



Supplementary submission and answers to questions on notice for the *Parliamentary inquiry into a better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence*



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## INTRODUCTION

One in Three would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to expand upon our written submission and answer questions on notice from the Canberra Hearing on Tuesday 5th September 2017.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

We would like to clarify and expand upon some of the material offered orally at the Canberra Hearing, as well as providing some additional information that we feel would be of assistance to the Committee.

### *One in Three initiatives*

During the Canberra Hearing, the Acting Chair asked “what current initiatives does One in Three have in place to work with these services to improve access for men experiencing family violence?”<sup>1</sup>.

As outlined at the Hearing, One in Three is primarily a lobbying and advocacy organisation. While we would love to do more, and there is a desperate need for additional services, we lack the resources to provide our own services or work extensively with other NGOs in providing services.

The main resource we provide is our website [oneinthree.com.au](http://oneinthree.com.au). It provides:

- information about the experiences of male victims and the barriers to disclosing they often face;
- research and statistics about male victims;
- opportunities for men to tell their own personal story and read over 200 stories from other men;
- news from around the globe; and
- a comprehensive list of national and international resources.

We have produced some powerful [videos](#) of men telling their personal stories of family violence and abuse. We regularly give conference presentations, provide research assistance to students, and give talks at high schools. We have produced a series of seven free digital [poster designs](#) aimed at educating boys and young men about respectful and healthy relationships. Unless we give men and boys the courage and support to disclose their experience of family violence, they will continue to suffer in silence.

We have collaborated with various NGOs to establish better services for male victims, most notably working with *Victims & Witnesses of Crime Court Support* (VWCCS), *NSW Police* and *Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service* to develop the *Insight* trial court support scheme for male victims of violence at the Downing Centre and Parramatta Courthouses in inner and western Sydney. The scheme operated between 2013 and 2015. Unfortunately, because of issues such as resistance to the scheme from other agencies including the Police, who failed to help advertise or promote the service, the work of the program was eventually folded into the day-to-day work of VWCCS.

Some other examples of collaborative work with other NGOs include:

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<sup>1</sup> Proof Committee Hansard, [HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY AND LEGAL AFFAIRS. A better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence \(Public\). TUESDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2017, CANBERRA](#), p2.



- assisting the *Men's Advocacy Network* in WA in developing the groundbreaking 2010 *Intimate Partner Abuse of Men*<sup>2</sup> report conducted by researchers from the School of Psychology and Social Science at Edith Cowan University
- collaborating with the *Western Sydney Men's and Relationship Services Network* to produce a [poster](#) listing domestic violence services available to male victims, which was distributed widely amongst service providers in Western Sydney.

*One in Three* regularly lodges submissions, attends consultations and appears before government inquiries and royal commissions into family violence. As a result, all the recent state and federal inquiries have acknowledged the existence and needs of male victims of family violence and have recommended that better support services be provided for them.

For example,

- The 2012 NSW Legislative Council's Inquiry into *Domestic violence trends and issues in NSW* recognised the gap in services for male victims and encouraged the government to examine how services could most appropriately be provided to male victims of domestic violence<sup>3</sup>.
- The 2015 Victorian *Royal Commission Into Family Violence* recommended that within a two year period, the Victims Support Agency and all other relevant support services should develop joint arrangements to ensure that male victims of family violence are supported in obtaining the help they need<sup>4</sup>.
- The 2015 report of the Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into *Domestic Violence in Australia* recommended that the Commonwealth Government recognise the need to provide appropriate services to male victims of domestic and family violence<sup>5</sup>.

The NSW Government recently opened up their [Start Safely](#) housing subsidy to male victims and committed \$13M over 4 years to provide new services for male victims of family violence, and we believe the Victoria Government is soon to follow suit. \$750,000 over 3 years in additional funding<sup>6</sup> was also provided by the Federal Government to *Mensline Australia* to enable them to better support male victims of family violence.

## Data sources referenced by *One in Three*

During the Canberra Hearing, Ms Husar advised that the Police's experience is that predominantly claims of violence made by men that are coming forward are counterclaims. She then asked us how and where we derive our figures from.

We have contacted BOCSAR who have [advised us](#) that,

Police reports are simply the recording of incidents that police have attended, or had reported to them. We have no way of determining whether incidents reported to police are genuine or not. We can provide the number of incidents of DV offences, such as DV assault, by the offender or victim's gender, but nothing in relation to whether they are counterclaims or not.

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<sup>2</sup> Tilbrook, E., Allan, A. & Dear, G. (2010), [Intimate Partner Abuse of Men](#). East Perth: Men's Advisory Network, May 26, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> New South Wales Parliament (2012), Legislative Council, Standing Committee on Social Issues, [Domestic violence trends and issues in NSW](#) (Report ; no. 46), p.xxxii.

<sup>4</sup> State of Victoria (2016), [Royal Commission into Family Violence: Summary and recommendations](#), Parl Paper No 132 (2014–16), p93.

<sup>5</sup> The Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee (2015), [Domestic violence in Australia](#), August 2015, p109.

<sup>6</sup> Gillard, J. (2010), [National plan to reduce violence against women and their children fact sheet](#), Australian Labor Party, p2.



BOCSAR also provided us with their latest recorded crime statistics on Domestic Assault in NSW (July 2016 to June 2017) which show that there were 9,474 male and 21,231 female victims of domestic violence related assault<sup>7</sup> (around one third of victims were male).

During the Canberra Hearing we advised that our main source of data comes from the 2012 ABS [Personal Safety Survey](#) (PSS). Another key data source is the [National Homicide Monitoring Program](#) database kept by the Australian Institute of Criminology. We have attached a Fact Sheet containing relevant statistics from these two data sources as *Appendix A* to this submission.

Of course, the most relevant and compelling data as far as this particular Inquiry is concerned is the data captured by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) that we provided in our [original submission](#), demonstrating conclusively that men and women in contact with the Family Law system experience not dissimilar levels of family violence and abuse.

The Committee can find a list of more than 2 dozen authoritative Australian references on our [website](#), supporting the fact that one in three victims of family violence is male.

## What do children and young people report?

Equally useful, we believe, is looking at the experiences of children and young people who witness family violence in the home. Unlike their parents, they have no reason to be untruthful about what they have seen.

The most recent Australian population survey on young people and domestic violence is *Young people and domestic violence – national research on young people’s attitudes to and experiences of domestic violence*<sup>8</sup> (YPADV). Published in 2001 by the National Crime Prevention division of the Commonwealth Attorney General’s Department and the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, the national research involved a quantitative survey of 5,000 young Australians aged between 12 and 20, and in-depth discussions with special groups, namely homeless youth, victims of domestic violence, and youth from different ethnic backgrounds. This is the largest and most recent sample of young people ever surveyed about their experience of and attitudes towards domestic violence in Australia or, most likely, the world.

The survey looked at young people’s experience of parental domestic violence. The principal aim was to provide a baseline measure of the extent to which young people in Australia are directly exposed to domestic violence between carers. Some of the results of the survey are presented in the following tables and graphs.

Table 4.22: Young people’s awareness of parental violence — male to female parent

	Perpetrated against mother/stepmother by male partner			
	NO	NOT SURE	ONCE/TWICE	MORE OFTEN
	%	%	%	%
Yelled loudly at her	24	14	30	28
Put her down/humiliated her	46	19	14	16
Not let her see her family or friends	74	11	5	6
Not let her have any money for her own use	75	10	5	6
Thrown something at her	69	11	8	9
Threatened to hit her	66	11	9	10
Tried to hit her	70	10	7	9
Hit her because she was hitting him	77	10	4	4
Actually hit her (even though she didn’t hit him)	74	8	5	9
Threatened her with a knife or gun	84	5	2	4
Used a knife or fired a gun	87	5	1	2

<sup>7</sup> NSW Government Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (2017), [NSW Recorded Crime Statistics July 2016 to June 2017](#).

