

# Chapter 8 Masculinity and violence

## 8.1 Introduction

Researcher Johan Galtung points out that men represent 95% of all violence committed in the world today. Hence, violence appears to be gender specific, and tied to masculinity and the male role.

At the same time it must be emphasised that this does not mean that all men are violent. Most men neither exercise violence, nor are subjected to violence themselves. Violence is not a part of most men's behavioural repertoire.

Men exercising violence towards their closest ones is a serious obstacle on the path to equality, and prevents women and/or children from feeling safe in their own homes.

The gender specificity of violence does not mean that women are never violent, but only that men exercise it to a greater degree.

In addition to putting violent assault on the public agenda and arresting and trying violent assaulters, society at large must take on the responsibility of helping men change violent patterns. There also needs to be an attitude of zero tolerance throughout society concerning all violence, including violence not encompassed by law. Prevention of violence must be put on the agenda.

"Turning Point" is a new action-plan by the government aimed at tackling violence in close relations, amongst other actions focusing on services available throughout the country for treatment alternatives for the perpetrators themselves. This chapter discusses the work that needs to be done in order to establish these nation-wide services.

## 8.2 About men's violence

In all police-reported violence, men constitute the largest category, both of victims and culprits. Men constitute 88% of all people that are identified as being guilty of crimes involving a threat to life and health, including assault and battery. When it comes to manslaughter cases, 90% of offenders are male. In 2006, 33 cases of manslaughter were reported. There were fewer male victims compared with previous years - however, the number of female victims was above average. 2006 stood out in that 60% of the victims were women. Typically, offenders are Norwegian men in their 30's or 40's who have a close relationship with the victim. Often intoxicants are involved, and in more than half of the cases the victim is a Norwegian woman. There have annually been registered 38 manslaughters on average in the years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the 1990's the average was just under 40 cases.

Men constitute the majority of the victims that report to the police, and in 2006 the number of male victims increased. Compared with the previous year the number of victims subjected to violent crime increased by 3%, mainly due to a 5% rise in male victims. This increase is connected with the fact that more people were victims of violence, while fewer had been subjected to threats.

Not all experienced violence is being reported to the police. The last Survey of Living Conditions indicates that only 15% of all cases of violence and threats are reported to the police. There are two main factors that determine whether a case will be reported or not: the severity of the episode, and the relationship between offender and victim. The more serious the crime, the more likely it is to be reported to the police. Violence between strangers is also more often reported than violence within families or between people who know each other.

The Survey of Living Conditions from 2004 shows that gender differences are being erased when actual violence and threats are being reported. Approximately 5% of men and women have reported being the victims of violence during the last 12 months. This investigation shows that the facts concerning the victims of violence have a connection with age. There are far more victims, both men and women, of violence against younger people compared to older people. Physical injuries for victims are also more common when young offenders are involved, and this trend is also the case for both men and women. There are approximately as many men as women who report being victims of violence or violent threats, and the spread of ages between the genders is relatively even. At the same time, there are clear differences between the genders in terms of describing what they have been subjected to. Women experience a greater extent of violence from close relations and in their local environment. Men on the other hand have a greater risk of being subjected to violence by strangers in public after nightfall and during weekends.

Violence can often be an ambiguous category. What is regarded as violence shifts between cultures, societies and time: The definition of violence in one era may well be regarded as a non-violent act in another and vice versa. This becomes clearer if one goes back to the 1950's and 60's. Back then smacking children was more common. Corporal punishment in schools was banned in 1936, but smacking your child remained lawful throughout the 1950's and 60's. The authority to physically punish children was contained in the law about limiting physical punishment from 20<sup>th</sup> of June 1891, nr 1. It was not until 1972 that this legislation was lifted and physical punishment became forbidden. However, fights between boys were common, and this was not regarded as violence. A fight was a fight, "boys will be boys" and fights were expected at times. In the previously mentioned study by Foldin Protective School for boys with behaviour problems from the 1950's and 60's, it is clear that boys who hesitated in exercising violence, who did not fight when asked and who tried to elevate their role in the hierarchy by "sucking-up" to bigger boys were branded as soft, pathetic and cowardly by school staff. The phenomenon of abuse of both men and women was considered differently in the 1950's and 60's than today. Child molestation and abuse of women are conceptions that grew from the female struggle of the 1970's. The 1950's and 60's were filled with what we today define and understand as violence, but the term was rarely used. The actions had different names and connotations during those days.

As mentioned in the introduction, most men are not violent. In our times violence is considered an unacceptable solution: to smack a child as a part of his or her upbringing is totally unacceptable. The same goes for all types of violence in close relationships, including between couples. Fights in the schoolyard are no longer the expected behaviour between boys, as it is now defined as violence. Boys now are no longer encouraged to "hit back" and turn to violence as a strategy for solving conflicts. However, being weak and cowardly (both physically and morally) are still the main signifiers of being recognized as "unmanly", and this still characterizes society's expectations of boys today. One is somehow not supposed to be "too tough", but at the same time not "unmanly" either. Anyone associated with showing cowardice, weakness or lack of self-control is still considered unpopular.

