

# FEELING SAFE AGAIN

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The **Australia Institute**  
Research that matters.

# Feeling safe again

## Recovering from property crime

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## Summary

Property crime in Australia declined by more than half between 2001 and 2011 – affecting 2.9 per cent of households in 2012, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Although the proportion of victims has been falling steadily, recovery from these incidents remains an important policy issue for those unfortunate Australians who fall prey to this sort of crime. The shock that property crime can cause is underestimated by most people – burglary victims, in particular, may experience a psychological trauma in addition to the loss of the property itself.

Until the mid-1980s it had long been accepted that victims of burglary recovered within two or three months following the crime. The consensus was that effects ‘wore off’ within a few weeks or months. More recent studies, however, have found that recovery can take much longer. The current consensus is that the effects are both ‘pervasive and persistent’.

Being the victim of a property crime has a bigger effect on a person’s reported feelings of safety than demographic differences. Neither sex nor age had any notable influence on average reported safety scores. Interestingly, respondents who have not been victims but who perceive that theft and burglary are common in their local neighbourhood experience a similar level of insecurity to that reported by actual victims.

Analysis of safety scores shows that being a victim of a property crime has an effect on people’s feeling of safety over the successive two years. The prolonged recovery experienced by victims suggests that more could be done to support recovery and presents an opportunity for expanding support services.

This paper has found that, after two years, victims of property crime still do not feel as safe as they did before the break-in or theft. Support services need to reflect this new understanding of recovery duration with, for example, long-term contact with victims. Even if initial services have been provided, a subsequent follow up may potentially improve recovery rates.

The experience of coping with crime has been divided into three responses – emotional, rational and social. Social coping strategies have been found to be 12 times more effective than the other responses. Despite this, many victims tend towards social isolation following a crime event. Women are more likely to call on social support than men, whereas men are more likely to elect for a rational response, which has been found to be the least effective means of recovery. This paper found a small difference between men and women who had experienced property crime and their reported ability to find someone to help them when they needed to.

The importance of social support to recovery underlines the importance of providing services to victims, especially men, that facilitate the process of identifying and calling upon friends and family, peers or colleagues for support.

While the burglary rate in Australia may be steadily declining, the need to improve the delivery of support services remains. Research findings from this paper point to two key means of improving victims’ circumstances:

1. Facilitating access to social support
2. Delivering further support a year after the event.

## Introduction

Property crime in Australia declined by more than half between 2001 and 2011.<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics data show that 2.9 per cent of households were the target of property crime in 2012.<sup>2</sup> Property crime includes burglary, motor vehicle theft and ‘other’ theft, which covers offences such as pickpocketing, bag snatching, shoplifting and bicycle theft. The data source used for this paper defines a property crime by the examples of theft and house break-in and excludes vehicle theft, which makes up a small proportion of residential property crime (seven per cent). Burglary (48 per cent) represents a marginally higher proportion of residential property crime than ‘other’ theft, which accounts for 45 per cent.<sup>3</sup>

For four out of five victims the crime is a one-off event – however, an estimated 50,000 Australian households were affected twice or more in the surveyed year. While the number of victims has fallen, for the victims themselves recovery remains an important issue. This paper looks at how long it takes someone to recover after a burglary or other property crime. To understand what may influence the duration of the recovery, we also examine how a person responds to their experience of property crime.

A 1999 Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) report recognised the need for further study of “more common forms of victimisation (such as burglary and assault)” in order to broaden our understanding of victims and their experiences.<sup>4</sup> In the context of burglary, the primary victims will be the residents of the property, but secondary victims could include neighbours, friends and colleagues.

Being a victim of property crime is likely to evoke different responses from victims compared with other crimes – the shock that burglary can cause is underestimated by most people.<sup>5</sup> Burglary victims, in particular, may experience a psychological loss in addition to the loss of property.<sup>6</sup> This psychological loss is in part due to the “invasion of privacy and feelings of intrusion” experienced.<sup>7</sup> Being subject to a property crime can generate a sense of fear in victims.<sup>8</sup> This fear has been found to be greater in multi-person households, a finding attributed to concern for the safety of others, in addition to personal safety.<sup>9</sup> How a victim responds to their circumstances may influence how long it takes them to recover from a burglary.

