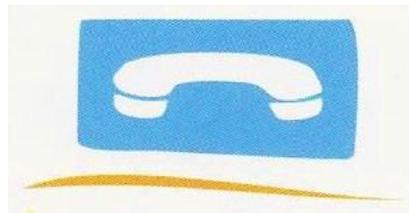


Crime Victims Helpline



Annual Report 2013

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About Crime Victims Helpline

The Crime Victims Helpline, established in 2005, is a confidential national helpline service providing information and support to victims of crime and people impacted by crime. Our volunteers are trained to understand the effects of crime and provide emotional support to people struggling to cope and recover after being victimized. Helpline volunteers are well versed in Gardaí and court procedures and provide information to callers who are attempting to navigate the criminal justice system. The Crime Victims Helpline also serves as a gateway for victims to the large number of face-to-face and specialised services available to crime victims in Ireland. The volunteers provide information about other voluntary organisations and can liaise with these services, as well as the Gardaí, on behalf of victims.

Message from the Patron

When I was working as a District Judge in the criminal courts I was often challenged by the accused when the case was for a hearing date. The challenge was because the accused had made a complaint to the Garda Complaints Board about some incident while the accused was being arrested or subsequently in the Garda station. I always declined to remand the case until the complaint had been dealt with believing that the complaint was a separate issue and no reason to delay hearing the case.

The Garda Complaints Board was set up under the Garda (Complaints) Act 1986. It stated that the Commissioner shall appoint a Superintendent or, if he considers that the circumstances so warrant, an Inspector to carry out an investigation. From this, the member of the public who made the complaint was always aware that the complaint would be investigated by a serving member of An Garda Síochána.

In 2005 the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) was established under An Garda Síochána Act, 2005, to be an independent complaints body, replacing the old Garda Síochána Complaints Board. This led people to believe that it would no longer be a case of 'guards investigating the guards'. However, most investigations of complaints are still carried out by Garda Superintendents.

In Crime Victims Helpline our volunteers quite often get calls from victims of crime who for one reason or another are dissatisfied with the way their case has been handled by the investigating Garda. They have made a complaint to GSOC and are then very dissatisfied because their complaint has been investigated by a serving Superintendent or other member of An Garda Síochána. Sometimes callers stress to us that they made the complaint in good faith thinking that GSOC is an independent statutory body and that their complaint would be investigated independent of the Gardaí. They are feeling further victimised that their complaint has not been investigated by an independent statutory body, and they have no confidence in the outcome of the investigation.

As someone who has seen both sides of the fence so to speak, I hope that one day victims of crime will have a more positive outcome to their "involuntary" experience with the criminal justice system and will not feel further victimised needlessly.

Gillian Hussey, Retired Judge of the District Court
Patron and Director

Message from the Coordinator

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

2013 was another year in which the Crime Victims Helpline showed just how much a small group of committed people can accomplish. Our team of over 30 knowledgeable, dedicated volunteers answered the Helpline six days a week and the voluntary Board of Directors (many of whom also volunteer on the Helpline) guided the organisation through another year of great demand for services. As a result, when someone is feeling scared, confused, sad and frustrated after being a victim of a crime there is somewhere for them to turn.

The Crime Victims Helpline continues to be the primary national support service for victims of crime. The letter sent to victims by Gardaí after the report of a crime includes the Helpline freephone telephone number of 116 006. The Helpline acts as gateway for victims to the many supports and services available in Ireland for victims. Based upon where victims are located, Helpline volunteers provide information about face-to-face victim support services; specialist services for rape, domestic violence, child abuse, and homicide; and access to counselling.

I joined the Crime Victims Helpline as the new Coordinator in March of 2014. What has struck me the most upon my arrival is the high quality of service provided to victims of crime by so many people who volunteer their time. The Crime Victims Helpline would not exist without our many volunteers and I want to extend my deepest thanks for their service to the Helpline in 2013 and beyond.

Michele Puckhaber, MSW
Coordinator

Our Services

In 2013, the Crime Victims Helpline received over 2,200 calls and made over 2,400 follow-up calls. A growing number of victims are choosing to access our services by email and text. In 2013 we received 420 contacts by text and email, an increase of 10% from 2012.