Many people draw attention to the ambivalent societal attitude towards violence in Norway. Violence is negative and must be opposed. At the same time one can find vast examples of violence as entertainment in various media. At the same time, violence is both abandoned and well accepted in mass media. When the hero explodes in violent behaviour, most people applaud and like what they see. The violence is applauded as an ideal and associated with heroism and courage.

Even with modest under-reporting, the results from surveys (including the Gender Equality Survey) suggest that violence is not a dominant feature in the everyday life of the average Norwegian couple. Other surveys show that women are reported as being the victims of violence in close relationships more often than men. When it comes to violence outside the home, men are, according to the survey, more involved both as victims and as offenders. Accordingly, the results show (as with many other Norwegian studies) that age plays an important part. Higher numbers of young men are involved in violent crime. After 50 years of age, men are dramatically less involved in violence, and the gap between the genders narrows.

One needs to make a distinction between gender and power in order to get men involved in opposing violence. If all men are branded potentially violent, they will not be encouraged to share their experiences. Many suggest that “silent resistance” from men prevents more efficient, preventive work. This has surfaced through work in voluntary organizations such as the White Ribbon campaign, among others. This resistance involves ignoring the problem of violence, not taking part in discussions, and consequently feeling attacked as a man. These men often critically oppose the notion that violence is gender-specific. An inability to deal with their own personal problems and violent episodes in their own life can make them afraid of being classified as perpetrators of violence. Hence, they rarely share their experiences and consequently the subject becomes taboo.

Below we debate the different aspects of violence in order to approach the challenges we face concerning equality. It is necessary to recognize and understand violence as a part of masculinity in order to instigate change.

### **8.3 Different types of violence**

What is perceived as violence is, as mentioned, changing over time and in step with changes in society. But even in a specified given era, violence is not a clear-cut category.

Violence can be defined as “every action aimed towards another person, which through this action harms, hurts, scares or violates the person, or makes this person do something against their will or stops them in doing what they want.” At the same time, violence that falls under the criminal law of chapter 22 concerning life, body and health, encompasses very differing social phenomena, even though they all have in common the fact that violence has been exercised. Violence that is being exercised on the street between strangers is different compared with violence in close relations, and these different phenomena must be understood from different perspectives. The connection between masculinity and violence also changes between the different types of phenomena.

#### **8.3.1 Violence in public**

As shown above, the majority of victims that report violence to the police are men. How big this percentage is depends on the type of crime. In terms of the major crimes there are greater gender differences in the occurrence of bodily harm (84% men) compared with less grave violations of the body (63% men) and threats (55% men). On the other hand, women are severely over-represented among victims of sexual crime (88% women) and abuse within family relationships. This is a topic we examine more closely in a later section. In this section we are focusing on violence in public.

Men are more often being subjected to violence from complete or partial strangers in public

places, in the evening and during weekends. The Survey of Living Conditions shows that 57% of all cases concerning violence aimed towards men occurred in public. Some incidents happen in connection with nightlife, and here the youngest victims, especially young men, are severely over-represented. At these times and in these arenas one can expect people to be under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants, and as previous research indicates, the main offender is frequently under the influence. The Survey of Living Conditions shows that 62% of all offenders that exercised violence towards men were under the influence of alcohol.

The risk of being subjected to or threatened with violence is connected with the victim being under the influence of alcohol as well. Research into the risk of Oslo citizens being subjected to violence found that those who are frequently intoxicated are more likely to be violently threatened. They also found connections between how often people frequent places that serve alcohol and acts of violence, especially by men.

Much of the reported violence is either exercised by men, or experienced by men, at night and at weekends around areas with a busy nightlife. At these times and in these areas, both abusers and victims are often under the influence of alcohol. In 2007 the chiefs of police in Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim pointed out that huge resources are being spent in preventing drunkenness and fighting during late hours.

It was mentioned above that young boys sometimes use violence as a means to “gain masculinity”. This is part of a greater masculinity image concerning boys, also known as "cowboy masculinity", where crime and violence are part of a larger identity the boy is trying to create. Also for boys that do not have any such ambitions, violence can be a masculine resource, at least when they feel threatened as a man.

The violence can accordingly be understood as an expression for a “masculinity project”, the creation of a certain kind of masculine identity. Researcher Isdal writes that one can distinguish between violence considered as taboo and other types of violence. The violence considered as taboo is violence that is condemned by society as objectionable: violence towards women or children or towards someone that is clearly inferior to the exerciser in size and strength. Violence that is not considered taboo is not problematic for the perpetrator in the sense that the perpetrator does not necessarily see that he committed any wrongdoing. On some occasions the perpetrator can even feel proud, brave and strong and believe that he has "won".

Violence among men supports the image of the male identity as aggressive and unafraid. When men speak about this violence, it is often portrayed in detail. Violence between men can in certain contexts gain approval and respect, no matter who wins the fight. To respond with violence when provoked, and to not back down, can for many men (especially young men), demonstrate that they are not only unafraid, but also capable of enduring and daring to both give and receive a violent assault.

A gathering of drunk, tired young men out and about late at night increases the chances of body language and comments being misinterpreted, and the demonstration of an unafraid male identity becomes more likely.