The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey includes a question that asks if respondents have been a victim of property crime in the preceding 12 months. The survey also includes a question about respondents’ satisfaction with how safe they feel. Responses to these two questions have been used to examine the effect of self-reported property crime in relation to feelings of safety. The longitudinal nature of the survey means the same people have been asked the same question each year since 2001. Changes in average safety scores have been used to measure recovery times for victims of

<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Criminology (2013). *Australian crime: facts and figures 2012*.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013), *Crime Victimisation, Australia, 2011-12*.

<sup>3</sup> AIC (2013).

<sup>4</sup> AIC (1999). ‘Victims’ Needs, Victims’ Rights: Policies and Programs for Victims of Crime in Australia’, p.x.

<sup>5</sup> Attorney-General’s Department, *Helping you to recover: From the experience*.

<sup>6</sup> De Lisi, Jones-Johnson, Johnson & Hochstetler (2010), ‘The aftermath of criminal victimization: Race, self-esteem, and self-efficacy’; Frieze, Hymer, & Greenberg (1987), ‘Describing the crime victim: Psychological reactions to victimization’.

<sup>7</sup> Mawby, Gorgenyi, Ostrihanska, Walklate, & Wojcik (1999), ‘Victim’s needs and the availability of services: a comparison of burglary victims in Poland, Hungary, and England’ p.18.

<sup>8</sup> Frieze, Hymer, & Greenberg (1987).

<sup>9</sup> Newhart Smith, Hill & Gary (1991), ‘Victimization and fear of crime’.

crime. This paper begins with a review of previous research into the duration of victim recovery.

## How long does recovery take?

Until the mid-1980s it had long been accepted that victims of burglary recovered within two or three months. The consensus was that “most emotional effects ‘wear off’ within a few weeks or months”.<sup>10</sup> Another study from the 1980s found a measurable degree of recovery for burglary, robbery and assault victims after four months.<sup>11</sup> More recent studies have found recovery can take much longer. The current consensus is that “the effects of crime are both pervasive and persistent”.<sup>12</sup> A comparative analysis of services for burglary victims in three European countries, using data from the International Crime Survey, found that victims reported being more affected four months after being burgled than they did at six to eight weeks.<sup>13</sup>

A 1994 longitudinal study of victims of different crimes in the United States found that, although victims show initial signs of recovery in the first three months, this recovery levelled off between three and nine months and the effects were still evident after 15 months.<sup>14</sup> This pattern was evident for victims of property offences, including burglary – however, the level of distress was less than that for victims of violence. The particular coping strategy a person employs following a crime can affect the length of their recovery.<sup>15</sup> The importance of individual responses and the link with recovery times provides direction for victim support services in providing effective assistance.

## Responses and recovery times

Previous research has found that psychological responses to crime change over time.<sup>16</sup> The most common initial response to burglary is surprise and shock. This response can transition to fear between three and eight months after a crime. In some people, fear moves to anger, including a desire for retaliation.<sup>17</sup> In terms of emotional responses, men are more likely to manifest anger in response to burglary, while women are more affected by a range of other emotional responses including shock, fear, insomnia and tears.<sup>18</sup> The foundations for longer-term behavioural changes are often set in the first few weeks following the crime and are influenced by a victim’s particular response or coping mechanism.

Victim responses have been divided into those who choose to cope alone and those who seek help from others.<sup>19</sup> A third overlapping category – a person’s emotional response – has been used to classify responses in three ways: affective or affect-driven responses (emotional); cognitive or rational responses; and social responses, which lead people to call upon others for support.<sup>20</sup> Men have been found to be more inclined towards a problem-

<sup>10</sup> Skogan (1987), ‘The impact of victimization on fear’, citing Maguire (1984), p.140.

<sup>11</sup> Davis & Friedman (1985), ‘The emotional aftermath of crime and violence’.

<sup>12</sup> Norris & Kaniasty (1994), ‘Psychological distress following criminal victimization in the general population: Cross-sectional, longitudinal, and prospective analyses’, p.111.

<sup>13</sup> Mawby, Gorgenyi, Ostrihanska et al. (1999).

<sup>14</sup> Norris and Kaniasty (1994).

