

# **Where Men Stand:** Men's roles in ending violence against women



**A White Ribbon Foundation Report**

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**The White Ribbon Foundation of Australia** works to prevent violence against women. The Foundation has established and sustains the White Ribbon Campaign in Australia to engage men and boys to actively oppose violence against women and to promote a culture of non-violence and respect.

The White Ribbon Foundation is committed to the development and dissemination of knowledge and evidence of effective prevention strategies to prevent violence against women and their children. This is the second report by the White Ribbon Foundation, and begins the White Ribbon Prevention Research Series.

**The White Ribbon Prevention Research Series** is intended to:

- Present contemporary evidence on violence against women and its prevention;
- Investigate and report on new developments in prevention locally, nationally and internationally; and
- Identify policy and programming issues and provide options for improved prevention strategies and services.

The White Ribbon Prevention Research Series will be directed by an expert reference group comprising academic, policy and service experts. At least two reports will be published each year, and available from the White Ribbon Day website at [www.whiteribbonday.org.au/](http://www.whiteribbonday.org.au/).

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## Introduction

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Where do men stand when it comes to violence against women? This report describes how many men use violence against women, what men think about violence against women, and what role men can and do play in reducing and preventing this violence.

The report is guided by the fundamental belief that men can play a positive role in preventing men's violence against women. Indeed, without men's involvement, efforts to reduce and prevent violence against women will fail.

Most men in Australia do not use violence against women, and most believe such violence to be unacceptable. A silent majority of men disapproves of violence, but does little to prevent it. Of most concern, significant numbers of men excuse or justify violence against women. The silence, and encouragement, of male bystanders allows men's violence against women to continue.

## Raise the bar

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We must raise the bar for what it means to be a 'decent bloke', a 'nice guy'. To stop violence against women, well-meaning men must do more than merely avoid perpetrating the grossest forms of physical or sexual violence themselves. Men must strive for equitable and respectful relationships. They must challenge the violence of other men. And they must work to undermine the social and cultural supports for violence against women evident in communities throughout Australia – the sexist and violence-supportive norms, the callous behaviours, and the gender inequalities which feed violence against women.

To the extent that men stay silent in the face of other men's violence against women, they are not perpetrators but perpetuators, allowing this violence to continue.

## Part 1: Men's violence against women and its prevention

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The report begins with the basic facts on violence against women. Violence against women is a widespread social problem, and a blunt expression of injustice and inequality. Men's violence against women has identifiable causes, and it can be prevented.

There are growing efforts to involve boys and men in the prevention of violence against women. The report outlines the rationale for this. It begins with three facts: (1) while most men do not use violence against women, when such violence occurs, it is perpetrated largely by men; (2) ideas and behaviours linked to masculinity or manhood are highly influential in some men's use of violence against women; and (3) men have a positive and vital role to play in helping to stop violence against women.

Violence against women is a men's issue. This violence harms the women and girls men love, gives all men a bad name, is perpetrated by men we know, and will only stop when the majority of men step up to help create a culture in which it is unthinkable.

Where then do men stand in relation to violence against women? The report then maps the state of play among men, in Parts 2-5. It focuses on four key dimensions of men's relations to violence against women: the use of violence, attitudes towards violence, immediate responses when violence occurs, and efforts to prevent violence. The report draws on various datasets, including a national Australian survey of community attitudes towards violence against women.

## Part 2: Men's use of violence against women

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How many men use violence against women? Australian data is very limited, and is focused on individuals' use of various aggressive behaviours against partners or ex-partners. Still, it does indicate that most men do not practise violence against women at least in its bluntest forms.

## Part 3: Men's attitudes towards violence against women

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What do men know and think about violence against women? This report documents that:

- Most men do not tolerate violence against women, although:
  - A significant minority do hold violence-supportive attitudes;
  - Men's attitudes are worse than women's;
  - Men with more conservative attitudes towards gender have worse attitudes towards violence against women – they are more likely to condone, excuse, or justify this violence than other men.
- Overall, men's attitudes towards violence against women are becoming less violence supportive.