### **8.3.2 Violence in close relationships.**

In surveys concerning how heavily Oslo citizens are subjected to threats, violence and sexual assaults, the same amount of men and women say that they have been subjected to partner violence during the last year. However, few (2-3%) have been subjected to grave or frequent violence. In terms of a whole lifespan, the research shows that far more women (12%) than men (3%) say they have been subjected to grave forms of physical violence from a current or previous partner.

In May 2005 the Norwegian Institute for City and Regional Research (NIBR) presented the report “Violence in couples – different perspectives”. It is the first investigation to survey the extent of violence between couples throughout Norway. The two main parts deal with the use of force and violence between spouses and partners, and violence towards women and health problems. One of the findings in the research is that the use of physical force and violence between couples has a greater importance if one looks at couples over a long period of time. After 15 years in a relationship, more than a quarter of women and a fifth of men have experienced that their spouse or partner, on at least one occasion, exercised physical force or threatened them with violence. When it comes to actions with serious potential for bodily injury (the partner has taken a chokehold, used a weapon, banged the head against floor or other objects), there are big differences between men and women. Far more women than men have experienced this. Just fewer than 10% of the women, and 2% of the men, have experienced this type of serious violence from a partner at some stage in their life.

Just over 5% of both men and women have been subjected to physical force or violence at least once during the last calendar year. Experiences’ involving threats and different types of physical force exercised by a partner divides itself in the following way:

Table NR *Experiences concerning threats and different uses of force exercised by a partner during the last year.*

<b>The Partner has:</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	<b>Last year</b>	<b>Last year</b>	<b>Previous</b>	<b>Previous</b>
<b>Threatened with violence</b>	<b>1,6</b>	<b>0,7</b>	<b>11,5</b>	<b>2,8</b>
<b>Prevented you from moving freely</b>	<b>2,9</b>	<b>1,7</b>	<b>17,5</b>	<b>5,6</b>
<b>Beat you with a flat hand</b>	<b>1,9</b>	<b>3,0</b>	<b>11,8</b>	<b>13,1</b>
<b>Thrown a hard object at you</b>	<b>1,3</b>	<b>1,8</b>	<b>6,3</b>	<b>8,8</b>
<b>Beat you with a clenched fist or object, kicked</b>	<b>0,9</b>	<b>1,7</b>	<b>8,3</b>	<b>5,3</b>
<b>Performed a chokehold, tried to strangle you</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>0,3</b>	<b>5,6</b>	<b>0,8</b>
<b>Used a knife on you</b>	<b>0,1</b>	<b>0,2</b>	<b>2,3</b>	<b>1,5</b>

<b>Banged your head against the floor, object</b>	<b>0,6</b>	<b>0,2</b>	<b>4,8</b>	<b>0,4</b>
<b>Forced sex upon you</b>	<b>1,0</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>9,0</b>	<b>1,0</b>
<b>Behaved in another violent way</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>1,6</b>	<b>15,6</b>	<b>6,7</b>
<b>At least one of these types</b>	<b>5,7</b>	<b>5,6</b>	<b>27,1</b>	<b>21,8</b>

Between 0.1% and 0.3% of the informants claim they have been subjected to one of the different types of force from current or past partners during the last year. The use of a knife or another type of weapon occurs the most seldom, which 0.1% of the women and 0.2% of the men have been subjected to. For men, beating with a flat hand is the most common use of physical force used against them, while the act of being prevented to move freely is reported the most often among women. 1 out of 10 women and 1 out of 40 men have been victims over the last year of the three categories with the greatest potential of injury (partner has taken a chokehold, used a weapon or banged the victim's head against the floor or object). If one looks at previously reported uses of force, the numbers concerning violence committed by men towards women are by far the greatest. The exception is beating with a flat hand and the throwing of hard objects.

Domestic violence is a serious societal problem and in the report from Committee against Domestic Violence the term *men's violence towards women and children in close relationships* has been put forward to illustrate that it is primarily men who are the perpetrators of violence, and women and children the victims. The term violence in close relationships is, in this way, closely linked with what in the 1970s and 1980's was referred to as *abuse of women*.

Newer research stresses that partner violence is not a clear-cut, one-sided phenomenon, but deals with several distinctly different forms of violence. Partner violence is the denominator for many different types of violence. There is a major distinction between what can be referred to as *patriarchal terrorism*, which we from now on will call *patriarchal assaults*, and what is referred to as *episodic partner violence*. The former type of violence is closely linked with what is referred to as abuse of women, and concerns itself with physical brutalities, psychic terror, systematic oppression, degradation and abuse of power. Mainly it is women who suffer from this. Episodic partner violence, on the other hand, has no clear gender profile, nor is it an ingredient in more serious suppression regimes. The episodes of violence are usually not grave and occur relatively rarely. This type of violence seems to be triggered by failures in communication and lack of conflict management skills.

The most widespread violence in close relationships is episodic violence, which can occur because of conflicts and arguments, and both partners may end up assaulting each other. This is most frequent in younger couples. In the age group 20-24, three times as many women have been subjected to physical force compared with women between 50-54 years. Among men, five times as many men are affected in the two youngest age groups than the eldest age group.

Even though this type of violence is less serious compared to systematic abuse, it is not to be trifled with. The research behind the Norwegian survey underlines that these issues are a huge

problem for the people affected. The experience can be both insulting and painful.