<sup>15</sup> Russo & Roccato (2010), ‘How long does victimization foster fear of crime? A longitudinal study’, p.970.

<sup>16</sup> Frieze, Hymer & Greenberg (1987).

<sup>17</sup> Frieze, Hymer & Greenberg (1987); Skogan (1987).

<sup>18</sup> Mawby, Gorgenyi, Ostrihanska et al (1999); AIC (1999).

<sup>19</sup> Frieze, Hymer & Greenberg (1987).

<sup>20</sup> Greenberg & Beach (2004), ‘Property crime victims’ decision to notify the police: Social, cognitive and affective determinants’.

focused response, whereas women are more likely to have affective or social responses. Although problem-focused responses had previously been identified as “indicative of good mental health”, recent research has found that such responses generate higher emotional stress compared with a social response.<sup>21</sup> Higher stress is likely to draw out the recovery period. If a cognitive response increases stress, then an emotional and/or social response will have a correspondingly lower amount of stress leading to a comparatively shorter recovery.

Calling on friends, families and other acquaintances for support following a crime is an important response for victims.

*In the aftermath of traumatic experience, the degree and quality of social support received by the victim is of particular importance to their subsequent adjustment.*<sup>22</sup>

Yet, bearing this in mind, social isolation is a common response for many victims.<sup>23</sup> Victims who perceive that they have social support to call on have been found to have lower levels of emotional stress, which in turn means an emotional response is more available to them.<sup>24</sup> Most notably, recovery for people using social coping strategies has been found to be 12 times greater than for any other response studied.<sup>25</sup> The evidence suggests that a social response or moving from an emotional to social response will likely result in a shorter recovery period compared with a cognitive response.

Whether a victim responds emotionally and/or socially or cognitively, their response is also dependent upon their self-efficacy. A victim’s self-efficacy is their capability to organise cognitive, social, and behavioural skills into a response to their situation.<sup>26</sup> Previous research has found that victims who had “greater difficulty coping with their victimisation” had reduced self-efficacy.<sup>27</sup> A victim’s ability to apply the coping skills they possess in the response to an experience of crime will influence the duration of recovery. The greater their difficulty coping, the longer their prospective recovery period would be. Supporting a victim of crime to draw on social support is one area in which victim services could be enhanced to support recovery and potentially reduce the time it takes.

### Victim support services

In Australia criminal justice is the responsibility of the states and territories, with a correlating demarcation in victim support services. The first support services were established in South Australia in 1979. Victim Support Service Inc. remains the largest non-government support organisation and has around 60 regular volunteers delivering services across the state.<sup>28</sup> The establishment of victim support services in Australia reflects the experience in the United Kingdom.

In the United Kingdom, the original victim support service ran for a few months in Bristol in the early 1970s. This service was designed as an informal community response in which volunteers visited victims in the same way a neighbour might. This approach reflects

<sup>21</sup> Green & Diaz, (2007), ‘Predictors of emotional stress in crime victims: implications for treatment’; *Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention*; (2008), ‘Gender differences in coping with victimization’.

<sup>22</sup> AIC (1999), p.18.

<sup>23</sup> Wirtz & Harrell (1987), ‘Victim and crime characteristics, coping responses, and short- and long-term recovery from victimization’.

<sup>24</sup> Green & Diaz (2007); (2008).

<sup>25</sup> Greenberg & Beach (2004).

<sup>26</sup> De Lisi, Jones-Johnson, Johnson, Roy & Hochstetler (2010) citing Bandura (1982).

<sup>27</sup> De Lisi, Jones-Johnson, Johnson, Roy & Hochstetler (2010).

<sup>28</sup> Victim Support Australia Inc. (2007), *About VSA: National Profile of Services* (website).



recognition of the importance of social support for victims. Though the original service only lasted a short period, around 30 local services were operating by 1978 and a national umbrella organisation was established in 1979. Interestingly, early support services were primarily provided to burglary victims due to police reluctance to refer more serious personal crime to volunteer organisations.<sup>29</sup>

### *Responding to victims*

Providers of victim support services recognise that support from family and friends is “one of the most important” aids in a victim’s recovery.<sup>30</sup> In summary, support services provide:

- Immediate help and advice
- Information and knowledge
- Support in making choices, referrals and being heard
- Guidance to the criminal justice system and follow-up, and
- Sensitivity and understanding.