## Part 4: Men's responses when violence occurs

What do men do when violence against women occurs? Most men say that they are willing to intervene in situations of domestic violence. Similarly, most boys say that, faced with a situation in which a boy was sexually coercing a girl, they would support the girl. At the same time, men's interventions may not be helpful, while some boys will support the coercive boy instead.

## Part 5: Men's involvement in violence prevention

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To what extent are men actively taking part, or being engaged, in efforts to reduce and prevent violence against women? The report documents that:

- Men find it hard to speak about violence against women. On the other hand, at least from US data, most men believe that they can help to end this violence.
- A growing number of men are joining the effort to end violence against women in Australia. In particular, the contemporary White Ribbon Campaign represents the most substantial and significant manifestation of men's involvement in preventing violence against women this country has seen.
- Men are increasingly the targets of education and other forms of intervention. A range of initiatives engaging men, at various levels of the 'spectrum

of prevention', are under way both in Australia and around the world.

- Men's involvement in violence prevention is on the public agenda, receiving endorsement in both state and Federal plans of action regarding violence against women.
- Violence prevention efforts among men do work – if they're done well. There is a growing evidence base, suggesting that well-designed interventions can shift violence-related attitudes and behaviours.

The report then examines the inspirations for, and barriers to, men's involvements in violence prevention. First, what prompts men to become involved in this work? Men are 'sensitised' to the issue of violence against women through hearing women's disclosures of violence, their love for and loyalties to particular women, their political and ethical commitments to justice and equality, and related experiences. They receive or find opportunities for involvement in violence prevention work, and give meanings to this involvement that foster greater awareness and commitment.

Second, what prevents individual men from taking steps to reduce or prevent men's violence against women? One obvious barrier is some men's support for sexist and violence-supportive attitudes and norms, but another, more subtle, barrier is men's overestimation of *other* men's comfort with violence. Men may fear others' reactions to attempts at intervention, have negative views of violence prevention itself, lack knowledge of or skills in intervention, or lack opportunities or invitations to play a role.

## Conclusion

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Men can play vital roles in helping to reduce and prevent men's violence against women. Indeed, some men, both individually and in groups and often in partnership with women, are already making a difference. Preventing men's violence against women will require sustained and systematic efforts in families and relationships, communities, and in society at large. It is time for men to join with women in building a world of non-violence and gender justice.

Men's violence against women is now firmly on the public agenda. The last 40 years has seen a groundswell of efforts to reduce and prevent physical and sexual assault of women. Two shifts have characterised the field in recent years: a growing emphasis on the need to prevent violence against women before it occurs, and an emerging emphasis on engaging boys and men in prevention.

This report maps where men stand in relation to violence against women. It describes how many men use violence against women, what men think about violence against women, and what role men can and do play in reducing and preventing this violence.

Above all, this report is guided by the fundamental belief that men can play a positive role in preventing men's violence against women. The report has been commissioned by the White Ribbon Foundation, whose mission is to prevent violence against women in Australia. The Foundation maintains the White Ribbon Campaign, centered on promoting men's positive roles in preventing violence against women.

The report offers good news. Most men see violence against women as unacceptable, and men's attitudes have improved over time. Increasing numbers of men are taking part in efforts to end violence against women. Educational and other prevention strategies directed at men and boys can make a positive difference. And male involvement is on the policy agenda.

At the same time, the report also details the bad news. Most men know that domestic violence and sexual assault are wrong, but men have done little to reduce this violence in their lives, families and communities. A significant minority of men hold violence-supportive attitudes, particularly those with more conservative attitudes towards gender in general. Men rarely take action to challenge the violence-supportive beliefs and behaviours they encounter from peers and others. Too many men believe common myths about violence, have ignored women's fears and concerns about their safety, and have stayed silent in the face of other men's violence-supportive attitudes and behaviours. There are important barriers to men's involvement in anti-violence work. And violence prevention work with men and boys remains small and scattered, although its momentum and sophistication are growing.