In comparison to systematic abuse, there is limited research concerning episodic violence, and it is little discussed in the professional literature. The reasons behind episodic violence in couples are therefore less well known. The link between gender, power and violence is far less apparent when the violence is sporadic compared with serious repetitive violence.

In both studies about partner violence in Norway that are available it emerges that episodic violence is more widespread than patriarchal abuse. It is important that these findings concerning the increase in partner violence are not understood as an increase in the abuse of women. The research behind both surveys emphasised in a joint feature article that this kind of violence is a serious enough problem as it is, without the issue being exaggerated. Here the authors point out that abuse against women, or patriarchal assaults, occurs in all countries, as well as in Norway, where approximately 2000 women per year spend a night in crisis centres. But despite the assertions sometimes made, there is little to suggest that a large part of the female population lives in an abusive relationship, nor is there any indication that the rate of this type of violence is increasing. On the contrary, it seems that the occurrence of this violence has been stable for a long time. The number of nights spent in crisis centres has varied very little over the last 20 years.

Results from a nationwide survey, conducted by NIBR, conclude that violence towards women in close relationships is a severe problem for public health. Women that reported violence from their partner experienced suicidal thoughts, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress syndromes much more often than other women. The results from this survey show that violence towards women in close relationships can lead to severe health damage, but that many still don't contact health services, even after physical injury.

Another important issue is children witnessing both episodic and systematic violence. The knowledge that has been gained about the problems these children experience was emphasised in the action plan against violence in close relations. The seriousness is reflected in several measures, including increasing the competence of Child Welfare teams and the three-year nationwide project called "Children that Live with Violence in the Family." To further emphasise that children who witness violence are thereby also subjected to violence, the Act of Compensation for Victims of Violence has been changed so that children witnessing violence now have the right to receive victim of violence compensation. This change came into effect 1.1.2008

#### 8.3.2.1 Who is affected by the abuse of women?

In research on violence with a gender-based perspective, violence exercised by men can be understood in connection with a patriarchal power structure in society where men are superior to women (patriarchal structure). This societal arrangement leads some men to establish and maintain a dominating position towards the woman they are living with by using forms of power and control. Male dominance or power is then expressed through violence, harassment, and sexual assault. This male dominance over women is also exercised through controlling behaviour. A gender-based perspective on violence concerns itself therefore with the connection between gender, power, control and sexuality.

Abusive relations are not equal. They are the remains within our society of feudal times, when the man owned the family and had a moral and legal right to do what he pleased with them.

When laws against rape were brought into Norwegian law, the female victim's point of view was overlooked. Today human rights are also for women and children, and everyone has the right to be safe, both in public and private domains.

Another key point in both surveys is that violence does not, from a social point of view, seem to be completely random. No segment of the population is excused, but the problem is far more widespread among people living in poorer conditions. The Oslo-survey shows that violence is far more widespread among people in difficult circumstances, such as the unemployed, recipients of social welfare, disability insurance or others with difficult economic conditions. Corresponding findings are surfacing in the nationwide Equality Survey: use of force between couples is more widespread among partners that have problems with their living conditions. Among men and women that received social welfare last year, or who say they have a much lower income than most, twice as many women were being subjected to violence from their male partner, compared with the rest of the sample. There were also substantially more women being subjected to the use of force among welfare benefit recipients, or people that had been unemployed over a three-year period.

If we look at the numbers of people contacting the crisis centres, we see they are relatively stable, but the particular groups of women who are contacting the centres are changing. Numbers taken from 2006 show that there is a clear rise in the number of women with a minority background contacting the crisis centres, and of these 90% are coming from a non-western background. Almost a third of the women are married to Norwegian men without an immigrant background.

In the societal debate concerning minorities there is a tendency to use culture as an explanation for violence, and NOU 2003:32 "The Right to a Life without Violence" are issuing a warning concerning this. In a conference arranged by the Committee against Domestic Violence in co-operation with minority representatives from the Committee for Contact between Authorities and Immigrants (KIM), there were expressions of concern over the tendency to "ethnify" violence. It was pointed out that this approach could make violence seem to fall into race categories, which could ultimately lead to a neglect of the many similarities that violence against women has across social, cultural and religious boundaries. This type of focus, concerning specific groups of people, can lead to the avoidance of seeing unpleasant sides of one's own culture, while at the same time further the marginalisation of minorities. All must work together if one is to finally get rid of all forms of violence towards women and children in close relationships, regardless of culture. This must also be accomplished without stigmatisation.

These are important warnings, but they need to be understood alongside the reasons why men are exercising violence towards their partner, as was previously referred to by researcher Arnlaug Leira. At the same time, there might be reasons to look closer at whether certain groups of men in Norwegian society are more influenced by the feudal gender code of masculine dominance and female suppression. This will not only encompass sub-groupings of minority men, but equally Norwegian men who marry women of a non-western origin, and Norwegian men who marry women of Norwegian origin.

### **8.3.2.2 Why is violence being perpetrated?**

Behind most systematic abuse we find men. In this context the connection between gender, power and violence becomes apparent. Violence is woven into a masculine regime of control that suppresses the female and puts her in a subordinate position. The male regime relies on



the man being physically superior. When a female uses violence against a violent and controlling male partner, it is reasonable to see it as self-defence, and this type of violence usually has far less serious consequences.