These services are relevant at different stages following a crime. As a person who is the victim of a burglary (or any other crime) works towards recovery, they will have different needs. The particular reliance of victims on services and the duration of their recovery will also differ between individuals. The value of access to information for victims has been emphasised among various service providers. Where there is a lack of information, victims have reported increased difficulty with their response to the experience,<sup>31</sup> which would likely delay their recovery. Similarly, a sense of having a voice and being listened to and taken seriously has been linked with more positive perceptions of involvement in the criminal justice system.<sup>32</sup> One study of victim responses to crime concluded that if psychological support is going to help it needs to be delivered within the ‘first months’ after the crime has occurred.<sup>33</sup> Responding to victims of crime with timely, relevant support services has the potential to improve the recovery process.

Despite success, challenges still exist for getting support services right. Satisfaction with victim support services has been linked to the victim’s experience of the process and not just the outcome. Police, however, still observe a mismatch between victims’ understanding that not all crimes are solved and the difficulty police experience in breaking this news to victims.<sup>34</sup> Assessment of services in the United Kingdom has identified further mismatches between the wants, needs and expectations of victims of crime. For example, support programs and service providers need to recognise the different requirements of minority groups.<sup>35</sup> The changing needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse community are a prime example of the need to continually reassess the services provided. The former Director of Victims Service, NSW Department of Attorney General and Justice, Ms Mandy Young has said that attitudes such as ‘that’s how it has always been done’ need to be overcome if support services are going to best serve victims of crime.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Simmonds (2013), ‘Lost in transition? The changing face of Victim Support’.

<sup>30</sup> AIC (1999), p.40.

<sup>31</sup> AIC (1999), p.76.

<sup>32</sup> Bradford (2011), ‘Voice, neutrality and respect: Use of Victim Support services, procedural fairness and confidence in the criminal justice system’.

<sup>33</sup> Russo & Roccatto (2010), p.971.

<sup>34</sup> Matters, C (2011), ‘What victims want: Not to be victims. What victims need: Information and intensive management’.

<sup>35</sup> Dunn (2007), ‘Matching Services Delivery to Need’.

<sup>36</sup> Young (2011), ‘Serving victims’.

Many support services incorporate roles for volunteers. State-based victims of crime assistance leagues involve volunteers, and a 1998-99 pilot program based in South Australia focused on burglary victims, the Residential Break and Enter Pilot project, trained:<sup>37</sup>

*volunteers to provide a service to victims that included tailored security advice, informal support, referral to other agencies and services, and links to neighbours.*

A residential break-and-enter training package was launched in 2004 based on the pilot project. The UK experience has found that volunteer-led victim services can foster community involvement and reduce costs, but reliance on volunteers “also limits service quality, treatment integrity, and evidence-based practice”.<sup>38</sup> Although volunteers may have an important role in the provision of victim services, their involvement needs to be organised and managed to maximise potential benefits.

### *Evolving support services*

In Australia, the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) has suggested improvements to support services, including the need for more research into the number of victims of crime and their experiences, public education to address fear of crime and its impact on feelings of safety, and the need for more flexible services.<sup>39</sup> Conclusions from the ‘Victims of Crime: working together to improve services’ conference emphasised the need to improve training and increase available services and encouraged the sharing of resources through an inter-agency collaboration. More recently, presentations at the 2011 ‘Meeting the needs of victims of crime’ conference underlined the need to be open to changing the way support services are managed and provided to incorporate modifications generated by the evolving understanding of victims’ needs and Australian society.

The Standing Council on Law and Justice comprising Commonwealth, state and territory Attorneys-General and the New Zealand Minister of Justice have agreed upon a National Framework of Rights and Services for Victims of Crime. The framework has outlined five outcomes to be achieved in the provision of support services by 2016. The outcomes addressed:

1. Access to information and support
2. Protocols for streamlined financial assistance processes
3. Reciprocal service arrangements
4. Building the evidence base for training and service delivery
5. Establishing quality services across Australia.

While these outcomes reflect the national focus of the framework, they reiterate areas for improvement identified in the past.