# Part 1: Men's violence against women and its prevention

To begin with, what do we know about violence against women?

## Violence against women is a widespread social problem.

The term "violence against women" is a useful, catch-all term for a range of forms of violence which women experience, including physical and sexual assaults and other behaviours which result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women. The term includes domestic or family violence, rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other forms of violence experienced by women.

The term "men's violence against women" refers to a subset of this violence, that perpetrated by men. Most 'violence against women' is violence by men, although women also experience violence from other women and from children. For example, among all women who experienced physical assaults in the last 12 months, 81 per cent were assaulted by males, 8 per cent by both males and females, and 27 per cent by other females (ABS 2006: 30).<sup>1</sup> This report focuses on men's violence against women, while recognise that violence against women also is committed by women and children.

Large numbers of women in Australia have suffered violence in the last year, according to two national surveys.<sup>2</sup> From ABS data, 5.8 per cent of women, roughly one in 20, representing over 440,000 women, experienced at least one incident of violence in the last year. In the last year, over 70,000 women (about 1%) experienced violence by a male current or former partner (ABS 2006: 30). The Australian component of the *International Violence Against Women Survey* finds that in the past 12 months:

- 10% of Australian women reported experiencing at least one incident of physical and/or sexual violence by a man (including violence by male partners or ex-partners, male friends and acquaintances, work colleagues, and strangers);
- 8% experienced physical violence, and 4% experienced sexual violence (Mouzos and Makkai 2004).

The two national surveys also provide data on women's *lifetime* experiences of violence. According to the ABS (2006), nearly one in six women (16%) have experienced violence perpetrated by a current or previous partner since the age of 15. The Australian component of the *International Violence Against Women Survey* finds that:

- Nearly two-thirds (57%) of Australian women report experiencing at least one incident of physical violence or sexual violence by a man over their lifetime. Just under half (48%) have ever experienced physical violence, and one-third (34%) have experienced sexual violence.
- Over a third of women (34%) who have ever had a boyfriend or husband report experiencing at least one form of violence during their lifetime from an intimate male partner.
- More than one in ten women (12%) who has ever had a boyfriend or husband has experienced sexual violence from a partner in their lifetime (Mouzos and Makkai 2004).

### Violence against women concerns us all.

Second, violence against women is an issue that concerns us all. Violence against women is a blunt form of harm. When a young woman is thrown against a wall by her boyfriend, when a woman is forced into sex by her ex-husband, what is happening is something *unfair*, something *unjust*, something that *nobody* should have to live with. Violence against women runs counter to the basic freedoms, the basic rights, that every person should have.

Violence against women is a symptom of gender inequalities. But violence against women also makes these inequalities *worse*. It limits women's autonomy, their freedom and everyday safety, and their access to the resources required for social and economic wellbeing.

*Violence against women is a symptom of gender inequalities. But violence against women also makes these inequalities worse.*

<sup>1</sup> These percentages add to more than 100 as some females have experienced physical assault by more than one category of perpetrator.

<sup>2</sup> Recent national data on violence against women in Australia comes from two major surveys: The Personal Safety Survey, conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (a national survey of 16,400 adults in Australia aged 18 and over) (ABS 2006); and the Australian component of the *International Violence Against Women Survey*, conducted by the Australian Institute of Criminology (a national survey of 6,677 women in Australia aged 18-69) (Mouzos and Makkai 2004).

Violence against women is an issue of concern not just to women but to men. Most men do not use violence, but violence hurts the women and girls we love, and gives all men a bad name.

### **Violence against women is a key issue of public health.**

Violence against women is not only an issue of injustice or inequality, but one of health. Violence has a significant impact on women's health and wellbeing – not just in terms of injury and premature death, but in terms of mental health problems including attempted suicide and self-harm, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, substance abuse, and poor reproductive health.

