



Crime Victims Helpline Annual Report 2015

Ten Years of Service to Victims of Crime 2005-2015



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Message from the Patron

In November 2015 the European Directive on Victims' Rights came into effect in Ireland and across the EU. The aims of the directive were to accord certain basic rights to victims of crime such as the right to be treated with dignity as a victim of crime; the right to information about the criminal process; the right to access support services; and many others. Crime Victims Helpline, along with other organisations supporting victims of crime, welcomed the directive as a major step in ensuring that victims of crime would no longer feel excluded from the justice system.

The experience of the helpline over a ten-year period of listening to victims of crime has provided evidence daily of the difficulties encountered by ordinary people when they have reported a crime to the Gardaí. While we hear from our callers of the high standard of service provided by Gardaí, we also hear stories of how people feel completely let down by the justice system. The victim experiences that were highlighted in the report by Justice O'Higgins on the cases in Cavan/Monaghan resonated with what our volunteers and staff hear on the helpline.

We are very pleased that progress has been made. We would like to note in particular the development of Garda Victim Service Offices in 28 Garda Districts across the country, which has made a tremendous difference to the experience of victims of crime. The Helpline has noted that since the introduction of these offices there has been a notable decrease in calls to the helpline where the caller is unable to make contact with the investigating Garda. We would like to congratulate An Garda Síochána on this initiative and on the amount of work that has been done to ensure compliance with the directive.

There are many challenges remaining. The Helpline would like to see:

- all victims of crime given prompt and relevant information about victim support services when they report a crime to An Garda Síochána;
- any victim who has been injured as a result of crime provided with information about the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal;
- every victim's experience considered in the court; victims notified of their right to be present at the hearing, regardless of whether or not they are to provide testimony; and that every victim who wishes to make a Victim Impact Statement is provided with the opportunity.

I am optimistic that through the continued coordinated efforts of victim service organisations, An Garda Síochána, the Director of Public Prosecutions and others in the criminal justice system that the Directive will be successfully implemented in Ireland. This will bring much needed relief and support to victims and their families.

We are indebted to the Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime and the Dormant Accounts Fund for their continued funding. I would also like to express my admiration and thanks to all those who volunteer their time with the Crime Victims Helpline together with the excellent work done by our staff, all of whom are vital to our organisation.

Gillian Hussey, Retired Judge of the District Court
Patron & Chairperson

Message from the Coordinator

In 2015, the Crime Victims Helpline (CVH) celebrated its tenth year as an independent charity. We started in 2005 with just one phone line where we received 168 calls. In 2015 we received over 3,200 contacts by phone, email, and text message. Over the next decade, we look forward to continuing to increase the number of people that we assist as well as expanding the ways in which we connect with people who need our service.

CVH was delighted to be awarded a grant from the Dormant Accounts Fund in 2015. The funds were used on activities and projects that raised awareness of our services. One of the projects was the creation of a short video, featuring many of our volunteers, that highlights the work of the Helpline. The video was launched by Minister Frances Fitzgerald in July 2015 and has been shown in cinemas across Ireland.

As awareness of our services grew in 2015, so did the number of people assisted. In this report you will find graphs and statistics that illustrate this increase. Hidden in these numbers are the stories of the people we helped. The father kept up at night with worry after his home was burgled while the family slept. The older woman who is too scared to walk to the shops or spend time in her garden because of ongoing harassment from her neighbour. The mother who is at her wits end trying to help her son who has become quiet and withdrawn after an assault. I am so grateful that these people and so many others were able to receive support through our service.

Volunteers are the head and heart of the Crime Victims Helpline. Our Directors, who receive no remuneration for their time, are responsible for the management of the organisation. Using their wealth of knowledge and experience, they guide the organisation along good governance practices and keep us on a sound financial footing. Volunteers on the Helpline answer calls six days a week and provide a caring and professional service to every caller. Our volunteers bring an amazing array of life experiences that enrich the work of the Helpline. Their compassion and generosity of time and spirit are an inspiration. A huge thank you to everyone who contributed their time, expertise and caring to the service of victims of crime in 2015.

I want to acknowledge and thank the Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime and the Dormant Accounts Fund. Their financial support make our work possible. Our audited financial accounts for 2015 are available on our website at crimevictimshelpline.ie.

Michele Puckhaber
Coordinator

About Crime Victims Helpline

The Crime Victims Helpline, Freephone 116 006, is a listening and support service for victims of crime in Ireland. Our aim is to support, inform and listen to victims of crime and all those impacted by crime. We provide time and space for victims to talk about their experiences and provide information about the criminal justice system and referrals to other resources.