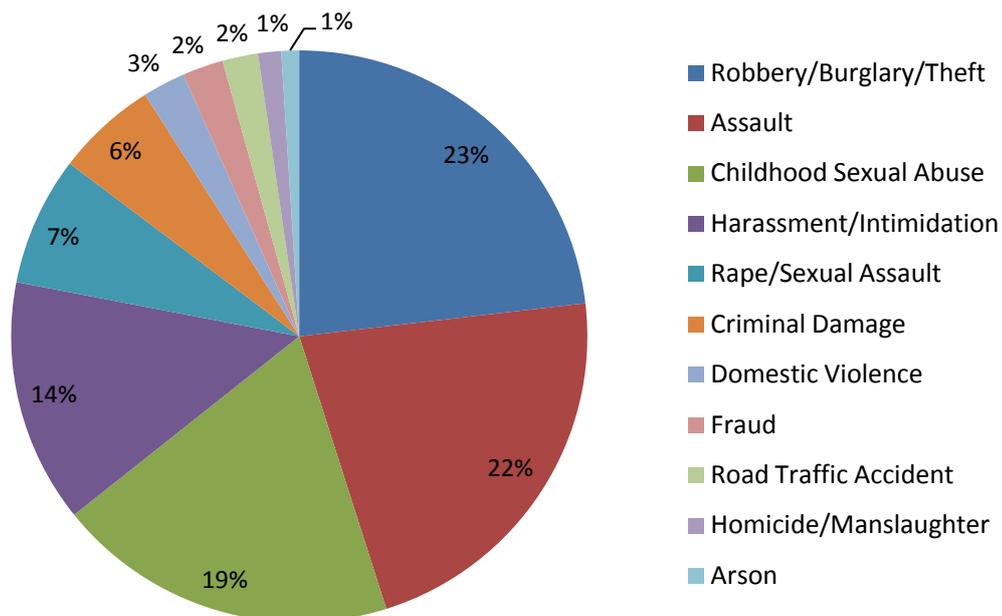
Types of Crime

Anne's house was burgled last week and she hasn't been able to sleep at night since.

Niamh is receiving harassing and threatening emails from her former boss and she doesn't know if she should report it to the Gardaí.

Paddy's teenage son had his phone snatched from him on the train and now Paddy can't stop worrying about him and his other children.

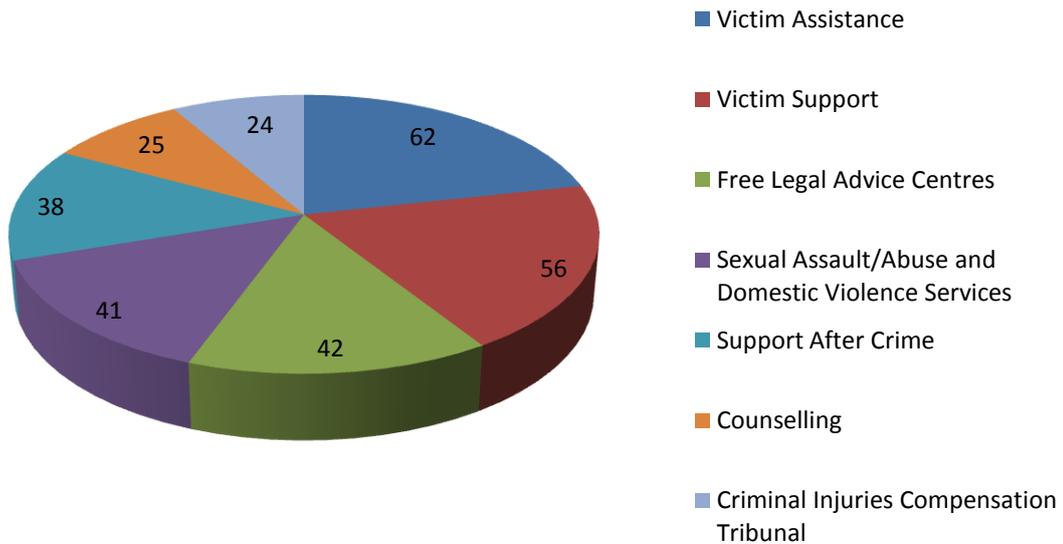
Crime—even those that are considered minor such as burglary, theft or harassment—can have a serious impact on the sense of safety, happiness and overall wellbeing of victims. The Crime Victims Helpline heard from hundreds of people in 2013 who were victims of crimes like those described above as well as more serious crimes such as homicide, rape, and assault.



Referrals to Other Services

One of the goals of the Helpline is to connect victims with the many services that are available to them in Ireland. The most frequent referrals that we made in 2013 were to local crime victim support agencies; free legal advice; organisations providing specialised services to victims of sexual abuse, rape, domestic violence and homicide; and counselling.

