

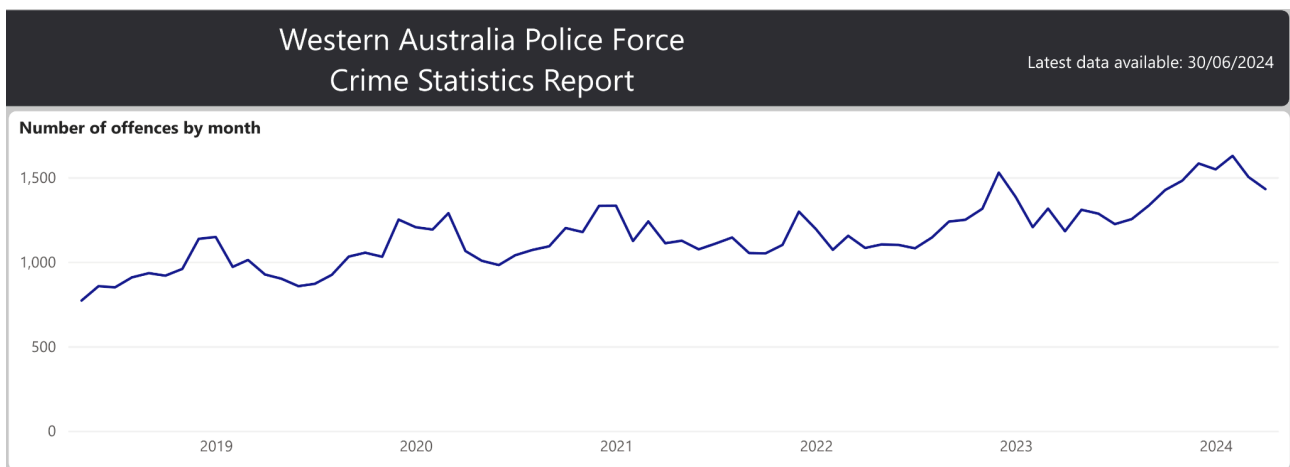


Stronger Families

strength from adversity

Christmas Shutdowns Increase Risks for Family and Domestic Violence Victims, Says Stronger Families Foundation

Perth, 04 November 2024 – As the festive season approaches, the Stronger Families Foundation is sounding the alarm on the heightened risks faced by family and domestic violence (FDV) victims during prolonged Christmas shutdowns. While the holiday period is traditionally seen as a time of joy and relaxation, for many FDV victims, it can be a time of fear, isolation, and increased danger. WA Police statistics for family assaults in the WA metro region from 01 May 2018 to 01 April 2024 show clear spikes over the Christmas period¹.



The extended closures many Australian businesses observe over Christmas and New Year's create a period of enforced isolation that can leave FDV victims trapped at home with their abusers. Without the daily routines and support networks provided by work or community interactions, victims are often cut off from crucial resources and spaces that can offer them a respite from violence.

“The extended Christmas shutdown, a tradition that once suited a more secure society, may be putting FDV victims at severe risk by enforcing isolation,” said Geoff Hart-Davies, CEO of the Stronger Families Foundation. “While many Australians spend this time enjoying festivities, some spend it feeling trapped, fearful, and unsupported.”

The Disturbing Reality of Holiday Shutdowns

Research indicates that periods of heightened stress—such as Christmas and holiday shutdowns—can intensify abusive behaviour. Data from Australia's Bureau of Statistics shows that one in 4 Australian women have experienced violence and emotional abuse from an intimate partner since age 15². Unfortunately, the absence of routine contact with colleagues, managers, and support networks during the holidays can exacerbate FDV situations.

Stronger Families Foundation Advocates for Workplace Flexibility and Safety Initiatives

Stronger Families Foundation, which works with fathers through education programs to prevent family and domestic violence, is calling on businesses to adopt more flexible and adaptive holiday policies. The

¹ <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/western-australia-police-force/crime-statistics>

² <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release>





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Foundation believes that staggered leave options or shorter shutdown periods could support employees in high-risk situations while maintaining a safe and inclusive workplace culture.

The Foundation encourages businesses to consider the following initiatives:

Flexible Leave Policies: Allowing employees to tailor their leave times offers victims the ability to access safer environments when they need them.

Resource Accessibility: Raising awareness of support resources, such as 1800RESPECT, a 24/7 helpline, and shelters, can connect FDV victims to help during the holidays.

Emergency Assistance Programs: Financial support in times of crisis can be crucial for those seeking to leave abusive situations.

Community Partnerships: Collaborating with local FDV organizations can extend resources and help employers create a supportive workplace culture.

Community Resources Offer Lifeline During Shutdowns

Though the Christmas shutdown can sever vital connections for FDV victims, support is available. Stronger Families Foundation urges businesses to disseminate information about essential services, like 1800RESPECT, which operates year-round, and local shelters that provide immediate assistance.

The Path Forward: Rethinking Christmas Shutdowns for FDV Safety

The Stronger Families Foundation asks Australian businesses to consider if the traditional, prolonged holiday shutdown is still relevant today. By fostering flexible policies and maintaining workplace support systems, businesses can play a vital role in safeguarding FDV victims and creating a safe environment for all employees.

“Businesses have a unique opportunity to contribute to the safety and well-being of their employees, especially those vulnerable to FDV,” added Geoff Hart-Davies. “Let’s make this holiday season one that respects every employee’s right to safety, support, and a future free from violence.”

For more information on Stronger Families Foundation’s work and FDV prevention programs, please visit www.strongerfamilies.com.au or contact Geoff Hart-Davies 0413 615500 ghd@strongerfamilies.com.au

About Stronger Families Foundation

The Stronger Families Foundation is dedicated to preventing family and domestic violence through targeted education programs for fathers. By providing tools and resources, Stronger Families empowers families to build healthier relationships and safer communities.

Ends

