'non-core' 'home invasions' include incidents which do not conform with the generally accepted definitions of home invasion, such as those relating to domestic violence matters. As noted earlier, this could only be verified by reading the police description for each incident.

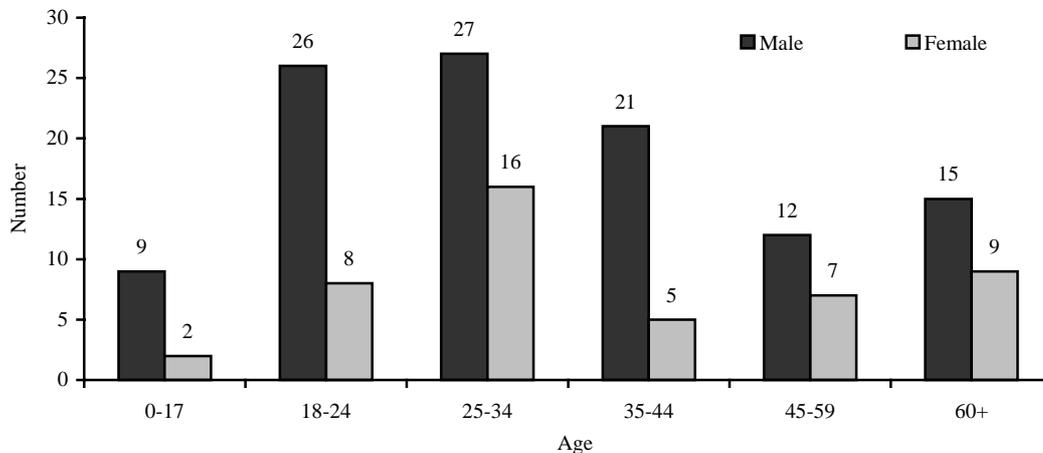
Figure 1
Victims of potential 'home invasion' incidents in 1998



Age

Figures 2a and 2b show victims of potential 'home invasion' incidents by sex and age, using the 'core' and 'non-core' measures respectively.

Figure 2a
Age and sex of victims of potential 'home invasion' incidents in 1998:
'Core definition of 'home invasion'



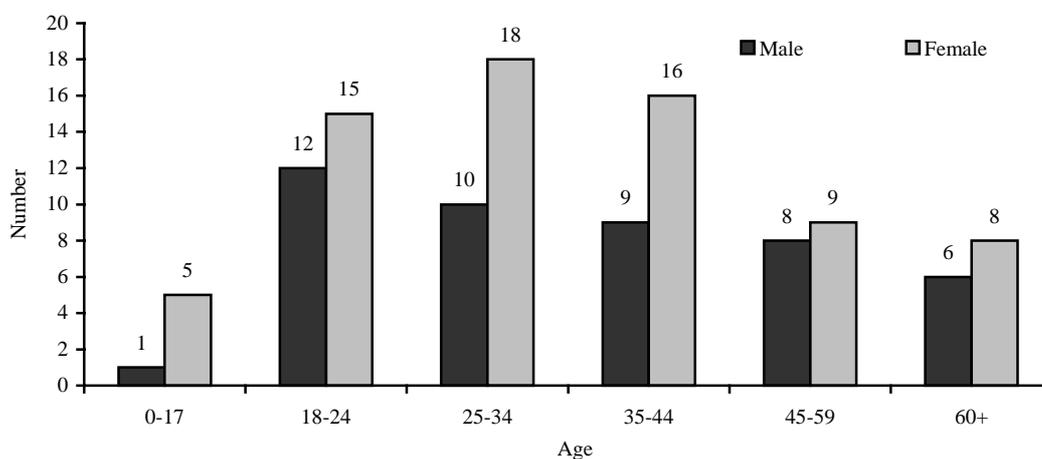
The most common age group for victims of 'home invasion' incidents defined by the 'core' measure was 25-34 years for both males and females (27 or 24.5% of male victims, 16 or 34.0% of female victims). This was followed by the 18-24 year and 35-44 year age groups for males (23.6% and 19.1% of male victims respectively) and the 60 years and over and 18-24 year age groups for females (19.1% and 17.0% respectively). A lower proportion of male than female victims fall within the oldest (and hence potentially more vulnerable) age group. In fact, while the 60 years and over age group has the fourth highest number of male victims it contained the second highest number of female victims.

