

Factsheet

Victimisation of gay and bi+ men through dating apps

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What we know about the trend of victimisation

Since June 2024, Victoria Police has been investigating attacks on gay and bisexual men. Perpetrators have lured victims to public places through Grindr or other dating apps. Victims have been threatened, extorted, assaulted or robbed. Often, the perpetrators have made homophobic comments.

The offenders are mostly 'vigilante' groups of young men aged between 14 and 24, who pose as an adult man on Grindr to lure men to public areas. The incidents typically involve being filmed by one or more offenders. Most incidents involve Grindr, with a small number on other platforms like Daddy Hunt, Scruff and Snapchat. On several occasions the offenders identified a victim's address through geotagging on Snapchat.

Victoria Police has worked with several organisations to understand and address this offending, including:

- The Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities
- Thorne Harbour Health
- Switchboard
- Grindr
- Police organisations from around Australia and internationally

We have worked together to respond to incidents and raise awareness.

Victoria Police has made a number of arrests since June 2024. Some perpetrators have been sentenced to jail for these offences. However, it is likely that many attacks have not been reported to police.

Responding to victimisation through dating apps

Prejudice motivated crimes

Attacks on gay and bisexual men through dating apps may be prejudice motivated crimes.

A prejudice motivated crime is also known as a 'hate crime'. It is any crime that a person commits because of hatred or bias towards a group. This could be on the basis of the victim's actual or perceived characteristic/s, such as sexual orientation, gender identity, sex, race, and others.

The offence can be partly motivated by prejudice. Prejudice does not need to be the sole reason for the offending.

Prejudice or hate is an 'aggravating factor', which makes crimes more serious and can impact on sentencing. It is not a separate offence. There are also specific offences which relate to prejudice and vilification. Refer to the VPM Prejudice Motivated Crime and the [Prejudice Motivated Crime page](#) on the [Community Support Hub](#) for guidance.

Supporting victims

Members are asked to consider these incidents when attending similar jobs, or where a male victim may be hesitant in disclosing details of a potential offence to police.

Where members believe an incident may be related to this series, please notify PSCD through the [OFFICE-OF-CMDR-PSCD-MGR](#) PBEA for intelligence purposes.

Many LGBTIQ+ victims are reluctant to report a crime to police, including where they have been targeted with violence. This may be due to:

- Embarrassment
- Fear of being outed
- Fear of being judged or blamed
- Concern that nothing can be done
- A mistrust of police

Victims who come to the attention of police may be reluctant to fully disclose details of offences, or to proceed with an investigation. It is essential for police to create a safe environment for LGBTIQ+ people to report crime and seek assistance when victimised and for frontline members to handle information regarding a victim's gender identity, pronouns and sexuality with respect at all times.

To support victims of attacks through dating apps:

- Improve your knowledge of [prejudice motivated crime and incidents](#), the associated policy and procedures.
- Treat all reports with seriousness and sensitivity.
- Refer victims to appropriate support services.
 - Switchboard has established a **dedicated helpline** to support victims: [Support for victims of app-facilitated violence — Switchboard Victoria](#)
 - Phone: 1800 729 367 (Press 1)
 - Open: 10am - 5pm, Tuesday - Saturday
 - [Rainbow Door](#)
 - [Thorne Harbour Health](#)
- Refer to local [LGBTIQ+ Liaison Officers \(LLOs\)](#) for advice.
- Refer to [Victim-Centric Policing for LGBTIQ+ Communities](#) for further guidance.

Safety tips

Here are some tips for staying safe when using dating apps:



- Always trust your gut instinct.
- Be cautious when using apps like Snapchat which have geolocating functions.
- Meet in a public place where there are other people around.
- If you arrange to meet someone, tell friends or family where you are going. Give them information about the person you are meeting.
- Be careful about linking to your social media accounts. These may contain personal information.
- Verify the other person's identity before you meet up.
- Familiarise yourself with the app's safety features and use these if necessary.
- Don't give out too much information too soon. This includes information like place of work, address, phone number and financial information.
- If you feel uncomfortable, leave, and stop communicating - it's always ok to say no.
- Always remain vigilant and stay up to date with emerging issues on dating apps.

Where to go to for help

For more information, visit the [Community Support Hub](#) or email the Priority and Safer Communities Division position based email account: [OFFICE-OF-CMDR-PSCD-MGR](#).

Further guidance

- [Victim-Centric Policing for LGBTIQA+ Communities](#)
- [Prejudice Motivated Crime \(PMC\) and Incidents \(PMI\)](#)
- [10 Tips for Keeping Safe on Hookup Apps | Thorne Harbour Health](#)