

Callers from Indigenous Backgrounds

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*Indigenous children and young people made 3.6% of calls to Kids Help Line between 1 July 2002 - 30 June 2005 — this is considerably higher than the proportion of people of indigenous backgrounds - 2.2% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001).

This report summarises three financial years (2002 - 2004) of data collected from 2,158 calls made by Indigenous children and young people. Given that the ethnic background of callers is recorded for only 25% of calls it is estimated that over 8,000 contacts have been made to the service by Indigenous children and young people across this period.

Caller Profile

The age and gender breakdown of calls from Indigenous children and young people is consistent with help seeking trends for Anglo-Australian callers with females making 74% of calls and males 26%. The average age of Indigenous callers was 14 years, with 47% aged between 10 and 14 and a further 48% aged between 15 and 18. The remaining callers (5%) were aged 5 to 9 years.

Age	Indigenous	Anglo-Australian
5-9 years	4.8%	5.2%
10-14 years	46.7%	47.4%
15-18 years	48.5%	47.4%

The geographic location of Indigenous callers differs markedly from Anglo-Australian callers. Over half (69%) are from rural or remote regions while only 45% of calls from Anglo-Australian callers come from outside metro areas.

Location	Indigenous	Anglo-Australian
Metropolitan	31.5%	54.7%
Rural	42.7%	42.3%
Remote	25.8%	3.0%

Disconnection from Parents & Family

Indigenous callers are three times as likely to have one parent who is deceased or absent (26%) and five times more likely to have two deceased or absent parents (8%) than their Anglo-Australian counterparts. Indigenous callers are also more likely to have parents who are separated or divorced (35%) or a sole parent (1%).

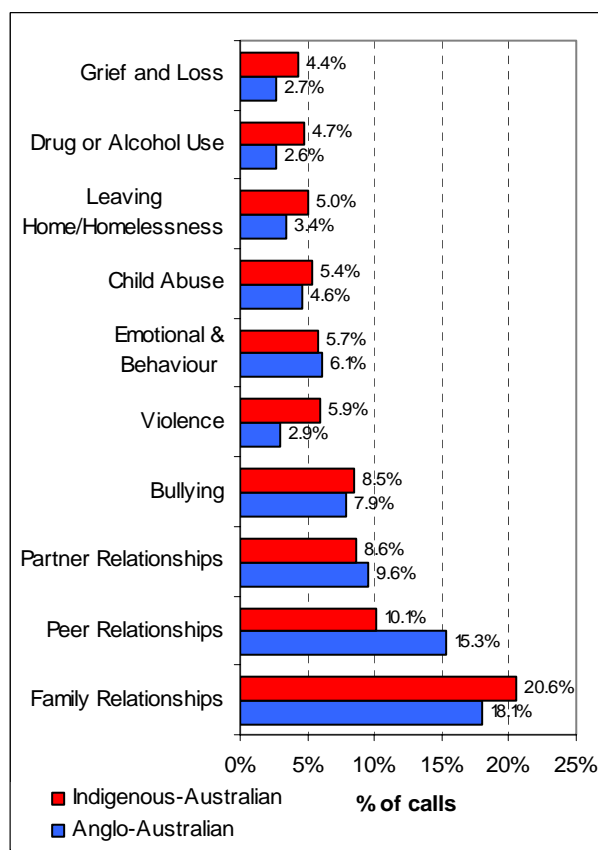
This level of disconnection from parents may explain why young Indigenous callers are much less likely to live with their parents (64% live with parents) compared with Anglo-Australian callers (84% live with parents). Consequently, they are four times more likely to live with extended family (17%), three times as likely to live in a shelter, hostel or supported accommodation (5%) and twice as likely to have nowhere to live (2%).

*Note: Indigenous refers to children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage.

Updated: September 2005

Main Problems

Ten issues stand out as the major concerns for Indigenous callers. Together these ten problems account for over 76% of calls from young Indigenous Australians. The graph below compares the rates of calls from Indigenous and Anglo-Australian young people across the ten main reasons Indigenous young people seek help.



The five most common reasons for which Indigenous kids seek help are the same as their Anglo-Australian peers. However, the other issues concerning this group vary considerably with higher rates of family relationships, homelessness, grief, drug & alcohol use and violence. The following sections examine some of these issues in more detail.

Family Relationships

Relationships with parents and family is the biggest concern for Indigenous children and young people. Forty-seven percent of these callers report experiencing frequent or major family conflict or disruption. A further 24% report occasional family conflict while 9% are experiencing issues related to family breakdown, separation or divorce. The remaining callers (20%) have worries about a family member.

The severity of family relationship concerns for Indigenous young people are quite similar when compared with their Anglo-Australian peers. However, Indigenous callers are more likely to be worried about a family member and less likely to phone about family breakdown, separation or divorce.