Previously in this document, men's violence towards other men has been referred to as a part of an "identity project", with men striving to establish themselves as tough and unafraid. Men's violence towards women on the other hand, is not a type of action that is considered positive for the masculine identity. To "beat someone who is smaller than you" is considered as rather cowardly and unmanly. Men as exercisers of systematic violence towards their female partner seem to be creating a different male identity, "the dominant man".

A male identity project that justifies violence towards women establishes women as inferior to men in the family. Men talk about violence towards women in a different way than violence towards other men. In stories concerning the abuse of women the actual action of violence is usually toned down, and a serious action of abuse could, for example, be explained with a simple "he lost it". Male violence towards women is a type of action that projects a negative male identity. These violent men seek to have "their way" and in so doing they reaffirm their position as superior to the woman they live with.

Researcher Holter points out that men who express dominance through violence towards women are found in all levels of society. But the connections between gender, power and violence are not simple. It is not necessarily the "patriarchs", men with power, or the "tough" men, that are assaulters. The violence is an *expression* of a societal condition that men are superior and women inferior, but often it is the relatively powerless men that resort to such violence. It is well known through studies of the systems of power, that power shows its worst face, not through those with power, but through those without it.

In isolation violence is often connected with the concept of *honour*. It is likely that this must be interpreted as a conception some men have about being superior and having the right to dominate, and not as a culturally acceptable foundation for the use of violence.

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### **8.3.2.3 Work towards improving men’s violence against women in close relationships.**

The government has worked in several different ways to prevent this sort of violence – see the boxes.

#### **BOX 1**

#### **Action Plan against Violence in Close Relationships (2008-2011) “Turning Point”**

In November 2007 “Turning Point” was launched, an action-plan against violence in close relationships. The plan contained fifty concrete measures under the following main divisions:

- Victims of violence in close relationships shall be guaranteed essential help and protection.
- The spiral of violence must be broken by strengthening services geared towards treating perpetrators of violence
- Victims of violence in close relations shall be given the opportunity of aided conversations with the perpetrator of violence. (Restorative justice)
- The cooperative competence and the knowledge base within the helping apparatus shall be strengthened and coordinated
- Work concerning research and development shall be initiated and continued.
- Violence in close relationships shall be made more visible.
- Violence in close relationships shall be prevented through changing attitudes and misconceptions.

The Justice and Police Department has the responsibility of coordinating the completion of the plan. The completion is made possible through the co-operation of The Ministry of Children and Equality, The Ministry of Health and Care Services, The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion and the Ministry of Education. A summary of the status of the action-plan work can be found at the website of the Ministry of Justice and the Police.

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## BOX 2

### **The Report from the Committee for Obstruction of Rape**

Sexual assault is one of the most traumatizing crimes a person can be subjected to, and represents a particular challenge for the legal and health services alike. It is alarming that so few cases are filed and taken to conviction. Moreover, it is worrying that health care services for rape victims vary in terms of quality, content and organization. According to numbers given by the police there were 9,6% more rapes reported in 2007 compared to 2006, and 28,6% more in 2007 compared with 2003. In 2007 there were 1014 rapes and rape attempts reported. (STRASAK 2007)

**In September 2006 The Department of Justice laid down a committee to account for the situation rape victims find themselves in. The Soria-Moria declaration was the starting point of this work, where the government targeted an improvement in rape victims' situations. The committee has, among other things, considered preventative measures, and programs concerning the reception and co-ordination of how public institutions welcome victims. The committee delivered their proposal on the 24th of January and has suggested the following measures:**

- Establish a central, nationwide special unit in the police force with the responsibility of targeting sexual violence (SEPOL). The committee suggests that the unit shall be operative on a 24-hour basis and in close cooperation with the district police. In addition to ensuring quality time and effort spent on individual cases, SEPOL aims to secure the routines concerning procedures, analysis and exchanging of information.
- Expand the advisory offices for crime victims (RKK) to a nationwide support function for the victims of rape. The offices should also expand to encompass the attention of rape victims with special needs.
- Establish SO-teams in every police district with at least one tactical and one technical investigator as well as a lawyer qualified to deal with cases of sexual assault.
- Raise the level of competence in the legal apparatus, in the assault clinics, and in social and health education, among others.
- Introduce free health care at the assault clinics.
- Introduce free follow-up care with a psychologist or psychiatrist, in addition to acute help for the first year from when treatment starts, independent of whether aid is being given by a specialist with or without an agreement with the public authorities.
- Give the opportunity for the case documents to be translated, and traveling and accommodation expenses covered if a rape occurs abroad.
- Introduce compulsory recordings of interrogations in cases of rape and questioning of victims.
- Initiate research to map out the extent of rape and research on young offenders and on people convicted for indecency in general.
- Open an Internet portal for information on rape and how to contact the police and the help apparatus.
- The Commission is open to the idea of a pilot project exploring aided communication between victim and perpetrator (Restorative Justice).