Highlights of 2015

- 2015 was a very important year for victims' rights. On the 16th November, the EU Victims' Directive came into effect. The Directive establishes minimum rights, supports and protection for all victims across the EU. The Crime Victims Helpline was pleased to be invited by the Minister for Justice to provide feedback regarding the Draft Criminal Justice Victims of Crime Bill 2015, the proposed legislation that would transpose the Directive into Irish law. While the bill did not become law prior to the general election, we would urge the government to prioritise the passing of this legislation.



- The opening of 28 Garda Victim Service Offices in 2015 was a big step forward by An Garda Síochána in their efforts to provide timely information and updates to victims of crime. Crime Victims Helpline were very pleased to be given the opportunity to provide victim awareness training at Templemore to the civilian and Garda staff of these new offices.

- In July we celebrated our tenth year as an independent charity. The occasion was marked by the launch of our Crime Victims Helpline video by Minister Frances Fitzgerald at the Irish Film Institute.



- Representatives from CVH participated in a wide range of conferences and events which provided us with opportunities to influence important policy decisions relating to victims of crime and helped to raise awareness of the helpline. These included the All Island Restorative Connections Conference; the Victim Support Europe Annual Conference; the Immigrant Council of Ireland's Victims of Crime Bill Forum; Garda National Crime Victims Forum; and multiple round table discussions on the implementation of the EU Crime Victims' Rights Directive.

- A number of volunteers of the Helpline were kind enough to give their time in participating in the Flora Women's Mini Marathon in June 2015 to help raise awareness of the services of the Helpline.



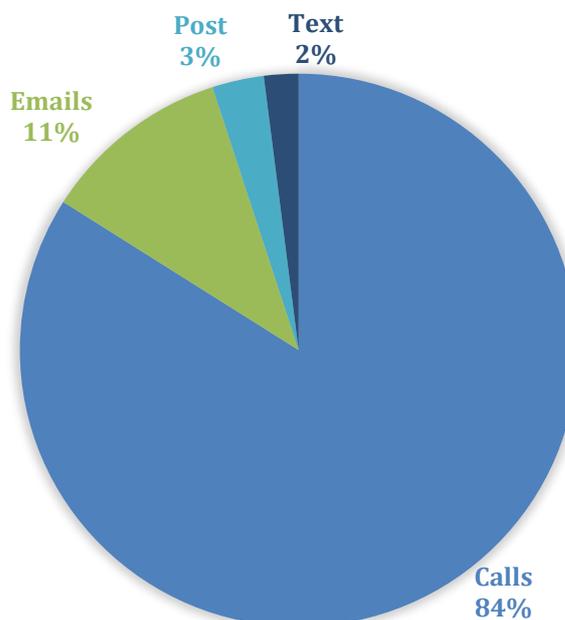
- CVH's video was entered into The Wheel's Better Together Charity Video Campaign. We didn't win but our video received over a thousand views!



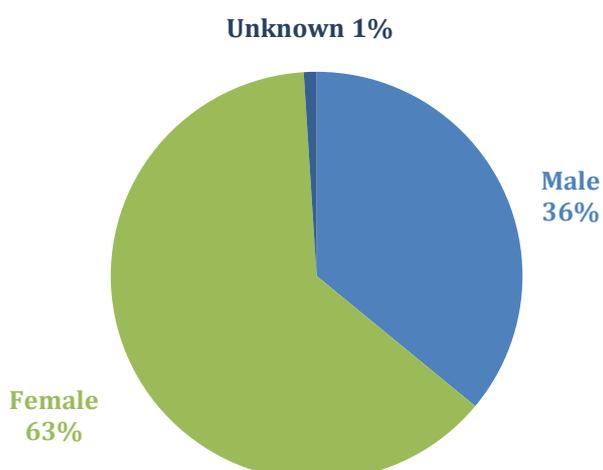
Our 2015 Statistics

In 2015, the Crime Victims Helpline had over 3,200 contacts with victims of crime and others who were seeking information and support. Three-quarters of our contacts were with victims and the remaining contacts were with friends or family members; other service providers (such as GPs or counsellors); and members of An Garda Síochána. As in previous years, we received more contacts from women than men. We received calls from victims of a wide range of crimes but a quarter of our calls were from victims of assault and another twenty percent were from victims of burglary or theft. In over 75% of contacts, the primary purpose was to receive either emotional support or information about the criminal justice system.

