

Callers from Indigenous Backgrounds

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The proportion of calls to Kids Help Line from *Indigenous children and young people has steadily increased from 2.2% in 1996 to 4.5% of all counselling calls made in 2003.

This report summarizes five years (1999 - 2003) of data collected from 3,769 calls made by Indigenous children and young people. Given that the cultural/ethnic background of callers is recorded for only 18% of calls it is estimated that closer to 20,000 contacts have been made to the service by Indigenous children and young people across this period.

Caller Profile

The gender breakdown of calls from Indigenous children and young people is identical to that for non-Indigenous callers with females making 76% of calls and males 24%. However, Indigenous callers are slightly older with 48% aged over 14 years compared with 43% of non-Indigenous callers (see table below).

Age	Indigenous	non-Indigenous
5-9 years	4.0%	6.3%
10-14 years	48.5%	51.0%
15-18 years	47.5%	42.7%

The geographic location of Indigenous callers differs markedly from non-Indigenous callers. Over half (58%) are from rural or remote regions while only 38% of calls from non-Indigenous callers come from outside metro areas.

Location	Indigenous	non-Indigenous
Metropolitan	41.8%	62.5%
Rural	38.8%	35.1%
Remote	19.4%	2.4%

Disconnection from Parents & Family

Indigenous callers are twice as likely to have one parent who is deceased or absent (17%) and five times more likely to have two deceased or absent parents (10%) than their non-Indigenous counterparts. Indigenous callers are also more likely to have parents who are separated or divorced (30%) or a sole parent (2%).

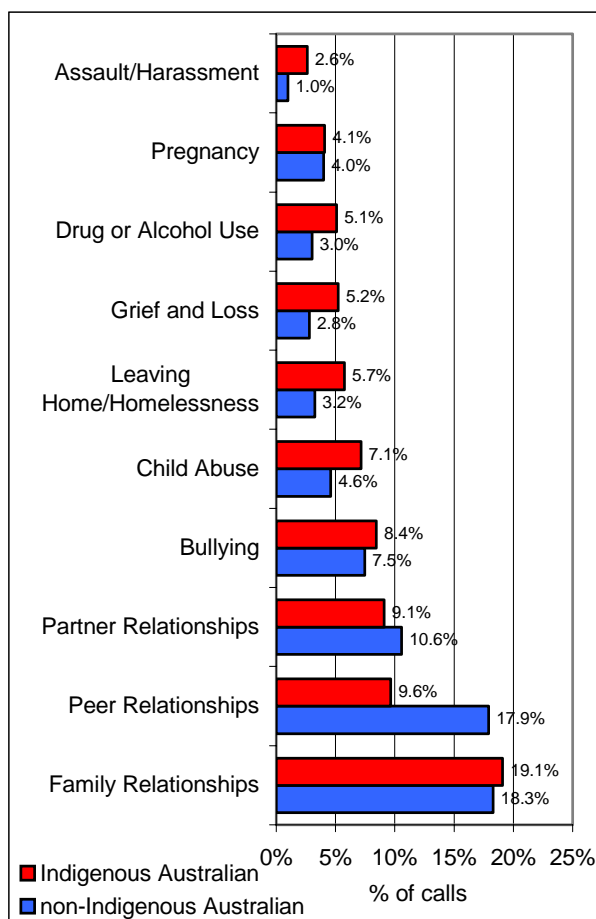
This level of disconnection from parents may explain why young Indigenous callers are much less likely to live with their parents (62% live with parents) compared with non-Indigenous callers (84% live with parents). Consequently, they are three times more likely to live with extended family (17%), and twice as likely to live in an institution (0.4%), have nowhere to live (3%) or live in a shelter, hostel or supported accommodation (5%).

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

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Main Problems

Ten issues stand out as the major concerns for Indigenous callers. Together these ten problems account for over 75% of calls from young Indigenous Australians. The graph below compares the rates of calls from Indigenous and non-Indigenous 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 non-Indigenous peers. However, the other issues concerning this group vary considerably with higher rates of 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-three percent of these callers report experiencing frequent or major family conflict or disruption. A further 26% report occasional family conflict while 10% are experiencing issues related to family breakdown, separation or divorce. The remaining callers (21%) have worries about a family member.

The severity of family relationship concerns for Indigenous young people are quite similar when compared with their non-Indigenous 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.

KIDS HELP LINE INFO SHEET

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 non-Indigenous counterparts - 10% compared to 18%.