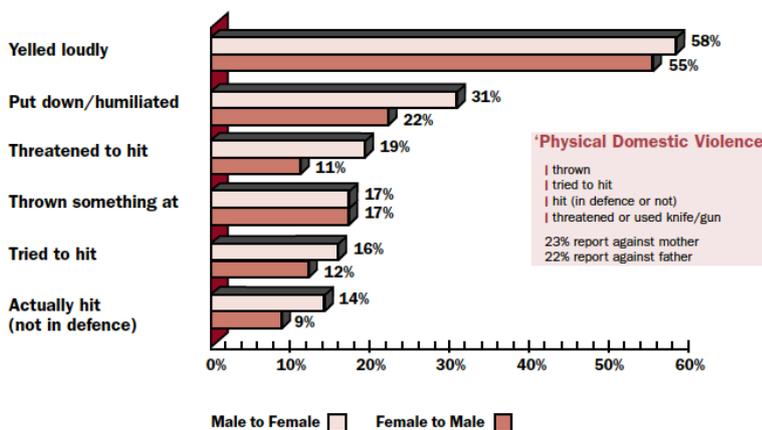
<sup>8</sup> National Crime Prevention (2001), [Young People and Domestic Violence: National Research on Young People’s Attitudes to and Experiences of Domestic Violence](#). Barton: Attorney-General’s Dept., September 18, 2001.



Table 4.23: Young people's awareness of parental violence — female to male parent

	Perpetrated against father/stepfather by female partner			
	NO	NOT SURE	ONCE/TWICE	MORE OFTEN
	%	%	%	%
Yelled loudly at him	28	12	30	25
Put him down/humiliated him	54	19	12	10
Not let him see his family or friends	81	8	3	3
Not let him have any money for his own use	83	7	2	2
Thrown something at him	69	9	11	6
Threatened to hit him	76	9	6	5
Tried to hit him	74	9	7	5
Hit him because he was hitting her	79	8	4	4
Actually hit him (even though he didn't hit her)	79	7	5	4
Threatened him with a knife or gun	86	5	2	2
Used a knife or fired a gun	88	4	1	2

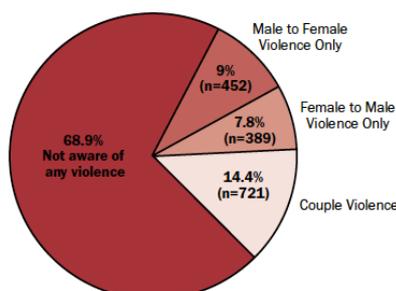
Figure 4.11: Young people's awareness of parental violence - percentage of total sample aware of past occurrences



58% of young people aged 12 to 20 years have witnessed a male parent “yelling loudly at” a female parent and 55% have witnessed a female parent “yelling loudly at” a male parent. 23% of young people aged 12 to 20 years have witnessed physical domestic violence by a male parent against a female parent and 22% have witnessed physical domestic violence by a female parent against a male parent.

While the rates of female-to-male violence witnessed by young people are slightly less than the rates of male-to-female violence, they are quite significant indeed. At the serious end of the spectrum there is some gender difference (9% vs 4% for unilateral hitting more often than once/twice; 4% vs 2% for threatening with a knife or gun more than once/twice), but there is no overwhelming prevalence of male to female violence.

Figure 4.12: Young people's experiences of physical domestic violence





Much more common and damaging than either male-to-female or female-to-male unilateral violence is mutual (or reciprocal) couple violence. When looking at the effects of young people witnessing domestic violence, the survey was unequivocal: “the most severe disruption on all available indicators occurred in households where couple violence was reported” (page 131).

- Considering physical violence only, nearly a third (31.2%) of young people had witnessed one of the following: a male carer being violent towards his female partner; a female carer being violent to her male partner; or both carers being violent.
- 14.4% of young people reported that this violence was perpetrated both by the male against the female and the female against the male. 9.0% reported that violence was perpetrated against their mother by her male partner but that she was not violent towards him. 7.8% reported that violence was perpetrated against their father by his female partner but that he was not violent towards her.
- Most reported parental violence seemed to be minor, in that no effects were reported by the majority of child witnesses. Where outcomes were reported, the most likely outcome was the separation of the parents. The most severe disruptions on all indicators occurred in those households where both male to female and female to male violence was reported (i.e. two-way couple violence).
- Where young people had, or were experiencing parental domestic violence, a third of them had not told anyone about it. This rate was higher amongst boys than girls and higher amongst the 12 and 13 year olds than the mid or older teens.
- Witnessing parental domestic violence had a significant effect on young people’s attitudes and experiences. Witnessing was also the strongest predictor of subsequent perpetration by young people. The best predictor of perpetration was witnessing certain types of female to male violence, whilst the best predictor of victimisation in personal relationships was having witnessed male to female violence.

The last dot point above is crucial: even if male to female violence causes more injuries and deaths on average than does female to male violence, if we want to break the cycle of violence we must work to prevent female to male family and domestic violence in order that young people don’t grow up to perpetrate violence themselves in their adult relationships.

## Is women’s use of violence primarily in self-defence?

The Committee has likely heard evidence that when women use violence against their partner, it is primarily defensive in nature. We would like to present evidence to challenge this assertion.

The YPADV study discussed above found that very little of the physical domestic violence used by either men or women was in self defence only (we remind the Committee that this evidence is provided by children and young people watching their parents’ violence):

### Male to female violence

The items pertaining to physical violence, that is, thrown something at, tried to hit, hit in defence, hit although not being hit, threatened with knife or gun, and used knife or gun were analysed as one sub classification described as physical domestic violence. Using this definition, it was found that 23.4 per cent of respondents reported at least one act of physical domestic violence against their mothers/stepmothers. Very little of this was in self defence only; when hit in defence (i.e. 1.3% hit her because he was being hit was removed), the proportion reporting physical domestic violence was 22.1 per cent (page 96).



## Female to male violence

As with male to female violence, the items pertaining to physical violence were analysed as a 'physical domestic violence' sub classification. Compared to the 23.4 per cent of respondents who reported at least one act of physical domestic violence against their mothers/stepmothers, 22.1 per cent reported at least one act of physical domestic violence against their fathers/stepfathers (Table 4.27: page 102). As with male to female violence, very little was only in self defence; the percentage reporting physical domestic violence, excluding 1.3% hitting because being hit was 21.2 per cent (page 97).

What does the extensive body of international research show when it comes to the use of violence in self-defence? The [Partner Abuse State of Knowledge Project](#) (PASK) is the world's largest domestic violence research database – 2,657 pages – with summaries of 1,700 peer-reviewed studies.

The purpose of PASK is to bring together in a rigorously evidence-based, transparent and methodical manner existing knowledge about partner abuse with reliable, up-to-date research that can easily be accessed both by researchers and the general public. In March, 2010, the Senior Editor of the *Partner Abuse* journal recruited family violence scholars from the United States, Canada and the UK to conduct an extensive and thorough review of the empirical literature, in 17 broad topic areas. Researchers were asked to conduct a formal search for published, peer-reviewed studies through standard, widely used search programs, and then catalogue and summarise all known research studies relevant to each major topic and its sub-topics. In the interest of thoroughness and transparency, the researchers agreed to summarise all quantitative studies published in peer-reviewed journals after 1990, as well as any major studies published prior to that time, and to clearly specify exclusion criteria. Included studies are organised in extended tables, each table containing summaries of studies relevant to its particular sub-topic.