**BOX 3**

The National Centre of Knowledge about Violence and Traumatic Stress (NKVTS) was established 1st of January 2004. Five ministries: The Ministry of Children and Equality, The Ministry of Health and Care Services, The Ministry of Justice, The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion and the Ministry of Defence are behind the establishing of the centre. The aim is to collect and strengthen the level of competence concerning violence, family violence and sexual assault, health care of immigrants and forced migrants, stress management and collective trauma situations. The tasks of the centre will include work in development, education, guidance and counselling. The National Centre of Knowledge concerning violence and traumatic stress has a key role in the completion of measures in the government's action plan towards improving violence in close relationships. (2008-2011). It has also established five regional resource centres in the violence and trauma field. These centres shall support the service apparatus with information, guidance and the development of competence, as well as establish a network between all co-operating regions. Interventions to help sexually assaulted children, social and psychological work with refugees and suicide-prevention work are included in the centres.

**8.4 Men as victims of violence and sexual assaults.**

Boys and men as victims of violence in close relationships and sexual assaults are discussed in public debate to a lesser degree than as perpetrators. Women are discussed publicly to a far greater degree, as they constitute the majority of assaulted victims.

The serious and repetitive violence in close relationships referred to above has been called *patriarchal assault*, and is mainly characterised by the fact that women are the victims, and men the perpetrators. This violence expresses itself through physical brutality, psychological terror, systematic oppression, degradation and abuse of power. Sexual assaults also affect more women than men, and here again most perpetrators of sexual assault are men.

Even though more women than men are being subjected to serious and repeated violence in close relationships, and to sexual assaults and rape, many men also suffer from these assaults. They are also victims of violence in public places, as shown above. Unfortunately these victim experiences are not given much attention.

**8.4.1 The problematic victim concept**

To perceive one's self as, and to be perceived as a victim are two contrasting sides of the same matter. To be perceived as a victim exempts guilt. This was an important element in the female movement when illustrating domestic violence in the 1970's. Then, the female movement fought for women's *right to be perceived as victims*, and not infamous and provocative bitches, or flirty girls who drove men to violence and abuse. Instead of looking at the violence as an interaction between two partners, the female movement managed to highlight that this was about abuse, and that the issue concerned a relation between violator and victim.

The role of the victim is a heavy load to carry. A *victim* is perceived as passive, helpless and pitiable, and negative associations such as *un-free, ruined, loser and unsafe* are inherent in the

word. The status as victim can also be useful, but the right to be a victim is not unproblematic. It has been said that there are few rights without obligations, and the right to be a victim implies a duty to be pitiable, weak, and a passive object.

To be perceived as a passive object is considered highly problematic, thus making the whole victim concept problematic from a feminist perspective. Victimhood has been under severe criticism. A study of advisors at the Crisis Centre Secretariat shows that the advisors are critical of calling women subjected to violence “victims”.

Many women therefore oppose the idea that they are "victims". This is just as problematic for men who are victims. The idea of victimhood is associated with femininity, and there are many negative associations with it that are in contrast to the image of a “real man”. It has emerged in a survey concerning raped men that they felt guilt and shame after the assault, and that they kept it hidden from the outside world.

It is problematic for men to be assaulted by other men, and this situation does not improve if the offender is a woman. To become a victim of a woman in this context stands as too big a contrast to what is expected from masculine men. To become victimized leads to degradation and loss of dignity. For men this situation also implies loss of manhood.

#### **8.4.2 Victims of violence in close relationships**

Reports from crisis centres in 2007, show that four men stayed overnight at crisis centres that year. That so few spend the night is consistent with the fact that the centres have primarily been a service for abused women. Most centres stick with the policy of children and women as their main target, and do not accommodate men.

At the crisis centres the users can meet up for conversations and come for advice and guidance. Of the daily users of the centres, 5% were men, and of these 95 men in all, 45 were having daily visits at 24 of the total 51 crisis centres that take day clients.

As mentioned above, (see 8.3.2) surveys of the extent of the problem of violence show that when one looks at partner violence as a whole, roughly as many men as women say they have been subjected to this type of violence during the past year. The nationwide survey shows that just over 5% of both men and women have experienced physical force and violence from their partner during the calendar year. If we look at the categories with severe injury potential (strangulation, use of a weapon, head banged against floor or object) 8.4% of women (1 out of 10) and 2.2% of men (1 out of 40) have been subjected to this. In a report from REFORM (Resource Centre for Men) – “Men subjected to violence in close relationships” – it is established that as many as 300 men yearly have a potential need for help or aid after being subjected to violence in close relationships. REFORM is being contacted both day and night, among other things via the “Hotline for men in crisis”. And on the basis of this contact we know a few things about those men.

From the report it emerges that:

- the social and psychological situation has striking similarities with the situation that is being depicted by women subjected to partner violence
- that many are seeking a place where they can receive help
- that many continue living with the perpetrator of violence due to the lack of offered accommodation for men subjected to violence in close relationships

- that victims show a palpable fear of not being believed
- that the threshold to seek help is so high that relatives are usually the ones who contact the help services first

REFORM asserts that if boys and men are to be given the opportunity to seek help concerning the situation they find themselves in, a specific service for this group must be established and made known. At the same time, work towards the removal of taboos tied being a victim of this violence must be continued. The report states that:

Men and boys subjected to violence in close relationships seem to have a palpable fear of not being believed and a high threshold concerning seeking help. The group seem to have a need for a greater acknowledgement of their problem in society, and taboos to be opposed. In this way the threshold for seeking help can become lower. There is need for the development of both a societal understanding and a development of the existing language to encompass men's problems, so that it is understood that serious violence between couples or family relations can also affect boys and men, and that they may need help also.

