



Family Violence Data and Trends between March & August 2020



EDVOS recorded the below trends which are consistent with recent research findings:



Overall there has been no significant increase in the total numbers of family violence referrals since March but **clear spikes** were presented at various times

EDVOS had an average of **30%** of first time engagement in victim survivors pre COVID-19



During Stage 3 and 4 restrictions, this increased to **60%**



of police referrals were **high risk**



Risk assessment showed increases in **frequency and severity of ongoing violence**, particularly physical & sexual abuse and coercive control



Women and children leaving the home **escalates at times of increased restriction measures**, and also when they ease



Between March and June, referrals and consultations from universal services increased by **20%**. This included services such as:

- ◆ local councils
- ◆ schools
- ◆ counselling & psychologist services
- ◆ community health services
- ◆ early childhood providers

Many of these services:



- had **never** contacted EDVOS before
- communicated **more fear** for women and children's safety



Consultation to RAMP, a program that supports women and children at imminent risk of death/serious harm, **increased**, including from services who have not previously consulted or referred



Family Violence Data from Crime Statistics Victoria between 2016 and 2020



The above trends are consistent with the findings from two recent researches:



'Responding to the 'shadow pandemic', Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, conducted June 2020

'The prevalence of domestic violence among women during the COVID-19 pandemic', Australian Institute of Criminology, conducted July 2020



Challenges for victim survivors in our region



Extremely difficult for women to request help during lockdown restrictions

Many women contacted EDVOS whilst hiding in bathrooms, backyards, aisles of grocery stores, schools, their cars and any other opportunity they had away from perpetrators



Access to emergency accommodation

Some motels in our region have been deemed unsafe as rough sleepers are being housed there indefinitely. Many women without access to alternative emergency accommodation are self-funding temporary accommodation, creating increased risk



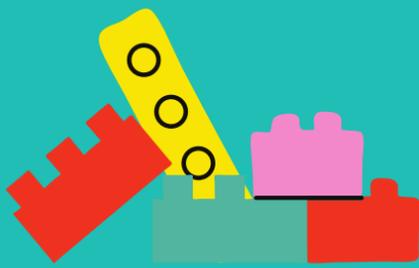
Interactions with perpetrators

Perpetrators are being released from prison early and unexpectedly, compromising safety plans and adding pressure and complexity to women and children's safety needs. Many women voiced concerns about perpetrators calling police to allege breaching of COVID-19 restrictions as a method of control



Interactions with police

Many women expressed nervousness about engaging with police and being fined for leaving home. At the same time, some women feel forced to disclose family violence to a statutory service which they may not trust based on previous experiences



Access to childcare

Many women initially required significant advocacy to access childcare under the vulnerable children category



Difficulty engaging women in the sex industry

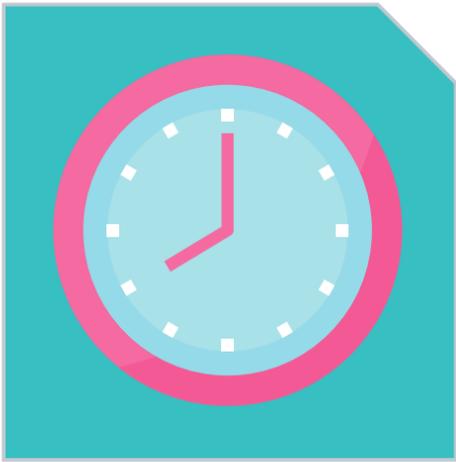
Some of these women are validly distrustful and disinclined to engage with services or report violence due to an extreme fear of penalties being applied against them, and with no other income available

Case Study

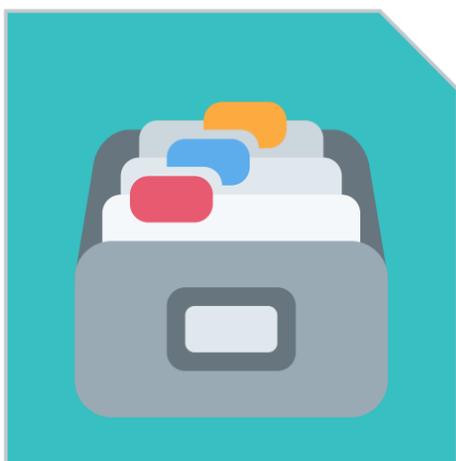
COVID-19 & Family Violence Risk

“A woman called EDVOS at 6pm and advised that the perpetrator was being released from prison the following morning (9 months early). She had been working towards a planned housing transfer during his sentence. Due to the unexpected release and high family violence risk, the woman had to flee her stable accommodation with her child, and re-engage with emergency accommodation services with EDVOS' support and advocacy. Currently she is supported to enhance security measures at home and explore housing options. At the same time, EDVOS is advocating for her to access her methadone as her sudden move and pharmacists' strict policies around transferring takeaway scripts posed barriers.”

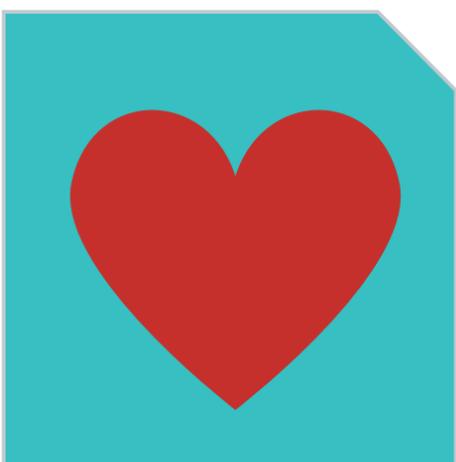
EDVOS SUPPORTS



Our response times are still well within our demand expectations. EDVOS has implemented an effective demand management plan with additional resources to respond to increased complexities and heightened risks related to COVID-19 restrictions and has been fully operational at full capacity



Case management time/periods have reduced slightly as women are focusing on short term goals due to women having less availability/time to continue engagement. However, referrals to case management continue to increase

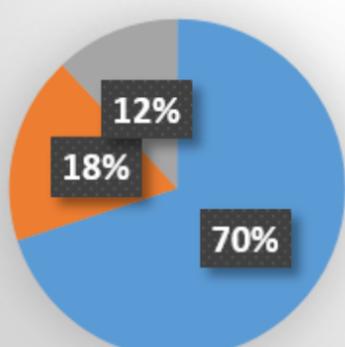


The local Homelessness Emergency Accommodation Response Team (HEART) with 14 relevant services in the East ensured more efficient homelessness support and expedient responses for family violence referrals focusing on consistent visibility over perpetrators



As many services are closed or offering remote support only, EDVOS (despite an undisclosed location), has had people seeking support for needs other than family violence

Brokerage Support Provided during COVID-19



- Support to access/maintain safe housing
- Urgent material aid
- Children's support and learning needs