In this unprecedented undertaking, a total of 42 scholars and 70 research assistants at 20 universities and research institutions spent two years or more researching their topics and writing the results. Approximately 12,000 studies were considered and more than 1,700 were summarised and organised into tables. The 17 manuscripts, which provide a review of findings on each of the topics, for a total of 2,657 pages, appear in 5 consecutive special issues of *Partner Abuse* published between April, 2012 and April, 2013. All conclusions, including the extent to which the research evidence supports or undermines current theories, are based strictly on the data collected.

The PASK study found the following when it comes to the motivation for using intimate partner violence (IPV):

- Male and female IPV perpetrated from similar motives – primarily to get back at a partner for emotionally hurting them, because of stress or jealousy, to express anger and other feelings that they could not put into words or communicate, and to get their partner's attention.
- Eight studies directly compared men and women in the power/control motive and subjected their findings to statistical analyses. Three reported no significant gender differences and one had mixed findings. One paper found that women were more motivated to perpetrate violence as a result of power/control than were men, and three found that men were more motivated; however, gender differences were weak
- Of the ten papers containing gender-specific statistical analyses, five indicated that women were significantly more likely to report self-defence as a motive for perpetration than men. Four papers did not find statistically significant gender differences, and one paper reported that men were more likely to report this motive than women. Authors point out that it might be particularly difficult for highly masculine males to admit to perpetrating violence in self-defence, as this admission implies vulnerability.
- Self-defence was endorsed in most samples by only a minority of respondents, male and female. For non-perpetrator samples, the rates of self-defence reported by men ranged from 0% to 21%, and for women the range



was 5% to 35%. The highest rates of reported self-defence motives (50% for men, 65.4% for women) came from samples of perpetrators, who may have reasons to overestimate this motive.

- None of the studies reported that anger/retaliation was significantly more of a motive for men than women's violence; instead, two papers indicated that anger was more likely to be a motive for women's violence as compared to men.
- Jealousy/partner cheating seems to be a motive to perpetrate violence for both men and women.

A 2004 qualitative Australian study by Sotirios Sarantakos from Charles Sturt University titled *Deconstructing Self-Defense in Wife-to-Husband Violence*<sup>9</sup> is also particularly illustrative<sup>10</sup>:

Members of 68 families with allegedly violent wives were studied to explore the nature of women's violence at home and to ascertain whether wives assault their spouses in self-defence. Accounts of children and the wives' mothers were contrasted with husbands' and wives' accounts to ensure a high degree of accuracy of the assessment of the problem and to test the validity of the spouses' accounts. Qualitative analysis revealed that the credibility of the wives' accounts of violence was highly questionable and a justification of self-defence for female-to-male violence was unfounded in a majority of cases.

The results of the study revealed that neither the nature of the behaviour of the spouses nor the structure of the family context of violence, nor the answers to direct questions support the defence of self-defence. In most cases, wives assault their husbands physically and otherwise not to defend themselves but to achieve other goals, for example, to settle a conflict or to punish their husbands. Simply, (a) wives assault their husbands when there is no "impending danger" for them or the children; (b) they hit husbands who have not been violent against them in the past; (c) they cause husbands to live in fear of their lives and of the lives of their children; (d) not wives but husbands leave the relationship, with the wives attempting to force husbands to return home; and (e) the majority of abusive wives admit that they did not hit their husbands in self-defence.

Equally important is the finding that women's allegations of DV were proven to be false. In most cases, the initial allegations of DV were modified considerably by them during the course of the study, particularly when they were faced with the accounts of their children and mothers, admitting in the end that they were neither victims of violence nor acting in self-defence. It is worth noting that these allegations were used—and are still used—by the authorities to construct DV and to act upon it.

In the United States a study of 302 men<sup>11</sup> who sustained severe partner violence revealed that:

...over half of the men reported that their women partners made false accusations against them, which included that he hit or beat her, that a restraining order was filed against him under false pretences, or that he physically and/or sexually abused the children. These findings are congruent with a previous study that showed that approximately 50% of men victims of IPV stated that their partners gave false information to the court system in order to gain custody of the children or to obtain a restraining order.

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<sup>9</sup> Sarantakos, S. (2004), "[Deconstructing Self-defense in Wife-to-husband Violence](#)." *The Journal of Men's Studies* 12, no. 3 (2004): 277-296.

<sup>10</sup> The purpose of citing this data is not to suggest in any way that female perpetrators are more likely than male perpetrators to claim victimhood or claim to have used violence in self-defence. On the contrary, we are providing evidence that *both male and female* perpetrators can use these tactics to avoid taking responsibility for their own use of violence.

<sup>11</sup> Hines, D. & Douglas, E. (2010), "[A Closer Look at Men who Sustain Intimate Terrorism by Women](#)", *Partner Abuse*. 2010 Jan 1; 1(3): 286–313.



## Are males primarily victims of family violence from other males?

The Committee has likely heard evidence that while male victims of family violence certainly exist, much of the time the perpetrator is another male (a same-sex partner or another family member), not a female.

The 2012 ABS Personal Safety Survey (PSS) sheds light on this claim. The PSS found that the vast majority of partner and dating violence committed against men is perpetrated by females (94%). Only 6% occurs in same-sex relationships with a male perpetrator<sup>12</sup>.

But what about broader family violence between family members? The PSS found<sup>13</sup> that the top 5 perpetrators of family violence against male victims since the age of 15, by sex, were as follows:

1. Female previous partner (n=318,300)
2. Girlfriend or date (n=295,100)
3. Father (n=161,700)
4. Female current partner (n=112,600)
5. Other male relative or in-law (n=80,100).

So while it is certainly true that a greater percentage of male victims experience family violence from a member of the same sex than do female victims, the vast majority of male victims experience family violence perpetrated by a female.

## Coercive control vs 'fights'

The Committee has likely heard evidence that while 'fights' (Johnson's "Situational couple violence" not motivated by a desire to control the life of the other person) are perpetrated almost equally by men and women, 'coercive control' (Stark's "pattern of behaviour which seeks to take away the victim's liberty or freedom, to strip away their sense of self") is predominantly or almost exclusively perpetrated by men.

Recent research from the UK challenges this assertion. In 2014 Elizabeth Bates from the University of Cumbria, along with Nicola Graham-Kevan and John Archer from the University of Central Lancashire published their study titled *Testing predictions from the male control theory of men's partner violence*<sup>14</sup>:

The aim of this study was to test predictions from the male control theory of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Johnson's (1995) typology. A student sample (N = 1104) reported on their use of physical aggression and controlling behaviour, to partners and to same-sex non-intimates. Contrary to the male control theory, women were found to be more physically aggressive to their partners than men were, and the reverse pattern was found for

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<sup>12</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013), [4906.0 - Personal Safety, Australia, 2012](#), Table 6 EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE SINCE THE AGE OF 15, Relationship to perpetrator by sex of perpetrator. 26,500\* males experienced violence from a male partner and 427,900 males experienced violence from a female partner since the age of 15. 18,700\*\* males experienced violence from a boyfriend or male date and 295,100 males experienced violence from a girlfriend or female date since the age of 15. [\*Estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.]

<sup>13</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013), [4906.0 - Personal Safety, Australia, 2012](#), Table 6 EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE SINCE THE AGE OF 15, Relationship to perpetrator by sex of perpetrator & Table 4 EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE SINCE THE AGE OF 15, Relationship to perpetrator.

<sup>14</sup> Bates, E. A., Graham-Kevan, N. and Archer, J. (2014), [Testing predictions from the male control theory of men's partner violence](#). *Aggr. Behav.*, 40: 42–55. doi:10.1002/ab.21499.



aggression to same-sex non-intimates. Furthermore, there were no substantial sex differences in controlling behaviour, which significantly predicted physical aggression in both sexes. IPV was found to be associated with physical aggression to same-sex non-intimates, thereby demonstrating a link with aggression outside the family. Using Johnson's (1995) typology, women were more likely than men to be classed as "intimate terrorists", which was counter to earlier findings. Overall, these results do not support the male control theory of IPV. Instead, they fit the view that IPV does not have a special aetiology, and is better studied within the context of other forms of aggression.