Peer Relationships

While peer relationships are the second most common reason young people from Indigenous backgrounds contact KHL, this group makes a significantly smaller proportion of calls than their Anglo-Australian counterparts - 10% compared to 15%.

Twenty eight percent of Indigenous callers phone with concerns for a friend's well being. A further 45% report occasional or one-off problems, while 20% report experiencing significant and ongoing problems with peers. The remaining 7% of callers are experiencing difficulty making or maintaining friendships.

Partner Relationships

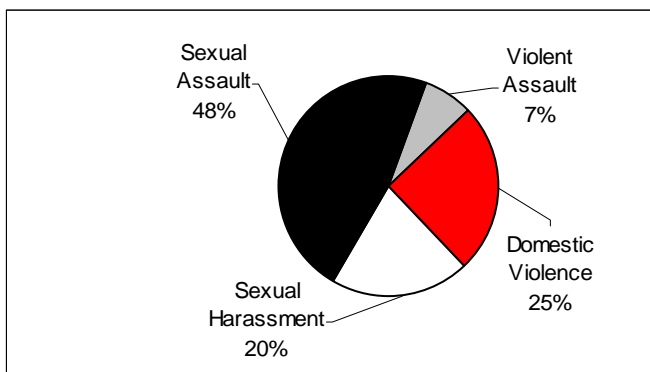
Partner relationship concerns account for 9% of calls from Indigenous young people. When examining the severity of these calls, young people from Indigenous origins are more likely to phone about significant difficulties, including violence, (29% of calls) than callers from Anglo-Australian backgrounds (14% of calls). Establishing a relationship (13%), negotiating a relationship (30%) and relationship breakdown (26%) are also common concerns for Indigenous young people, while a small proportion are concerned for a partner's well-being (2%).

Bullying

Indigenous children and young people make a greater proportion of calls about bullying (8.5%) than their Anglo-Australian counterparts (7.9%). Forty-one percent of these calls relate to episodic incidents while 39% involve frequent incidents or continual harassment. A further 18% of callers report an isolated incident with the remaining either concerned for another or seeking information (2%).

Violence

Young people from Indigenous backgrounds are almost twice as likely to be experiencing violence (verbal harassment, physical assault, domestic violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault), accounting for 5.9% of Indigenous calls as compared with 2.9% of Anglo-Australian calls. The graph below indicates the types of violence concerning Indigenous callers.



Indigenous young people who phone about sexual assault are most likely to report personally being assaulted (47%) or have experienced an attempted assault (13%). Twenty-five percent of callers report experiencing long-term distress. Smaller proportions call to report regular assault by a person known to them (6%). The remaining 9% are seeking information.

Emotional and Behavioural Management

Emotional and behavioural management concerns account for 6% of calls from Indigenous young people. The severity of emotional and behavioural management concerns for Indigenous young people are very similar when compared with their Anglo-Australian peers.

Fifty percent of Indigenous callers were needing to talk through their emotions or behaviour. A further 29% were experiencing difficulty managing emotions and/or behaviours, 11% were seeking management strategies and 5% were in extreme distress. The remaining 5% were concerned about another person.

Child Abuse

Although child abuse is a common reason both Indigenous and Anglo-Australian children phone KHL, the proportion of calls relating to child abuse is 17% greater for Indigenous callers. These calls relate to neglect (14%), emotional (5%), physical (49%) and sexual abuse (32%). Physical and sexual abuse make up the majority of these calls.

The largest group is of Indigenous youth who contact the service about physical abuse (49%). Similarly, this is the most common reason Anglo-Australian children and young people with child abuse concerns contact KHL.

The severity of physical abuse concerns for Indigenous young people are very similar when compared with their Anglo-Australian peers. The vast majority of these callers are experiencing occasional or regular abuse (77%) or currently at risk of injury at the time of their call (7%). A further 11% report an isolated instance of abuse while 5% are seeking information.

Leaving Home/Homelessness

Leaving home and homelessness concerns account for almost 5% of calls from young Indigenous people compared with only 3% for Anglo-Australian callers.

Over half (56%) of Indigenous callers state they have left home, of which three quarters have nowhere to stay. A further 3% are severely distressed or at risk of harm as a result of being homeless. Twelve percent of young people phone after having been told to leave. The remaining 29% are seeking information or contemplating leaving home.

Drug or Alcohol Use

The proportion of calls from Indigenous young people about drug use (4.7%) is 45% greater than that for Anglo-Australian young people (2.6%). More significantly, the proportion of calls about alcohol use (1.3%) from Indigenous young people is over double that for Anglo-Australian callers (0.5%).

Almost one-third (31%) of Indigenous callers with alcohol concerns are using frequently, constantly or bingeing – similar to that for Anglo-Australian callers (29%). In contrast, for 50% of Indigenous callers, drug use is frequent, habitual or needing urgent intervention compared with 35% of Anglo-Australian callers.

For more information

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