



MEDIA RELEASE

Has Domestic Violence increased in the wake of COVID-19 social distancing measures?

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Domestic violence reports did not increase in April 2020 compared with the same time last year. This is despite most of the community being in lockdown in their homes over that month.

Concerns have been raised that social isolation strategies implemented to address the COVID-19 pandemic may inadvertently increase the incidence of domestic violence. A new report by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) considers domestic violence data from various sources in order to monitor signs of an increase.

The data show:

- The number of domestic violence assaults recorded by NSW Police in April 2020 was slightly lower than in April 2019
- The number of urgent Police DV callouts in April 2020 was equivalent to the number in April 2019
- Calls to the NSW Domestic Violence Line increased in 2020, but the increase pre-dated social isolation measures.

It is possible that the figures above are affected by a fall in domestic violence *reporting* during social isolation. While murder and grievous bodily harm are infrequent, they are serious enough that we expect they will come to police attention regardless of victim willingness to report. Neither of these offences were higher in April 2020 compared with April 2019.

Commenting on the findings, Jackie Fitzgerald, Executive Director at the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research noted that while there is no evidence to suggest social isolation measures have increased domestic violence, we cannot rule out an increase in *unreported* domestic violence. "If there were an increase in *unreported* domestic violence that didn't result in serious physical injury, it would not be apparent in this study."

Further enquiries: Jackie Fitzgerald, Executive Director 0423 139 687

Email: bcsr@justice.nsw.gov.au

Copies of the report: www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au