In light of this evidence, we would encourage the Committee to consider that perpetrators who might be seeking to extend their coercive controlling behaviour by declaring themselves as victims, may be *either male or female*.

It is critically important that the Committee also understand that while coercive control is undeniably the most serious form of family violence, 'fights' are by no means minor or trivial. Even feminist scholar Michael Johnson, one of the best known scholars of typologies of violence, acknowledges that women's violence is a serious social issue which must be addressed<sup>15</sup>:

- "women both initiate violence and participate in mutual violence and that, particularly in teenage and young adult samples, women perpetrate violence against their partners more frequently than do the men"
- "repeat, severe violence against a non-violent intimate is symmetrical by gender"
- "I and others have always noted that situational couple violence
  - (a) is far and away the most common form of intimate partner violence,
  - (b) is perpetrated about equally by men and women, and
  - (c) can be extremely consequential."

By applying Johnson's typology of intimate partner violence to the data from the 2012 ABS PSS, we find that there were some 45,000 male victims (26%) and 128,000 female victims (74%) of severe/chronic violence during the past 12 months<sup>16</sup>.

## Case studies

At the Canberra Hearing, Ms Husar asked the following:

A lot of the submissions have been about case studies. They've been able to point to specific examples in the family law sphere that have involved extenuating domestic and family violence. Do you have any cases that you are willing to put forward or that are available to the committee that could be used to exemplify what it is that you've provided in your submission?

We are not an organisation that has any capacity to conduct case work support with the men and women who contact us. We would direct the Committee to the hundreds of [personal stories](#) of family violence and abuse that we have collected on our website over the years.

However, because of Ms Husar's specific question, we would like to present two case studies to the Committee. We put out a request asking people to volunteer to tell their stories. Over a 48 hour period we received 61 offers from male victims of family violence to tell their personal stories. From these we chose the following two cases which we believe are representative of the experiences of many male victims who have been through the family law system.

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<sup>15</sup> Johnson, M. (2011). [Gender and Types of Intimate Partner Violence: A Response to an Anti-Feminist Literature Review](#). *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, Volume 16, Issue 4, July/August 2011. pp 289 - 296.

<sup>16</sup> Andresen, G. (2014), [A critique of the claim by Dr Michael Flood that women make up 90 to 95% of victims of severe domestic violence](#).



**Case Study No.1: Story**

I am [redacted] years old and a father of two girls, now aged [redacted].

[redacted] last year my marriage [redacted] came to a violent end.

I was no longer able to work due to medical reasons. This is when my wife became increasingly abusive, controlling and violent.

Police were called to the house we lived in about six times. The first three times I was removed from the house under a 24 hour move on notice simply because I was male, but thanks to our police commissioner's community policing initiative where the same officer kept attending, by the third time, even though I was removed, I was the protected person on the order. The subsequent three times my wife was removed, culminating in her finally being involuntarily being admitted to a mental health ward at a hospital.

At the time I had two choices, flee with my daughter or try and support my wife through her mental health and addiction issues. Unfortunately I chose the latter.

Things were calm for about six months, then got worse than ever. She became pregnant after going out and getting drunk, returning home and forcing herself on me, with quite a degree of violence. I did not report this incident as the police were sceptical enough about the domestic violence, why would they believe a woman was capable of rape?

By 2016, I was completely alone, isolated from family and friends, and completely under her control. She knew how important my children were to me and held the threat that I would never see them again if I did not comply with everything she said.

I was studying part time [redacted], came home exhausted after a particularly gruelling day, and she demanded I go out and procure her some drugs, which I refused to do. She took my keys, drove herself and got her drugs, and returned home to lock herself in her room.

The following day she told me she wanted me gone, and when I told her she couldn't just kick me out as my name was on the lease, she said she would get me out. She applied for a VRO that day.

This was on a Friday. The following Monday she had her hearing where she told the magistrate I had never been violent or abusive. He adjourned the matter for a couple of weeks to hear my side of the story.

On the Monday she dropped the paperwork in my lap and told me I had to go to court.

I told her if she wanted me gone, couldn't we just wait until the end of the month when I got my hardship payment from my superannuation and I would get out. I said "let's just behave like adults and be normal for the kids' sake". She agreed, but by Saturday, she attacked me again, pulled a knife on me in the kitchen in front of the kids, and punched me in the head about six times as I tried to escape.

I went to the local police station which was closed, rang the non-emergency line, and was told to go to another police station some 20kms away to give a statement.

As I waited for six hours to give my statement to the only officer on duty, my wife had fled to her mother's place, had police attend, and by the time I gave my statement, there was a yellow alert on the system about me.

Both statements were fed back to the local police, and on Monday I went in to follow up and insist on charges. The officer laughed at me with my black eye, told me there was no chance of successful prosecution and charges



would not be laid as it was a "he said, she said". He told me "she has bruises too mate." I said "what, on her shoulders where I tried to stop her punching me? Charge me too then! Give me my day in court!"

He refused, and during the past year this was the only time I lost my temper. I called him a few choice words, told him what he would do if the genders were reversed and that this is society's comment on domestic violence that it is always the man's fault.

Up until that moment I had faith in the police. To report as a victim of a crime and be laughed at, is in my view reprehensible. When I tried to get a welfare check a few weeks later, the same officer actually scoffed as soon as he saw me. Then told me to call 131444. When the welfare check was eventually done, the officer told me not to waste his time and sort it out via family court.

I went to the Department for Child Protection, who refused to investigate any of the serious concerns I had for the safety of my children, then to court to file a VRO against my wife and contact legal aid.

On Friday my wife called me to tell me my eldest daughter wanted to come and visit me. When I arrived, my wife and both my children were all packed up. The charade that they were being kicked out of her mother's place was later admitted to be a ploy to regain control of the rental and its contents.

I stayed until my money came in, praying every night she would stab me in my sleep. The VRO's we both filed, hers was dropped as she didn't show up, mine was withdrawn by consent as she was back in the house, and the magistrate told me he would not grant it anyway to have her removed from the house as this needed to be sorted out in family court.

When my money arrived I fled to be with family for a couple of weeks, then returned, knowing I would be homeless to fight for my kids.

When I returned, all of what my wife deemed to be mine was neatly packed on our back porch. She asked me if I was intent on going for custody. I said "yes". She told me to get out. I did. I went and registered at a homeless shelter, and returned in the afternoon to find my belongings smashed and strewn all over the driveway. I called the police. They attended and refused to lay charges. She tried to claim that it was me who smashed my stuff and I had assaulted her. The police didn't buy that, and told me to get to family court as soon as possible.

The following day I filed a VRO and was immediately granted an ex parte interim VRO. The final hearing was a week before the directions hearing, and was granted by consent with a couple of minor conditions. By this time I had seen my children for the sum total of two hours in six months.

My initiating paperwork included a Form 4 Notification of family violence, child abuse/neglect. Her response was absolutely full of lies to try to justify her behaviour. Despite her initial application for a VRO, where she stood up in front of a magistrate and swore under oath that I had never been violent or abusive, her affidavit in family court in response to the Form 4 tried to paint me as a monster.

Because the VRO was consented to on a without admission basis, my wife's Lawyer ensured no evidence needed to be presented about any of the abuse. This then paved the way for her ability to abjectly lie in family court with full awareness that there was no likelihood of perjury charges being laid. Had she opposed the VRO and lied in the Magistrate's Court, I believe she would likely have faced perjury charges.