Thirty-two percent of Indigenous callers phone with concerns for a friend's well being. A further 40% report occasional or one-off problems, while 17% report experiencing significant and ongoing problems with peers. The remaining 11% of callers are experiencing difficulty making or maintaining friendships.

Intimate Relationships

Intimate 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, (27% of calls) than callers from non-Indigenous backgrounds (13% of calls). Establishing a relationship (17%), negotiating a relationship (27%) and relationship breakdown (26%) are also common concerns for Indigenous young people, while a small proportion are feeling pressured or uncertain about sex in an established relationship (3%).

Bullying

Indigenous children and young people make a greater proportion of calls about bullying (8.4%) than their non-Indigenous counterparts (7.5%). Forty-two percent of these calls relate to episodic incidents while 32% involve frequent incidents or continual harassment. A further 19% of callers report an isolated incident with the remaining either concerned for another or seeking information.

Child Abuse

Although child abuse is a common reason both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children phone KHL, the proportion of calls relating to child abuse is 54% greater for Indigenous callers. These calls relate to neglect, emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Physical and sexual abuse make up the majority of these calls.

The severity of physical abuse concerns for Indigenous young people are very similar when compared with their non-Indigenous peers. The vast majority of these callers are experiencing occasional or regular abuse (68%) or currently at risk of injury at the time of their call (16%). A further 9% report an isolated instance of abuse while 7% are seeking information.

The largest group of Indigenous youth who contact the service about sexual abuse (42%) are no longer experiencing abuse but phoning about unresolved issues resulting from past abuse. Similarly, this is the most common reason non-Indigenous children and young people with sexual abuse concerns contact KHL. Twenty-four percent of Indigenous young people report occasional or regular abuse and 26% are currently at risk of sexual abuse. The remaining callers are seeking information.

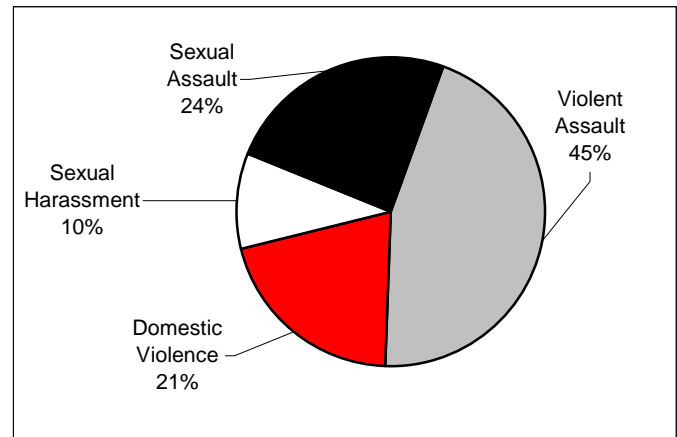
Leaving Home/Homelessness

Leaving home and homelessness concerns account for almost 6% of calls from young Indigenous people compared with only 3% for non-Indigenous callers.

Almost half (49%) of Indigenous callers state they have left home, of which three quarters have nowhere to stay. A further 4% are severely distressed or at risk of harm as a result of being homeless - double the proportion of non-Indigenous callers (2%). Sixteen percent of young people phone after having been told to leave. The remaining 31% are seeking information or contemplating leaving home.

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 5.8% of Indigenous calls as compared with 3.0% of non-Indigenous calls. The graph below indicates the types of violence concerning Indigenous callers.



Indigenous young people who phone about harassment or physical assault are most likely to report an isolated incident (41%) or threats of personal harm (34%). Smaller proportions report prolonged or frequent attacks (14%) and personal injuries (2%). The remaining callers are seeking information.

Drug or Alcohol Use

The proportion of calls from Indigenous young people about drug use (3.7%) is 50% greater than that for non-Indigenous young people (2.5%). More significantly, the proportion of calls about alcohol use (1.3%) from Indigenous young people is over double that for non-Indigenous callers (0.5%).

Over one-third (37%) of Indigenous callers with alcohol concerns are using frequently, constantly or bingeing - similar to that for non-Indigenous callers (38%). In contrast, for 46% of Indigenous callers, drug use is frequent, habitual or needing urgent intervention compared with 39% of non-Indigenous callers.

Grief & Loss

Young people from Indigenous backgrounds are almost twice as likely to be concerned about grief or loss issues, accounting for 5.2% of Indigenous calls as compared to 2.8% of non-Indigenous calls. The majority (58%) of young people need to talk through an experience of loss while 28% are suffering acute distress due to a recent loss and 11% of young people are experiencing long-term distress due to a loss. The remaining callers are seeking information.

For more information

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