## **Victims of property crime**

In 2010, 3.3 per cent of respondents to the HILDA survey reported being victims of property crime in the previous year. The same figure was reported by the ABS for the year 2008-09.<sup>40</sup> The majority of Australians in the HILDA survey were not victims either of property or violent crime (95.6 per cent).

<sup>37</sup> Walter & Prior (2000), ‘Break and Enter’, p.118.

<sup>38</sup> Dunn (2007).

<sup>39</sup> AIC (1999).

<sup>40</sup> ABS (2010), *Crime Victimisation, Australia, 2008-09*.

## Who are victims?

A link is commonly made between age and sex and the risk of being a victim of crime, though most research dismisses the assumption that women and older people are at greater risk.<sup>41</sup> Analysis of HILDA survey data found men are just as likely as women to be victims of crime. The data also shows that the younger you are, the more likely you are to be a victim of crime. Table 1 shows the breakdown of victims of property crime by sex and age.

**Table 1 Demographics of victims of crime (2010)**

Crime	Sex		Age			Total
	Men	Women	18–35	36–50	Over 50	
Property	185 (3.4%)	177 (3.1%)	139 (4.0%)	113 (3.7%)	110 (2.5%)	362 (3.3%)

Source: HILDA 2010, respondents aged 18 years and over.

The data show that younger people (aged 18–35 years) were more often victims of property crime. The proportion of older people (aged over 50 years) who were victims of crime was the lowest of the three categories. To understand why the reported incidence of crime contradicts the generally accepted notion that women and older people feel more insecure we can look at reported feelings of safety among respondents.

## Feeling safe

Respondents to the HILDA survey were asked to rank out of ten how satisfied they were with how safe they feel (where ten represents totally satisfied). In this paper the response to this question is referred to as a 'safety score'. The average safety score for respondents who did not report being a victim of crime in the 12 months prior to the 2010 survey was 8.1 (out of ten). Table 2 shows the average safety scores for victims of crime and non-victims which is also broken down by sex and age.

**Table 2 Reported safety scores (2010)**

	Victim of crime		Sex*		Age*		
	Non-victim	Property	Men	Women	18-35	36-50	Over 50
Average safety score	8.1	7.5	8.2	8.1	8.3	8.0	8.1
Sample size (n)	10,528	362	5,136	5,392	3,297	2,925	4,306

Source: HILDA 2010, respondents aged 18 years and over.

\* Non-victims only.

Table 2 shows being a victim of a property crime has a bigger effect on a person's safety score than demographic differences. Neither sex nor age had any notable influence on average reported safety scores. A more telling difference was found (see Table 3) when perceptions of property crime in a respondents' local neighbourhood was analysed.

<sup>41</sup> Hicks & Brown (2013), 'Perceptions of risk: A review of the effects of individual and community-level variables on perceptions of risk'.

**Table 3** Reported safety scores and perception of neighbourhood property crime among non-victims (2010)

	Common	Not common/Never
Average safety score	7.3	8.3
Sample size (n)	984	8,561

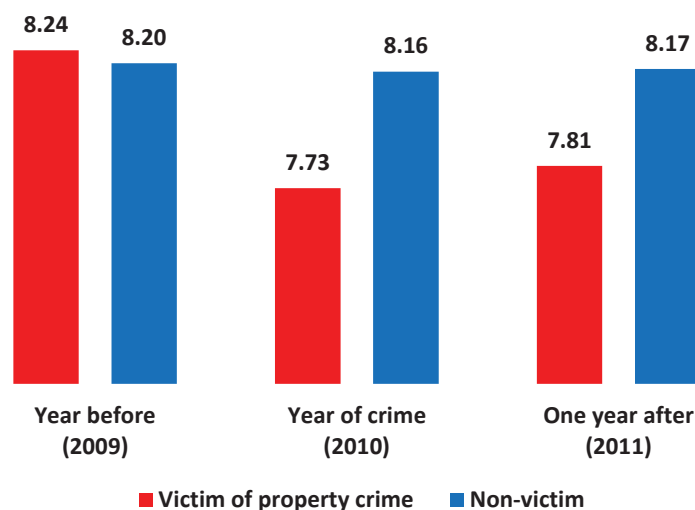
Source: HILDA 2010, respondents aged 18 years and over.