At the directions hearing, my wife consented to all the orders sought, including weekly access and twice monthly drug testing. She failed the first two drug tests before legal aid pulled funding and I couldn't even get a letter sent by my lawyer. She also only allowed about a third of the visits agreed to.



She has been convicted of five VRO breaches, and continues to breach but I have little faith that breaching her will improve anything.

At the dispute resolution in August (that the court ordered for May), I told the mediator that my position is that the only reasonable course of action for my kids is that they be removed from their mother and put into my care. By then my new partner had relocated , and we had secured a rental opposite my eldest daughter's school.

The mediator told me that was impossible, so I pushed for 50/50 shared care.

I was granted that with my eldest, and on those days she is here, my youngest spends from 9-4 during the day with me.

Because my wife has refused any drug or mental health intervention, the court case remains open. She is still abusive, neglectful, and breaching the VRO. I will continue to fight on behalf of my children.

I am not trying to cut my children's mother from their lives. If my wife was male, on drugs, violent, abusive, neglectful, breaching VRO's. She would be in gaol not enabled by the system to continue her abuse.

I have experienced physical violence, intimidation and threats: punches, kicks and threats that I would never see my children again. The final incident also included a knife being pulled on me in front of my kids.

I have experienced sexual abuse: I was raped (forced to penetrate) by my wife. This was combined with violence (punches and slaps), and demeaning insults.

I have experienced emotional abuse: the last three years have been continual emotional abuse that continues to this day. I still receive texts full of it.

I have experienced psychological abuse: switching frequently between idolising and hating me, and threatening I would never see my kids again. Withholding access after separation for no good reason. The psychological abuse extending to my kids.

I have experienced verbal abuse: frequent verbal abuse for any sleight she could think up. Sometimes for ridiculous things like "hanging stuff on the line wrong".

I have experienced financial abuse: she controlled the finances totally. When I was earning \$1,600 per week nett, I did not have enough money to buy a packet of chewing gum. Once I became medically unfit for work, things got worse fast. Centrelink paid her the bulk of the money including a carer's pension and family tax benefit. I was stuck on Newstart Allowance. She demanded all of my money to "contribute", which was usually gone within a day of receiving it.

At the last place we were in, she sent word through the real estate post-separation that she wanted my name removed from the lease. I said "no problem, as soon as my bond is returned," as unpaid electricity bills in my name were lumped on me. Within two weeks of that response I had a \$3,000 bill from the real estate agent. She had trashed the place and moved out.

I have experienced property damage: intentionally crashing two cars into each other then destroying them with a tyre iron. Smashing up two rental properties. Destroying pretty much all of my belongings when I went to retrieve them.

I have experienced social isolation: all phone calls and communications were monitored. She had full access to my phone and demanded I had no social media, friends, and did her best to limit my communication with my family.



From the Police, to the DCPFS, and Family Court, the entire system was geared from the get go to protect my abuser and punish me.

Private citizens should be able to press charges and get matters heard immediately by a magistrate if serious assault is alleged. My experience with Police and prosecutors was that they were incompetent and brainwashed that men are the only perpetrators of domestic violence. Female perpetrators should be held accountable just like men. Male victims and their kids deserve protection, shelter and support just as much as female victims.

On a scale of 1 to 10, I experienced fear at a level 10/10, control at a level of 10/10 and coercion at a level of 10/10.

My eldest child witnessed all of the violence and abuse. She is still fearful and anxious about returning to her mother's place. She is (and has been) frequently yelled at, and called all kinds of things no year old should ever be subjected to.

The only services I was able to access for male victims of family violence were Dads in Distress (peer support) and Starting Over Support (outfitted our place with furniture, appliances, etc, when I recently moved from homeless accommodation into a private rental with my new partner and her son). I have had very little practical assistance from legal aid, in fact only a month after the directions hearing they cut my funding.

If I had been female in the same position, rather than male, I could have fled with my kids to a shelter. I may have received legal aid for the VRO hearing (I was refused outright because I was male). If my wife was male, she would not be allowed anywhere near our kids. She would definitely be in gaol.

### **Case Study No.2: Story**

Domestic violence has ruled my life for the past years or so.

I was trauma-bonded to my ex-wife. She was a victim of child abuse. My abuse was different. I had to keep it a secret as it involved several family members. With the promise from my ex that one day she would tell, her denial was killing the relationship. We had kids and it was affecting them too.

We did have a year where I learnt I had become rape victim number two. Safe areas were things that we had to set up in our home with rules, like no abuse, no shouting, no violence, and in my ex-wife's case, no drinking or entering the safe area drunk (one of my ex-wife's addictions). It is difficult to tell my story as I suffer from C-PTSD.

Physical violence in the end was daily. It would range from a passing punch to being pinned up against the wall. Her favourite place was in my walk-in wardrobe as it was a confined space. Escape was through her, but once she was drunk she was super strong and harder to deal with. My ex-wife put me in hospital. I have had three stress-related heart attacks and am now on medication. She threatened me with an 8-inch knife standing over my bed as I slept, or tried to. Sleeping was with one eye open.

Sex was on my wife's terms. As a rape victim there were rules and regulations. That didn't bother me at first but it did turn into a problem later in the relationship.



Emotional abuse was focused around her rape. I was empathetic that she had been abused. She refused help for her mental health situation that only grew in time and affected the relationship. Sex would be promised then denied.

Psychological abuse formed the basis of our relationship, as I was drawn into her rape. I too played the victim role. Films that involved rape were banned and I would become super-vigilant around her abusers or if we would go out together. I was made to promise not to tell anyone about her rape or she would harm herself. Later in the relationship my family would ask what was wrong with me. My then wife would come up with a story that I was sick, avoiding the truth that I could no longer cope with the affects of her rape on my life. My then wife made promises to seek help that never really happened.

Verbal abuse happened daily. I was called names, made to feel inferior even in front of other people. My then wife knew I wouldn't tell about her rape and as I became sicker she managed to push the boundaries. She had no problem with raising her voice alone or in public. My then neighbours often said to me that all they could hear was my ex-wife's voice when we were having a row.

I experienced financial abuse. My ex-wife found it hard to work so I paid all the bills. When she did get part-time work, her money was her money. She never really contributed to the family home. Her money went on drink to sustain her addiction to alcohol. All the debt was in my name.

My ex-wife demanded control of my bankcard, with the idea of paying the bills, but we were visited by debt collectors. Her drink came first. I tried many times to regain control of my bankcard but she would get it back. She even lied to the bank to send another bankcard, but the bank found out when the two cards were used at the same time. I was called in to the bank and told about the problem with the two cards which I had cancelled. My new card was sent to the bank for collection. My ex-wife never knew until she went to use my old card and it was declined.

There was a lot of property damage. I bought my ex-wife a new car that she showed off in and blew the motor that I had to pay to get fixed. I had the windscreen of my car and her car smashed lots of times. Part of my recovery was to re-start hobbies I used to do before I met my ex-wife. My hobby then was model making. I began it again in my safe area. For her to walk in and smash one up was always a threat. Keeping them safe was a nightmare. I had my die cast model cars destroyed, my Elvis collection and my car almost sold (but I managed to cancel those sales). I had other belongings sold or given away.

Another hobby of mine is restoring old cars. When I finished respraying my last car she scratched it from front to back. I had my uniform thrown out. Phones that I had pictures on were destroyed. There was one occasion when I was rearing birds as a hobby. I went out, and when I came home again the birds were gone. Police were called to the break-in – the birds were never found. This was the work of my ex-wife. On another occasion I came home to find one of the birds had been killed in its cage: again my ex-wife.