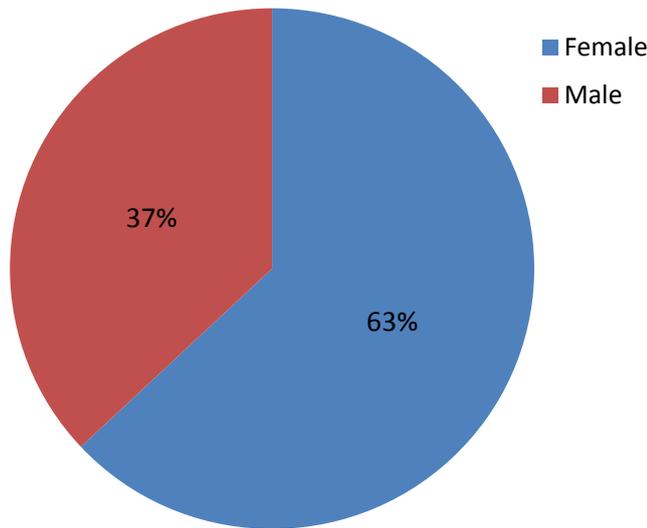
Services



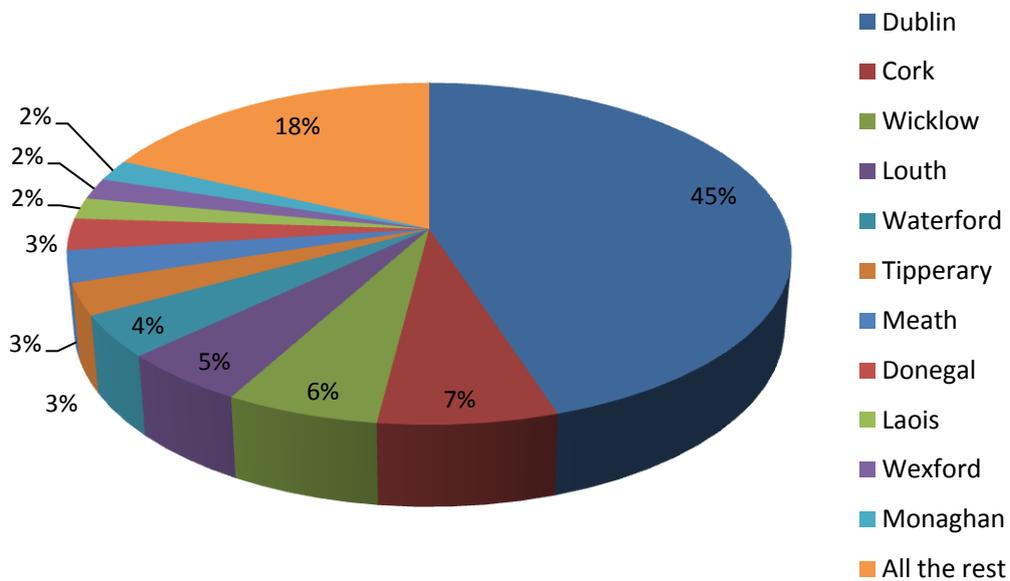
Who Contacts Us

The Helpline provides support to people from all areas of Ireland who have been victims of a wide variety of crimes. More women than men contacted us in 2013 and the majority of calls came from County Dublin.

Gender of Callers



Counties



2013 Activities

In February Coordinator, Maeve Ryan, and Board Member, Gillian Hussey, attended a Garda relations meeting with Assistant Garda Commissioner Jack Nolan and Inspector Lorraine Stack. A variety of issues relating to victims and their interactions with the Gardaí were discussed.

Given the increasing interest in restorative justice in Ireland and the likelihood of more victim involvement, Crime Victims Helpline has continued to forge bonds with the restorative justice movement:

- Coordinator, Maeve Ryan attended a seminar hosted by the European Forum for Restorative Justice, in Leuven, Belgium on the 'Accessibility and Initiation of Restorative Justice.' Some 15 countries were represented and many gave presentations on the use of restorative justice in their countries. The role of victims organisations in raising awareness of restorative justice and supporting victims who are going through the process was also discussed.
- Board Member, Eileen Brady, joined the Board of Management of Restorative Justice Services as a representative of Crime Victims Helpline.
- Crime Victims Helpline was represented by staff member, Geraldine Kelly, at the 'Restorative Connections: Developing a road map across the Island of Ireland' conference. The conference allowed for shared learning between the north and south and was a great opportunity to hear how restorative justice is already being used across Ireland.
- Interested volunteers attended a one-day training entitled 'Introduction to Restorative Practices' conducted by the International Institute of Restorative Practices to further their understanding of the uses of restorative practice.

The Helpline remained engaged with Ireland's journey to transpose into law the EU Victims' Rights Directive (a law that requires all Member States to implement legislation to give victims of crime minimum rights, supports, and protection). In September, the Coordinator attended 'Know Your Rights—Guide on the Victims' Directive' facilitated by the JUSTICIA network and launched by Greg Heylin, Director of the Victims of Crime Office.

Members of the Board of Directors and the Coordinator met with representatives of the Victims' Rights Alliance and support the work being done by the Alliance to encourage implementation of the Victims' Rights Directive.

2013 Board of Directors

Eileen Brady

Áine Ferguson Brown

Claire Carroll

Michelle Clarke

Gillian Hussey

Maureen McKay

Joe McKeown

Ruby Morrow

Simon Treanor

Current Board of Directors

Eileen Brady

Áine Ferguson Brown

Claire Carroll

Gillian Hussey

Naoise Kelly

Joe McKeown

Ruby Morrow

Simon Treanor

2013 Coordinator

Maeve Ryan

Current Coordinator

Michele Puckhaber

Helpline Support Worker

Marie Murray

The Crime Victims Helpline is funded by the Commission for the Support of
Victims of Crime as well as by individual donations.

Company Number 409235 ♦ Registered Charity Number 16894