For victims of possible 'home invasion' incidents in 1998, as identified by the 'non-core' measure, the largest number of male victims was in the 18-24 year age group (12 or 26.1%). For males, from the age of 18 onwards, the number of victims in each age group decreased as age increased, with the result that the 60 year and over age group had a comparatively low number of male victims (6 or 13.0%). For female victims of incidents defined by the 'non-core' measure of 'home invasion', the age group with the highest number of victims was the 25-34 year category (18 or 25.4% of all female victims),

followed by 35-44 years (16 or 22.5%) and 18-24 years (15 or 21.1%). In all age categories, however, the number of female victims exceeded the number of male victims – which is in complete contrast to the pattern observed for the ‘core’ incidents, where males predominated across all age categories. Again, this strengthens the likelihood that the ‘non-core’ definition of ‘home invasion’ includes incidents which are generally not regarded as ‘home invasions’.

It has been suggested (particularly in the media) that the elderly are a specific target of home invaders. If we limit discussion only to ‘core’ incidents, the official crime statistics depicted in Figure 2a shows that the 25-34 year age group has a greater risk of victimisation than persons aged 60 years or more. However, analysis of victimisation levels for offence categories other than probable ‘home invasions’ suggests that persons aged 60 or more have a greater risk of being the victim of a ‘home invasion’ than other offences such as *assault*. For example, in the 1997/98 Police Annual Report, victims aged 60 years or more made up 1.9% of all victims of *serious assault*, 2.3% of all victims of *minor assault* and 2.7% of victims of all *offences against the person*. This compares with 15.3% of those persons identified as probable victims of ‘home invasions’.

Figure 2b
Age and sex of victims of potential ‘home invasion’ incidents in 1998:
‘Non-core’ definition of ‘home invasion’



Victim Support Service

The Victim Support Service database includes only limited data regarding the circumstances of reported ‘home invasion’ incidents. Full details of the incident are only available from hard files.

However, information on the age and sex of victims is recorded. Of the 129 victims who contacted the Service between February 1998 and April 1999, 69 (53.4%) were female and 60 (46.6) were male. The majority (110 or 85.3%) were aged between 18 and 64, including 49 males and 61 females. A small number of victims (5 or 3.9%) were aged between 13 and 17, including three males and two females. Victims aged 65 or more made up 13 (10.1%) of all victims who contacted the service. This figure included six females and seven males.

SUMMARY

There is no legal definition of 'home invasion' and the term is used in a number of different ways by victims, the media and police. Despite this, there appears to be a general perception that 'home invasion' refers to an incident involving unlawful entry into a house with intent to commit a crime, when the occupants are at home. According to official crime statistics, there were 157 probable 'home invasion' incidents during 1998 and a further 119 that could possibly have involved 'home invasion'. These statistics indicate that the 25-34 year age group have a greater risk of 'home invasion' compared with persons aged 60 years or more. However, it would appear that persons aged 60 or more have a greater risk of being the victim of a 'home invasion' (as defined in this Bulletin) than other offences such as *assault*.

There are some indications that the number of potential 'home invasions' are increasing. However, the recent publicity given to these incidents in the media may have contributed to this perception of an increase. Overall, the 157 probable and 119 possible 'home invasion' incidents identified from official crime statistics in 1998 represent a very small proportion of all recorded offences.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks are extended to SAPOL, in particular Assistant Commissioner Paul White, for help in providing access to the police data, and to Commander Dean Angus, for his constructive comments on an earlier draft of this paper. The assistance of David Kerr from the Victim Support Service is also acknowledged.