As I became sicker I was isolated from my friends and family, just in case I told anyone about our home life or her rape. New friends were told I had brain damage and not to believe a word I said. Friends who visited me were made to feel unwelcome. If I was in hospital, no one was told. My birthday cards were opened and any money was removed before I could have the card. My ex-wife punished me if I opened or replied to an email.

I tried to talk to my Mum about my home life but she never believed me. My ex-wife was in regular contact with my family so my word was never believed as I was sick. I did confide in a friend, who then told my ex-wife. Wow did I get a beating for that! My true friends witnessed what was going on, and they did offer me support.

I did tell the police once. It took a lot of courage to go the the police station and ask for help, but I was told to go away as I was big enough to look after myself.



My doctor whom I confided in told me to contact mental health support for my wife. I did, but they could not help me because a mentally ill person has to ask for help themselves. My ex-wife would never do that. I was also told that the law had changed. I could ask for a Section 10 at home when she was going mad at me, but it's hard to phone them when you're being attacked. I phoned mental health support multiple times asking for help as I was in fear of my life. They were very sympathetic but couldn't help me as the law had changed.

In the end and in pure desperation, during one night of violence I called the Police. They came and my ex-wife was removed.

I had an interim intervention order placed on her (advised by the Police), that gave me time to gather evidence of her domestic violence. I had a lot of evidence including medical evidence, photos and videos. My ex-wife did the same to me. In court the judge was confused as our statements were different. I told the judge she could believe my evidence because my statement was taken from my phone. I videoed two hours of domestic violence on the night I called the Police. At last I was believed and my ex-wife's interim order was dismissed. She is a compulsive liar.

Later in court I did get the intervention order I wanted. It was granted for      years. My ex-wife fled the country.

The system is broken, it's that simple. The Police failed at their job, putting my life in daily danger. If they had acted, my ex-wife might be getting the mental health support she needed. The mental health act needs to change to protect the victim. I asked them for help with my ex-wife but two services failed me. Only now, two-and-a-half years later, have police warrants for her arrest been issued.

The family law courts are a joke. In the end I gave up the fight. I lost my home because of it. I was suffering from C-PTSD that was not taken into account, even with medical proof from my psychologist.

I had to leave my job because of the domestic violence at home. Finding work has been hard, and when I do, they notice I have mental health issues and let me go. Domestic violence has profoundly affected my life. I expected the system to help me, but it failed.

## Access to support services

At the Canberra Hearing, Ms Husar made the following statements:

“women who are claiming to have had violence perpetrated on them have to prove that this has happened before they are able to get services”

“women are having to prove that they're going through this and that it is not a counterclaim.”

These statements certainly surprise us. As a social worker for more than 20 years, and having been a counsellor for many women and men who claim to be experiencing family violence, Mr Humphreys was trained and directed to come from a standpoint of believing the victim. The risk of re-traumatising clients is an important ethical issue for social workers. Mr Humphreys has found very few people who presented to him claiming to be family violence victims were lying, and those who were, usually revealed themselves over time.

In order to investigate further whether Mr Humphreys' clinical experience was typical, we decided to conduct some further research in the Penrith area of Western Sydney.

Research was supervised by Graham D North, Master Applied Science - Social Ecology, University of Western Sydney, Majoring in Cultural Psychology.



## Brief

To establish the veracity of the following two statements by consulting with various family violence service providers:

- "women who are claiming to have had violence perpetrated on them have to prove that this has happened before they are able to get services"
- "women are having to prove that they're going through this and that it is not a counterclaim".

## Method

To question three family violence services in the federal electorate of Lindsay, NSW. Each service was contacted by telephone by a female researcher who asked the following questions:

Question 1: does a woman need to prove that she is a victim to gain access to your services?

Question 2: if a woman is making a counterclaim to her partner's claims, does she have access to your services?

## Responses

1. West Connect Domestic Violence, Penrith. Tel 02 4732 2318.

Question 1: "Any woman who wants someone to talk to or advice or any other service we provide just has to call. No need to prove victim status."

Question 2: "Her eligibility for service in this event is only related to eligibility for Legal Aid and only when he has applied to Legal Aid prior to her. In this case she can still go to Women's Legal Aid NSW, which is available for women regardless of counterclaims leaving them out of legal aid." [NB: There is no Men's Legal Aid NSW].

2. Queen of Hearts Community Foundation Domestic Violence Service, Penrith. Tel 1300 856 737.

Question 1: "No it's not true that she can't get access to the service without proof that she's a victim" [said emphatically]

Question 2: "No that's not right. It doesn't matter about counterclaim."

3. Relationships Australia, Penrith. Tel 02 4728 4800.

Question 1: "No, not at all – absolutely not true. If she says she is abused I believe she is abused."

Question 2: "Counterclaims are OK too. We have plenty of women who are violent. It doesn't mean they don't experience violence. Whilst mutual, it is not usually equal. The woman needs to often fear more than the man."

It appears that thankfully most women are actually believed at face value and do not need to prove that violence has occurred in order to access services. It may well be the case that *some* women are not believed at face value – different services may have different policies. Certainly, interim AVO orders are made with no testing of the claims, and such orders are largely granted to women. Recent legislation enacted in WA means that no violence need to have occurred in order for a restraining order to be issued: it is enough for a woman to simply claim she *fears* violence *may* occur.

Whatever the facts of the matter are, *One in Three's* position is very clear. To avoid discriminating unfairly on the basis of sex, if a service requires proof that violence has occurred, this should be required equally of both males and females approaching that service. And if a service takes victims' claims at face value without need of proof, this should also apply equally to both males and females.

One in Three Campaign



The guiding principle of the common law system, and the policies and services that flow from it, is that it does not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, race, religion, or any other demographic characteristic. This must be applied to family violence as to anything else. It follows that the same approach to hearing the claims of men and women should apply to punishments, which should be the same irrespective of gender of the perpetrator or victim, and that the same screening principles should apply for access to services for men and women.

We have attached a recent statement by the CPS in the UK about male victims as *Appendix B* to this submission. We believe it represents the “gold standard” in dealing with family violence generally, and should be followed here, especially its recognition of, and commitment to, male victims.

## CONCLUSION

On behalf of all male victims of family violence and abuse, we hope that you will give serious consideration to this supplementary submission.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide input into this Inquiry.

Greg Andresen  
Senior Researcher

Andrew Humphreys  
Social Worker

6th October 2017



Research from the 2012 ABS Personal Safety Survey and Australian Institute of Criminology shows that both men and women in Australia experience substantial levels of violence.

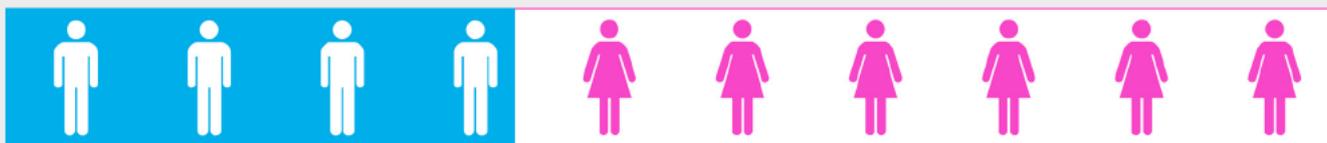
Males make up a significant proportion of victims of family and sexual violence, yet are excluded from government anti-violence programs.