Table 3 shows that survey respondents who have not been victims of crime but perceive that theft and burglary is common in their local neighbourhood feel a level of insecurity similar to that reported by victims of property crime. The heightened sense of insecurity some non-victims report points to the potential to expand support services. Some victim support services include an educational component and awareness-raising that extends to the general population. Unfortunately, the potential for this further service to deliver real improvements in feelings of safety is compromised by the prevailing pressure of populist ‘tough on crime’ policies and media commentary.<sup>42</sup>

## Recovering from crime

This paper examines how long it takes victims of property crime to recover from their experience. While a range of factors can influence recovery, the average safety score of victims has been used to measure recovery in survey respondents who reported being a victim of property crime compared to those who were not. Figure 1 shows the average safety scores of victims of property crime and non-victims for 2009 to 2011.

**Figure 1** Average safety score year before, year of crime and year after



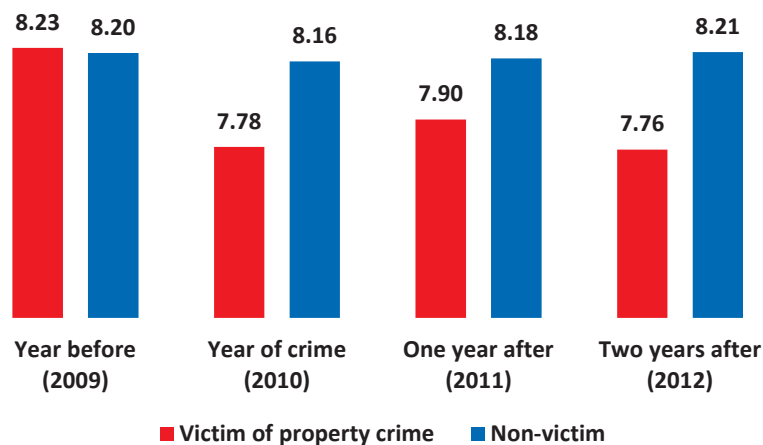
Source: HILDA 2009-2011, respondents aged 18 years and over.

Note: Sample for victims (n=163) does not include respondents who were a victim in 2009 and/or 2011 or did not participate in the HILDA survey throughout this period.

<sup>42</sup> For further discussion see Baker, D (2013), *Tough on crime: The rhetoric and reality of property crime and feeling safe in Australia*.

There was a decrease in average safety scores in Figure 1 among reported victims of crime. By comparison, the average safety scores for non-victims from 2009 to 2011 remained steady. A year later the average safety score for victims had not improved greatly, suggesting recovery times indicating that recovery times are in excess of 12 months. When the second subsequent year is analysed (Figure 2) we find that victims continue to report lower safety scores.

**Figure 2** Average safety score year before, year of crime and following two years



Source: HILDA 2009-2012, aged 18+.

Note: Sample for victims (n=138) does not include respondents who were a victim in 2009, 2011 and/or 2012 or did not participate in the HILDA survey throughout this period.

Analysis of safety scores show that being a victim of a property crime has a sustained effect on people's feeling of safety over the following two years. This finding confirms previous research, which found recovery from burglary can take up to 15 months. These findings indicate that more could be done to support victims' recovery and suggest a need for longer-term support services for victims of property crime.

### Improving recovery

Previous research has found that accessing social support is the most promising avenue for victim recovery. Social support has been reported to be 12 times as effective as other coping mechanisms. Women are more likely to seek out and make use of social support, whereas men are more inclined to deal with their experience alone – employing rational, action-orientated responses. Research suggests that a social response, possibly preceded by an emotional response, will likely result in a shorter recovery period compared with a rational or cognitive response.

The HILDA survey includes the question: How much do you agree or disagree that when you need someone to help (you) out, you can usually find someone? Respondents' answers were scored on a scale of one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree). Men who had been victims of property crime in the previous year reported an average score of 5.25 compared with an average score of 5.7 among women who had been victims. The difference between men and women is small but significant and indicates that women may have more social resources to call on for support in their recovery. The importance of the social response in victim recovery underlines the importance of providing support services that

facilitate the identification of friends and family, peers or colleagues that victims can call upon for support.