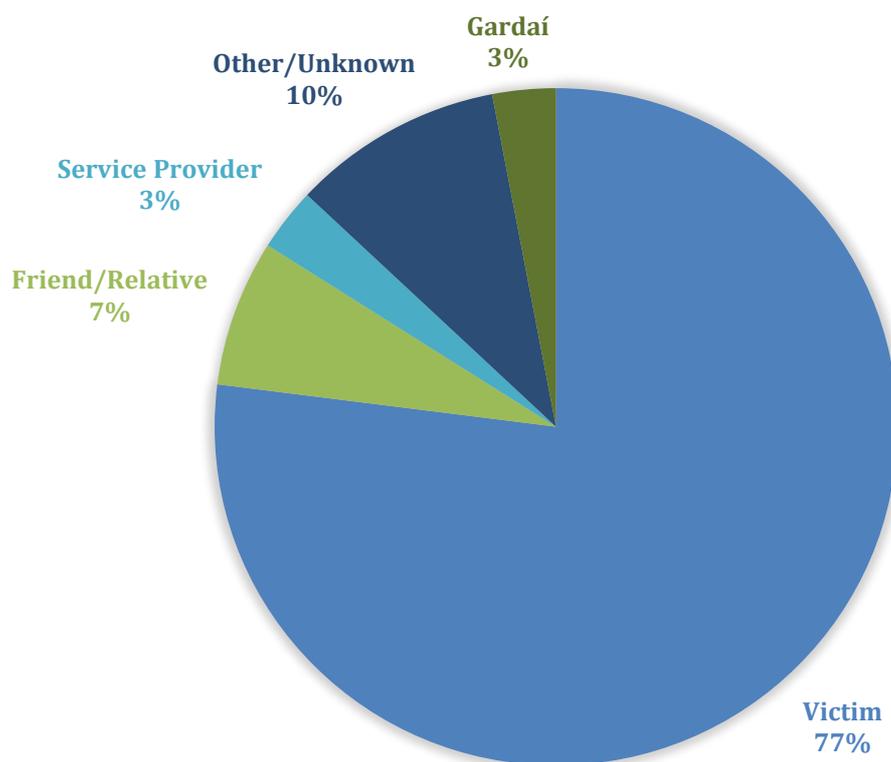
TYPES OF CONTACTS



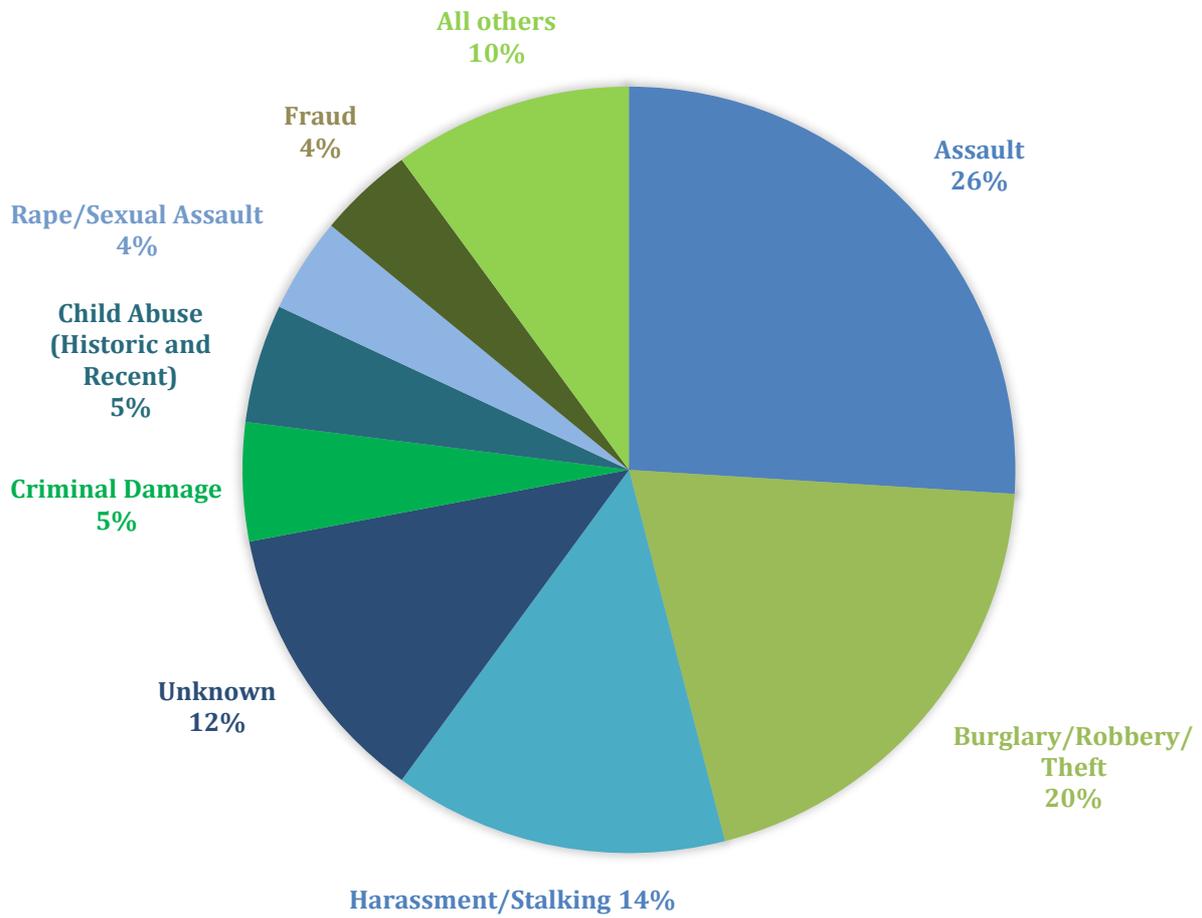
GENDER



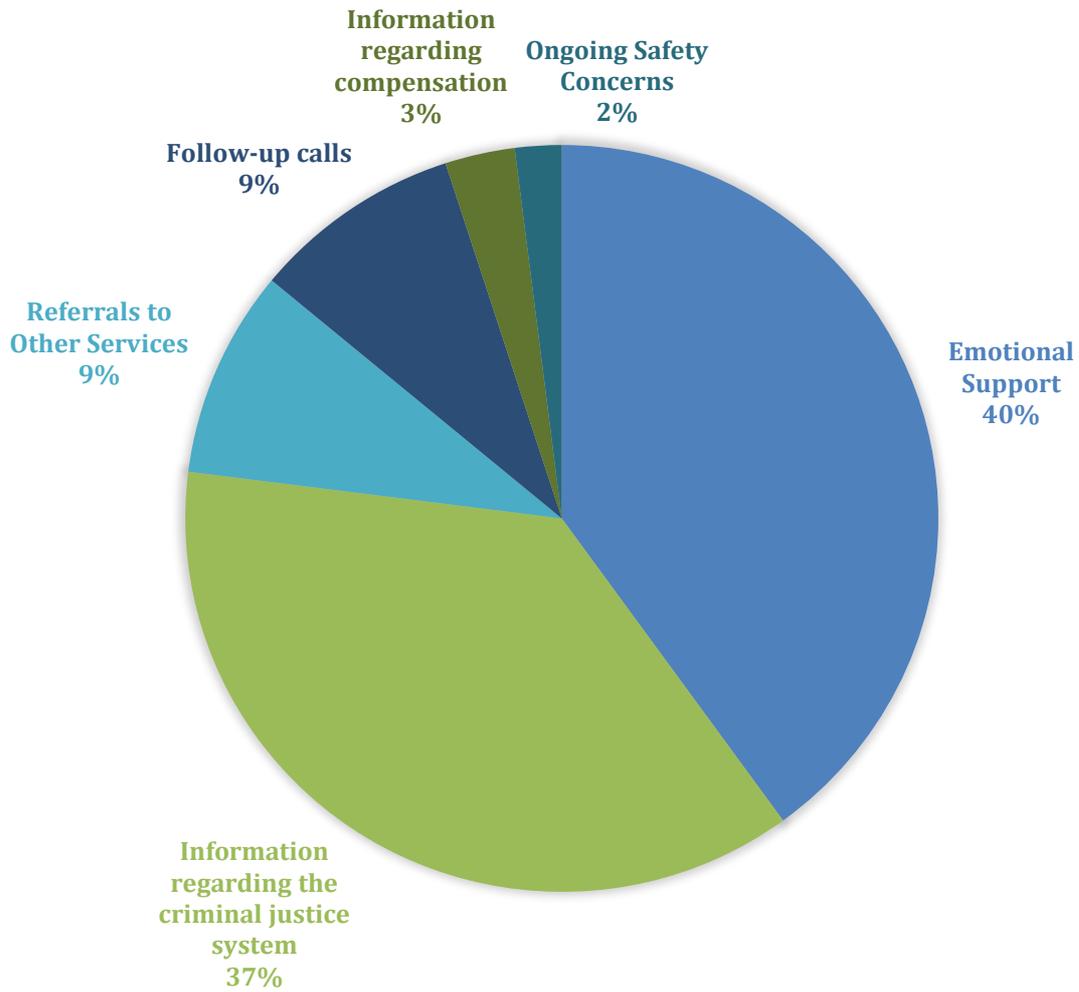
CONTACT WITH



CRIMES



PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE CONTACT



Board of Directors

Eileen Brady

Claire Carroll (Resigned 2015)

Tony Hickey (Appointed 2016)

Gillian Hussey

Naoise Kelly

Joe McKeown (Resigned 2015)

Ruby Morrow (Resigned 2015)

Maeve Ryan

Simon Treanor

Michael Tyndall

Paul Williams (Appointed 2016)

Staff

Michele Puckhaber – Coordinator

Naomi Gould – Coordinator (Maternity Leave Cover)

Marie Murray – Helpline Support Worker

The Crime Victims Helpline is funded by the Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime and the Dormant Accounts Fund.



Company Number 409235 ♦ Registered Charity Number 16894

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