75 males were killed in domestic homicide incidents between 2010-2012.  
**This equates to one death every 10 days.**

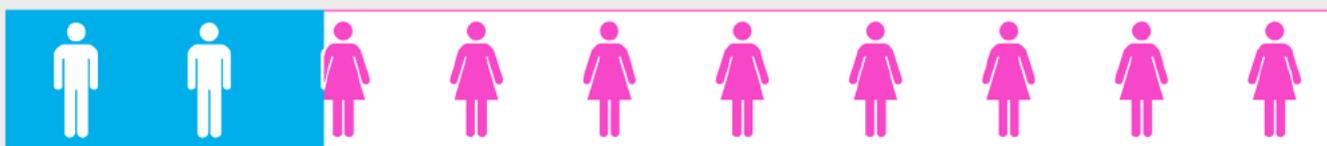
## Experience of family violence by gender

### DURING THE PERIOD 2010-2012:

**2 in 5** victims of **domestic homicide** were male (38.3%)

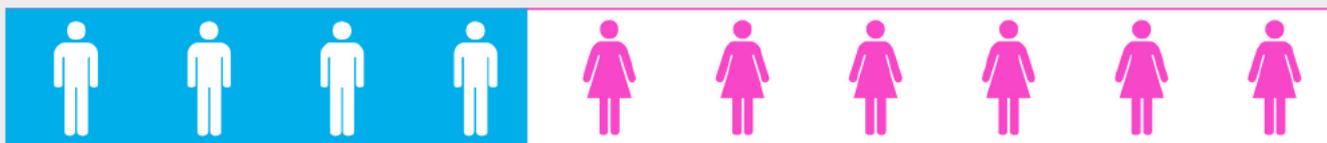


**Almost 1 in 4** victims of **intimate partner homicide** were male (23.9%)



### BEFORE THE AGE OF 15:

**2 in 5** persons who experienced **physical and/or sexual abuse** were male (39.0%)



For more information and research about male victims of family violence, or for media comment visit [www.oneinthree.com.au](http://www.oneinthree.com.au)

If you are experiencing family violence, seek support, call MensLine Australia on 1300 78 99 78

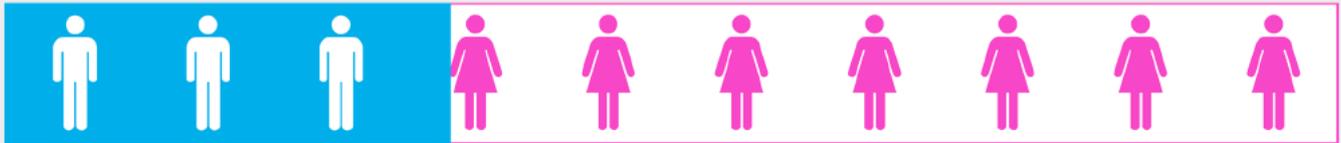
Information has been sourced from the ABS and the AIC. Produced by the One in Three Campaign ([oneinthree.com.au/infographicrefs](http://oneinthree.com.au/infographicrefs)).

# Male victims of family violence: key statistics

## EXPERIENCE OF FAMILY VIOLENCE BY GENDER

### DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS:

**1 in 3** persons who experienced violence from a **current partner** were male (33.3%)



**Almost 1 in 4** persons who experienced violence from a **previous partner** were male (22.0%)



**Almost 1 in 3** persons who experienced violence from a **boyfriend/girlfriend or date** were male (27.9%)



**1 in 2** persons who experienced violence from a **known person** were male (49.0%)



**More than 1 in 3** persons who experienced **emotional abuse** by a partner were male (37.1%)



**Half these males** experienced **anxiety or fear** due to the emotional abuse (46.1%)



For more information and research about male victims of family violence, or for media comment visit [www.oneinthree.com.au](http://www.oneinthree.com.au)

If you are experiencing family violence, seek support, call MensLine Australia on 1300 78 99 78

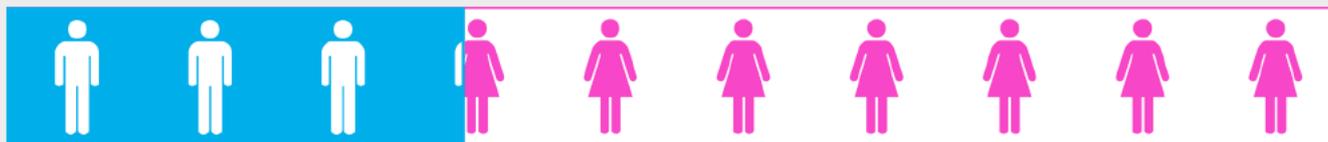
Information has been sourced from the ABS. Produced by the One in Three Campaign ([oneinthree.com.au/infographicrefs](http://oneinthree.com.au/infographicrefs)).

# Male victims of family violence: key statistics

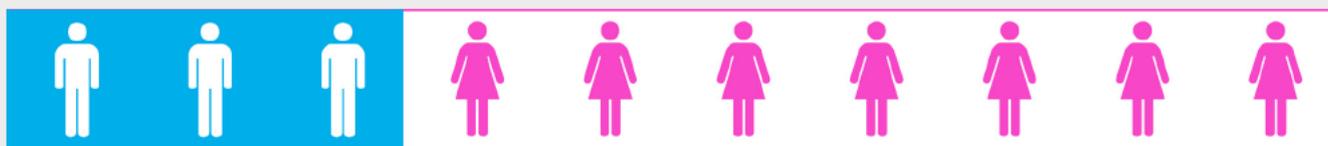
## EXPERIENCE OF FAMILY VIOLENCE BY GENDER

### DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS:

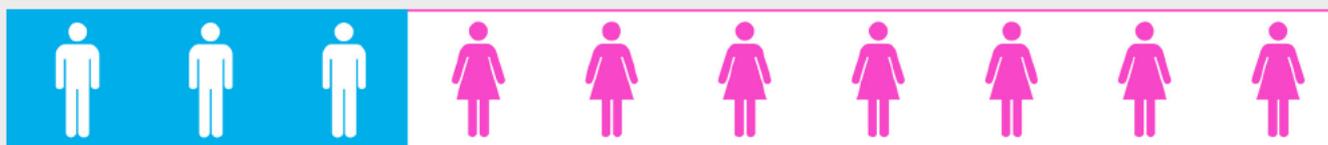
**1 in 3** persons who experienced **stalking** were male (34.2%)



**Almost 1 in 3** persons who experienced **sexual assault** were male (29.6%)



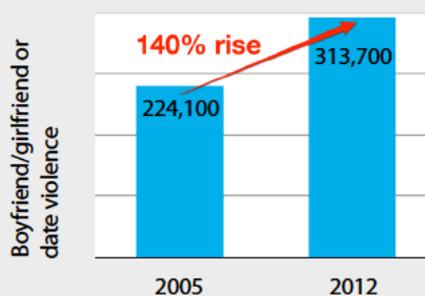
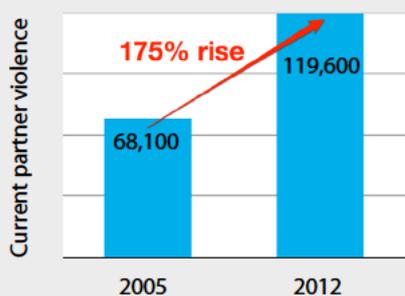
**Almost 1 in 3** persons who experienced selected types of **sexual harassment** were male (30.0%)



**Almost 10%** of all males experienced **violence**



Since the previous ABS *Personal Safety Survey* (2005) there has been a **large increase in the number of males reporting current partner and dating violence** since the age of 15.