### **8.4.3 Victims of sexual assault.**

Boys and men are subjected to sexual assault and rape too. In a survey among students in graduating classes at secondary schools, 22% of the girls and 8% of the boys reported having been subjected to minor sexual assaults. Minor abuse included incidents such as unwanted caressing and masturbation. More grave abuse included all other forms of unwanted sex, including rape and attempted rape. 15% of the girls and 7% of the boys reported this type of grave abuse. Of these girls 9% reported experiences of rape or attempted rape. Less than 1% of the boys reported such incidents.

The survey shows that experiences of sexual assault increases the risk of self-destructive behaviour such as attempted suicide, self harm, eating disorders, aggressive outward behaviour, problems tied to sexuality due to premature sexual activity, seeking paid sex, having intercourse with multiple partners and forcing intercourse upon others (this only concerned grave assaults). In addition it also increases the risk for mental problems such as low self-esteem (again, only concerned the grave sexual assaults), anxiety, depression and disassociation.

A surprising find in this survey is that a number of boys reported to have been subjected to assaults by women. This concerned half the boys who answered that they had been subjected to an unwanted sexual act.

Numbers from the Centre for Sexually Assaulted Men show that of the men that visit the centre, more than a quarter of them report that the perpetrator was a woman. In 2006, this amounted to 26.5% of the men.

No previous nationwide or known international surveys have shown such a high percentage of boys and men that report a female perpetrator. The difference could come from inequalities in the given samples and the way the survey was planned. But the difference could also mirror the changes over time concerning the image of offender and victim. The difference could be an expression of the fact that more women are actually assaulting men than in previous times. Another possible explanation is that men now have a lower threshold when it comes to reporting these circumstances, and therefore are experiencing and reporting these incidents to a greater degree.

That more boys are reporting unwanted acts of sex could also be an expression for an increasing

consciousness among boys concerning the control over one's sexual practices and reluctances.

The risk of sexual assault towards boys and men is a phenomenon that we today have insufficient knowledge of, and efforts in researching the area must be increased.

#### **8.4.4 Victims of violence in public places**

The violence most men are victims of is violence in public places, committed by totally or partially unknown perpetrators, at night and on the weekends, as mentioned in paragraph 8.3.1. Considering the extent of this violence, the victims do not receive much attention and little research is done on the matter. A new survey makes up for this scarcity. The purpose of the survey is to gain more insight into the psychological reactions to so-called random violence, where the perpetrator in most cases is unknown. The survey shows that as much as 33% of the sample suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder after the incident. 44% show symptoms of anxiety and depression immediately after the attack. Furthermore, sleeping disorders, nightmares, tension, irritability and isolation are also common reactions.

The study also revealed that victims of random violence have difficulties coming forward because of the black and white picture painted of the victim as a young, intoxicated man who practically “asked for it”. Such an attitude makes it difficult for many of the victims to tell their families and colleagues about the assault, out of fear of being judged as irresponsible.

Many of the victims in this survey experienced inadequate follow-up care from the health service. They said they felt neglected, overlooked and badly taken care of, despite struggling with major problems. This study shows that there is a need for a service for anyone who has been exposed to violence, irrespective of gender or whether the perpetrator is a family member or not. There is a need for a service that makes it possible to follow up those who struggle after a violent attack and for the victims to work through their reactions.

### **8.5 Strategies and initiatives to reduce violent attitudes and actions, particularly among boys and men.**

One significant reason for not being able to accomplish full equality between the sexes is men's violence against women and children.

The professionals within the field often talk about men's violence against women as if it were an unambiguous type of violence, performed by a clear-cut group of men. Men are different, and the violence they use is different both in terms of severity, extent and methods. Today, men's violence against women is not only about men committing violence against their wives or girlfriends. There is also the matter of prostitution and trafficking.

Moreover, violence in close relationships is also about men's self image. Boys and girls have different limits of tolerance to aggression and brutality. This affects the understanding of what is acceptable entertainment. The male clients of «Alternative to Violence» often struggle to see other alternatives than violence, because they feel that the alternatives are a threat to their male self- image.

Most boys and men have no problems with violence and do not exercise violence, neither inside nor outside relationships. It is the offender who is responsible for the act of violence, not the gender. But all men have a collective responsibility to take a stand against violence at their workplaces and within their own social network.

Violence is not only about the suppression of women as an expression of the lack of equality between the sexes. Violence is also about violence being present, the tolerance of violence and to what extent the violence is felt as normal in a man's life. The violence could be determined by the situation or linked to the person's own violent traumas.

The highest priority for this government is the effort against violence, including violence in close relations. Through the action plan "Turning Point" the government put forward a number of initiatives to prevent violence. The plan of action includes help and treatment initiatives for victims of violence, but also a service for assailants.

From a gender equality perspective, and with special awareness of boys and men, these strategies are critical for further work on the subject:

- Clarify the relationship between commercial violence and violent acts and attitudes, especially among boys and men.
- Develop help and treatment centres for boys and men with violent attitudes and actions, across the country.
- Make changing the attitudes among men and in male dominated environments a priority.
- Preventive work in primary and secondary schools.