## Policy suggestions

The volunteer origins of victim support services reflect the primary role of social support in victim recovery from burglary. The need for support is likely, however, to outstrip volunteer resources. The growth of support services has resulted in the centralising of management alongside local volunteer and/or staff services. A mix of government and non-government (NGO) support services adds another working relationship that requires attention for the successful delivery of support services that can be delivered from available funding.

While the burglary rate in Australia may be steadily declining, the need to improve the management and delivery of support services remains. Areas for improvement in support services to better support victims of burglary that have previously been identified include:

- Avoiding the trap of ‘doing it as we always have’
- Recognising the changing needs of a society with increasingly diverse languages and cultural experiences
- The need for more research into the experience of victims and how to reach those who may not access services
- Flexibility of services
- A national framework.

In addition to these identified areas of improvement, the research presented in this paper on the length of recovery times for victims of property crime points to more specific improvements. These are:

1. The need to reflect the length of time recovery takes in the duration and follow-up of support services
2. Factoring in the importance of social support to recovery needs
3. Recognising the differences in response between men and women in the design of support services.

## Longer-term support

For a long time it was accepted that victims of burglary recovered within a few months. The current research shows that recovery can take much longer. The research presented in this paper finds that, after two years, victims of property crime still do not feel as safe as they did before the crime. Support services need to reflect this new understanding of recovery duration by providing long-term follow-ups with victims. Even if available support services for a victim of burglary have expired, a later follow-up may potentially improve later-stage recovery rates through renewed contact with support services. How these services are provided to victims of burglary needs further investigation. The South Australian Residential Break and Enter Pilot project found that few victims followed up on referrals to support services despite the reported appropriateness.<sup>43</sup> Any development of support will need to include consultation with those who have been victims of burglary.

The structuring of support services also needs to reflect the longer duration of victims’ recovery. The different responses victims of crime can exhibit and the transitions that can occur in responses also need to be reflected in the range of support services that are made

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<sup>43</sup> Attorney-General’s Department, (2002), *The South Australian Residential Break and Enter Pilot Project Evaluation Report: Summary Volume*.

available. Existing research has documented the recovery process and this evidence should inform any review of support services. The need to be open to reform has been identified in the past – support services’ openness to review and possible change will help to facilitate improvement.

## Social support

The importance of social support for the recovery of victims cannot be ignored in developing policies to improve services for victims of burglary. Services also need to recognise the potential benefits for recovery among men who can be supported to access social support. This does not necessitate reinventing the wheel – much work has already been done in the area of facilitating access to social support for men.

At a community development level there are examples for widening the social support base available to men. The Men’s Shed model has enjoyed great success among older men, facilitating increased participation in social activities. Encouraging participation in clubs for sport and hobby interests may provide greater options for social contact among middle-generation and younger men. More specifically, encouraging men to talk about their experiences as a step towards social support could take the form of a telephone hotline or online discussion forums. This latter method is already being used to support men’s health issues and provides anonymity for men who may find taking about their experience challenging. For those men who might prefer direct contact, many victim support services already have information and referral services for counselling.

Counselling will also be important for women, even though they tend to have more access to social support and a willingness to access this support. It should not be assumed that all women are going to have the necessary social support. The potential for fostering participation in interest groups, sports or hobbies may also benefit women who have experienced burglary.

Families are also victims of break-ins and other related property crime and access to counselling and social support is in some cases going to be important for children, other family members and the family as a whole. Where family-orientated social support is lacking, community development programs provide guidance for generating possible services that may enable families to benefit from social support.

Improvements to support services for victims of property crime should not result in reductions in services for other types of crimes. Instead an increase in funding is required that reflects the expanded requirements of long-term recovery. This paper provides evidence of this requirement. Further primary research examining the recovery of burglary victims and their needs would provide the specific evidence required to develop this extension in services.

## Conclusion

Recovery from burglary was for a long time considered to take only two or three months – research now shows that recovery can take much longer. This paper shows that average safety scores for victims of property crime remain low two years after a break-in or theft. This finding points to opportunities to improve the approaches to and delivery of victim support services to address and attenuate this long-term recovery period.