**The vast majority of partner and dating violence committed against men is perpetrated by females (94%). Only 6% occurs in relationships with a male perpetrator.**



For more information and research about male victims of family violence, or for media comment visit [www.oneinthree.com.au](http://www.oneinthree.com.au)

If you are experiencing family violence, seek support, call MensLine Australia on 1300 78 99 78

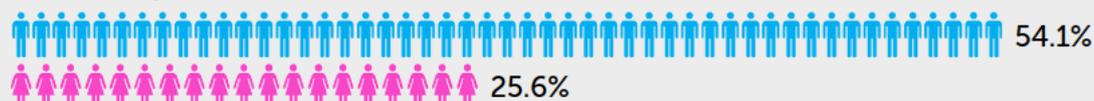
# Male victims of family violence: key statistics

## EXPERIENCE OF FAMILY VIOLENCE BY GENDER

### MEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED PARTNER VIOLENCE ARE:

**2 to 3 times** more likely than women to have **never told anybody** about experiencing

- Current partner violence



- Previous partner violence

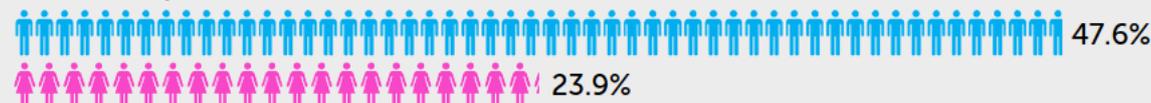


**Twice as likely** as women to have **never sought advice or support** about experiencing

- Current partner violence



- Previous partner violence



**Up to 40% more likely** than women to have **not contacted police** about experiencing

- Current partner violence

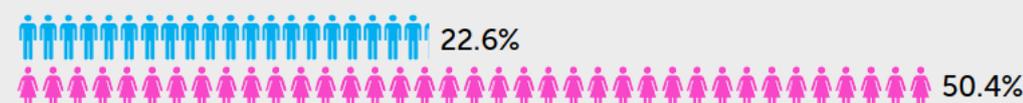


- Previous partner violence



**Half as likely as women** to have had **a restraining order issued** against the perpetrator of

- Previous partner violence



For more information and research about male victims of family violence, or for media comment visit [www.oneinthree.com.au](http://www.oneinthree.com.au)

If you are experiencing family violence, seek support, call MensLine Australia on 1300 78 99 78

Information has been sourced from the ABS. Produced by the One in Three Campaign ([oneinthree.com.au/infographicrefs](http://oneinthree.com.au/infographicrefs)).

## **Public statement on male victims for crimes covered by the CPS Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy**



This statement outlines the CPS support for male victims of domestic abuse, rape, sexual offences, stalking, forced marriage, honour-based violence, child abuse, prostitution, human trafficking focusing on sexual exploitation, pornography and obscenity.<sup>1</sup>

Building on previous work, the CPS has incorporated new and emerging patterns of abuse within its VAWG Strategy such as: broadening the scope to include girls as well as women, and recognising the different dynamics around teenage relationship abuse, same sex abuse and older victim abuse. The CPS is looking to ensure its response is effective to the specific needs of male victims of these crimes, recognising the significant numbers of men and boys affected by these crimes and the increasing number of reports being made. The CPS has met with national men's groups, national women's groups and a range of academics to develop this statement.

The CPS applies policies fairly and equally to all victims, both male and female, and we are committed to securing justice for **all victims**. Prevalence studies of these crimes evidence the disproportionate experience of females however the CPS recognises the experience of male victims and its distressing impact on them.

This paper reaffirms our commitment to male victims of these crimes. It outlines the barriers to reporting, explores gender myths and stereotypes, challenges perceptions of abuse and explains the differences in types or patterns of abuse experienced by men and boys.

### **CPS commitments to male victims**

#### **The CPS will:**

- Provide information for our prosecutors to help challenge myths and stereotypes; understand the experience of male victims within the criminal justice system and provide details of support services for male victims;
- Explore issues that may arise because of multiple forms of discrimination such as that faced by BAME or LGBT victims;
- Ensure all relevant policies, guidance, training and case studies for prosecutors contain details on the experience of male victims and outline any unique barriers to reporting;
- Work with NGOs and Communications to consider ways to dispel societal myths, especially around masculinity, as well as respond to media issues;
- Involve more national men's groups in the scrutiny of CPS policies, guidance and training and within the VAWG External Consultation Group;
- Establish a stakeholder forum on child sexual abuse to specifically ensure that work expressly includes boys as well as girls;
- Reflect the male experience of these crimes, in relevant media communications, by working closely with men's groups, to increase confidence in reporting; and
- Provide data on male victims where possible and, with our partners, strive to improve the gender and relationship breakdown of CPS relevant data.

**The CPS recognises: *There are barriers to male victims reporting such crimes. This list is not intended to be exhaustive but provides examples of where barriers may exist. They may not apply to all male victims and likewise we acknowledge there may be other barriers experienced by individual victims.***

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<sup>1</sup>Male victims include heterosexual, gay and transgender men and boys.

First, there are some barriers to reporting crimes that are experienced by all victims, irrespective of gender. These are:

Fear of not being believed; feelings of shame or guilt; the societal trivialisation of some abuse; hesitancy to report because of perpetrator's mental health issues or their childhood abuse; immigration status; not recognising the situation as abusive; belief that such abuse is acceptable in some cultures; fear of losing contact with their children; threats by the perpetrator to harm family, pets or friends; not knowing who to report crimes to; fear of children being taken into care; recriminations from the wider community; and, pressure from family and friends to stay in their relationship.

Second, there are specific barriers for male victims, which have an impact on reporting these crimes. The way society dictates how individuals should behave, according to their gender, can result in abuse being trivialised, normalised and misunderstood. Many of the barriers are based on gender stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, sexist or homophobic assumptions, for example:

Male victims may feel their masculinity will be diminished if they report domestic abuse by a woman; or their sexuality will be questioned if they report rape by a man; or if they are young they will be perceived as being initiated into sexual activity by a woman, rather than being recognised as a victim of child sexual abuse because societal norms suggest all males wish to be sexually active from a young age.

**Types, patterns and context of male abuse:** There are also specific types, patterns or context of abuse for male victims that differ from female victims, such as:

- In cases of child sexual abuse, boys are more likely to be abused by authority figures or people outside the family; whereas girls are more likely to face familial sexual abuse or by someone more closely known to them;<sup>2</sup>
- The disclosure rates of abuse for boys of child sexual abuse peaks at age 13; whereas for girls is at age 16;<sup>3</sup>
- Ridiculing of men's masculinity plays a large role in many men fearing reporting abuse;
- Domestic abuse is under-reported by all victims, but with a lower proportion of men reporting it to the police than women;
- Although most domestic abuse is perpetrated by men, it is recognised that men are also victims of domestic abuse both as victims of female perpetrators and in same sex relationships – assumptions should not be made;
- Larger numbers of men report sexual abuse after attending chemsex parties; and
- In forced marriage and honour-based violence cases, male victims are often targeted when they are blamed for the behaviour of women, who are perceived as bringing shame to their family, culture or community; they individually are not complying with expected 'masculinity' behaviours; they are, or are thought to be, gay or are males with disabilities.

**Summary:** Progress against the commitments outlined above will be carefully reviewed in the Annual VAWG Crime Reports and bi-annual VAWG Assurance exercises. The CPS will continue to ensure it delivers an appropriate level of support to male victims and adheres to its values to:

- Treat everyone with respect;
- Be independent and fair;
- Be honest and open; and
- Behave professionally and strive for excellence.

The VAWG strategy includes the most up-to-date and relevant gender data from England and Wales. This position paper is part of the overall VAWG strategy.

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<sup>2</sup>Andrea Kohn Maikovich-Fong and Sara R. Jaffee, 2010, 'Sex Differences in Childhood Sexual Abuse Characteristics and Victims' Emotional and Behavioural Problems: Findings from a national Sample of Youth', *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 34.6 (June 2010)

<sup>3</sup>Police data on the age at report/discovery in Children's Commissioner for England, *Protecting Children From Harm: A Critical Assessment of Child Abuse in the Family Network in England and Priorities for Action* (London: Children's Commissioner for England, 2015)