### **8.5.1 Clarify the connection between commercial violence and violent attitudes and actions, particularly among boys and men.**

The way commercial violence is specifically directed towards boys and men could be of great significance. A survey made for the ministry asks, among other things, if the respondents like to watch violence in films, on television or the Internet. The study of media consumption by the Ministry of Church and Culture shows that boys use games or the Internet in such a manner that violence plays an important part, to a much greater extent than girls. The National Institute for Consumer Research concludes that toys directed towards boys often focus on violence, while this more or less does not occur when directed towards girls. Studies of boy's media consumption (internet, games etc.) show that the element of violence is of great significance.

Prevention from an early age is important. The government also sees it as important to look at the relationship between the commercial violence that is especially directed towards boys and the experience of bullying and violence as it is shown in school and criminal statistics. The government will therefore work on clarifying the effects of commercial violence, together with other possible causal factors, and the use of violence among groups of young boys and men.

### **8.5.2 Develop a help and treatment service across the country, for boys and men with violent attitudes.**

The Soria Moria declaration states that help and treatment services offered to assailants need to be developed further, and made into a nationwide service, and that «Alternative to Violence», will play an important role in establishing these services.

As a first step towards developing a nationwide service, The National Centre of Knowledge about Violence and Traumatic Stress (NKVTS) has, on commission from several ministries, mapped out the already existing services. This survey showed that most of the help-and



treatment services for adult assailants are carried out by the Correctional Services Department and that few of the services are available for people who are not already taken care of by Correctional Services, psychiatric health services and services for people with addictions. Geographically these services are centred in the south and east of Norway. In the three northern counties, there are only two open services.

The survey from NKVTS is followed up in the action plan directed at domestic violence, «Turning Point 2008-2011», where it is stated that more and better services should be established for people who perpetrate violence. A follow-up plan will be developed in order to establish a nationwide service for assailants, according to their situation and their needs. More services shall be available and existing help and treatment services within The Family Guidance Agencies, Psychiatric healthcare and the other already established services that have treatment of assailants as their main field need to be strengthened. Help and treatment services for men must have multiple cultures in focus, and they must offer both group therapy and more specialized services according to the assailant's needs. The service needs to take both youngsters and adults into consideration, those who seek help to prevent and avoid violence, and those who are already convicted of violence and assault. In addition, it is also important that the service is inclusive and adapted to men from different ethnic backgrounds.

As part of providing a nation-wide service, three new treatment centres have been established in 2008, run by "Alternative to Violence": in cities Stavanger, Kristiansand and Arendal. These services come in addition to the already existing establishments in Oslo, Drammen, Asker and Bærum, Vestfold and Langesund. The national spread of services offering help in anger management based on the model from St. Olavs Hospital, Brøset branch has been accomplished according to initiative 18 in the action plan against domestic violence (2008-2011) "Turning Point".

In 2009 four more treatment services will be established by Alternative to Violence, in counties Hordaland, Nordland, Troms and Hedmark/Oppland. In addition, the Family Guidance Agencies received NOK 2 million to extend their services for assailants in the northern districts, in cooperation with Alternative to Violence. In addition, REFORM, and their group therapy on anger management, will be given priority.

With this, the help and treatment service for assailants will be strengthened and close to being spread nationwide.

### **8.5.3 Attitude reforming work among men and in male-dominated environments**

The Men's Panel concludes that established services for boys and men should be strengthened and developed. The international campaign "White Ribbons" is an example of a grass-roots movement for men that promotes zero tolerance for violence, and the campaign should be strengthened and developed in Norway.

### **8.5.4 Preventive efforts in primary and secondary education**

Student surveys frequently measure the occurrence of both physical and psychological bullying in schools. Despite the initiatives developed as a part of "Manifesto against

Bullying", recent numbers presented show that more than 6% of pupils are being bullied on a regular basis. Again, boys state that they bully the most, and are most likely to be bullied, with the exception of sexual harassment - which girls state as a bigger problem for them. Bullying in schools is also pointed out as a challenge for the schools in the White Paper nr. 16 (2006-2007) "...and no one was left behind", where it is also stated that bullying has a gender-related aspect. Nevertheless, initiatives geared directly towards boys are lacking.

The government wants to make an effort developing a clearer perspective on gender in the preventive work against violence, through the follow up of the Manifesto against Bullying. As a part of "Turning Point", a pilot project will be developed for secondary schools with a focus on family relationships, communication and conflict management. The project will be collaborated between the Family Guidance Agencies and schools, and will be offered at schools in some regions through selected Family Guidance Agencies.

### **8.5.5 Initiatives for boys and men who have been victims of violence**

With support from the Ministry of Children and Equality, and the Church Resource Centre against Violence and Sexual Assault, one will arrange an international conference in January 2009 concerning sexual assaults against boys and men. The conference is directed towards people who either work with, or seek knowledge on, the problems connected with assaults, looking from a gender perspective.

As an initiative in "Turning Point", National Knowledge Centre about Violence and Traumatic Stress (NKVTS) will carry out a survey on violence and assaults on men in close relationships, and their specific need for help. The outcome of this survey will form the foundation for the development of further methods and initiatives.