How victims respond to being burgled is likely to affect their recovery. While shock and stress are initial responses, increased fear can persist. For some victims, fear translates to anger and a desire for retaliation. The ways victims cope with an experience of crime can be broken down into three responses – emotional, rational and social. Social coping strategies have been found to be the most effective for recovery, but these are compromised by social

isolation, a common tendency among victims. Women are more likely to respond socially or emotionally, whereas men are more likely to opt for a rational response, which has been found to be the least effective means of recovery. These findings point to opportunities for the targeted facilitating of access to social support, which could reduce recovery times for victims of property crime.

Support for victims of crime has to be part of a wider approach to safety. The finding that heightened perceptions of crime can generate similar levels of insecurity indicates that feelings of safety are influenced by more than just direct experiences of crime. There is a potential role for support services to be resourced to foster greater awareness and support around the issue of safety in the wider community.



## Appendix

### Methodology

The data for this paper is taken from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey. Three data samples from the survey were analysed. The first sample consisted of all respondents of the 2010 survey who answered whether they had been a victim of crime in the past 12 months and aged 18 years or over. Responses to a question about how safe respondents felt with an average safety score analysed.

The second sample was made up of respondents who answered the victim of crime question each year between 2009 and 2011. To analyse the impact of crime on respondents' safety scores, respondents who reported being a victim in 2009 were excluded to control for any prior changes in feelings of safety. Data from 2011 were used to analyse changes in safety scores following a crime as an indicator of recovery. For this reason, respondents who reported being a victim in 2011 were also excluded from the sample. A small number of victims of violence were also excluded.

The third sample further included respondents from 2012 who had answered the victim of crime question each year since 2009. Respondents reporting being a victim of crime in 2009, 2011 and or 2012 were again excluded to control for any influence on reported safety scores. Again this extension had the effect of reducing the available sample.

Table A 1: Average safety score (2010)

		Sample size (n)	Mean safety score	Significance ( $p < .05$ )	Standard error	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Victim of property crime	No	10528	8.14		.015	8.11	8.16
	Yes	362	7.54	Yes	.102	7.34	7.74
Age	18-35	3297	7.97		.025	8.23	8.33
	36-50	2925	8.28	Yes	.029	7.91	8.03
	Over 50	4306	8.14		.025	8.23	8.33
Sex	Male	5136	8.22		.029	.101	.217
	Female	5392	8.06	Yes	0.159		
Perceived level of property crime	Common	8561	8.26		.062	.819	1.061
	Not common/Never	984	7.32	Yes	0.940		

Source: HILDA Survey 2010, age 18 and over.

**Table A 2: Average safety score (2010 and not a victim of crime 2009 or 2011)**

	Sample size (n)	Mean safety score	Mean difference	Significance ( $p < .05$ )	Standard error difference	95% Confidence Interval Lower	95% Confidence Interval Upper
Year before (2009)	Non-victim	8.20					
	Property crime	8.24	-.049	No	.101	-.247	.150
Year of crime (2010)	Non-victim	8.16					
	Property crime	7.73	.435	Yes	.124	.189	.680
Year after (2011)	Non-victim	8.17					
	Property crime	7.81	.362	Yes	.115	.135	.589

Source: HILDA Survey 2009-2011, age 18 and over.

**Table A 3: Average score for reported social support of property victims of crime by sex (2010)**

	Sample size (n)	Mean safety score	Mean difference	Significance ( $p < .05$ )	Standard error difference	95% Confidence Interval Lower	95% Confidence Interval Upper
Men	190	5.25					
Women	195	5.7	-.0445	Yes	.157	-.754	-.136

Source: HILDA Survey 2010, age 18 and over.

Table A 4: Average safety score (2010 and not a victim of crime 2009 or 2011, 2012)

		Sample size (n)	Mean safety score	Mean difference	Significance ( $p < .05$ )	Standard error difference	95% Confidence Interval	Lower	Upper
Year before (2009)	Non-victim	7096	8.20	-.023	No	.112	-.243	.198	
	Property crime	137	8.23						
Year of crime (2010)	Non-victim	7108	8.16	.389	Yes	.138	.117	.661	
	Property crime	138	7.78						
One year after (2011)	Non-victim	7111	8.18	.277	Yes	.127	.026	.529	
	Property crime	138	7.90						
Two years after (2012)	Non-victim	7101	8.21	.443	Yes	.166	.116	.771	
	Property crime	138	7.76						

Source: HILDA Survey 2009-2012, age 18 and over.

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