Research by VicHealth shows that intimate partner violence in fact is the *leading* contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15–44. This violence is responsible for more of the disease burden than many well-known risk factors such as smoking, high blood pressure, and obesity. Intimate partner violence alone contributes 9 per cent to the disease burden in Victorian women aged 15–44 years, making it the largest known contributor to the preventable disease burden in this group (VicHealth 2004).

Intimate partner violence has a very substantial *economic* cost, estimated to be over \$8 billion per year (Access Economics 2004). And violence against women also hurts children, whether they experience violence themselves or witness it.

### **Violence against women has identifiable causes.**

Men's violence against women has identifiable causes. There are three broad clusters of determinants of intimate partner violence. First, there is *gender*. There are strong associations between violence against women and gender roles, gender norms, and gender relations. Second, there are links between violence against women and the acceptance and perpetration of *other* forms of violence. Third, the material and social resources available to individuals and communities, including patterns of disadvantage, shape violence against women.<sup>3</sup>

### **Violence against women can be prevented.**

It is possible to prevent this violence from occurring in the first place. We know that some strategies of primary prevention do work, and that a wide range of other strategies are promising.

## **Causes of men's intimate partner violence against women**

### **(1) Gender roles and relations**

Men's agreement with sexist, patriarchal, and sexually hostile attitudes

Violence-supportive social norms regarding gender and sexuality

Male-dominated power relations in relationships and families

Sexist and violence-supportive contexts and cultures

### **(2) Social norms and practices related to violence**

Lack of domestic violence resources

Violence in the community

Childhood experience of intimate partner violence (especially among boys)

### **(3) Access to resources and systems of support**

Low socioeconomic status, poverty, and unemployment

Lack of social connections and social capital

Personality characteristics

Alcohol and substance abuse

Separation and other situational factors

(Flood 2007)

<sup>3</sup>See Flood (2007) for a detailed account of these three clusters of determinants of intimate partner violence against women, and VicHealth (2007) for a summarised account.



We know that education programs among children and youth can have a positive and lasting impact on their attitudes and behaviours. Social marketing campaigns can change attitudes and behaviours. Community development can improve the social contexts which foster violence against women, while community mobilisation can build communities' and networks' capacity to shift social norms and inequalities. Legal and policy reform can create multi-level partnerships in prevention across government and community sectors. Thus, we *can* make a difference. Programs, policies, and political activism can reduce and prevent men's violence against women.

## Preventing violence

In the last decade and a half, prevention has become a central focus of community and government efforts to address violence against women. This reflects the recognition that we must not only respond to the victims and perpetrators of interpersonal violence, but also work to prevent violence from occurring in the first place. We must address the underlying causes of physical and sexual violence, in order to reduce rates of violence and ultimately to eliminate it altogether.

Prevention work has only become possible because of years of hard work and dedication by survivors, advocates, prevention educators, and other professionals (CDC 2004: 1). In particular, advocates and activists in the women's movement have worked hard to gain recognition for women who have experienced violence, to place violence on the public agenda, and to generate the political will to tackle it (Harvey *et al.* 2007: 5). Primary prevention efforts complement work with victims and survivors, but do not replace or take priority over it.

'Primary' prevention refers to activities which take place before violence has occurred to prevent initial perpetration or victimisation. In relation to men's violence against women, 'secondary' prevention refers to reducing opportunities for violence by supporting the men who are at risk of perpetrating violence. 'Tertiary' prevention aims to prevent the re-occurrence of violence, and refers for example to work with men who have already used violence (Chamberlain 2008: 3; Foshee *et al.* 1998: 45). At the same time, it is also important to recognise that the groups of boys or men who are the objects of ostensibly 'primary' efforts usually include individuals who have used or are using violence. In addition, all three forms of activity contribute to each other. For example, rapid and coordinated responses to individuals perpetrating violence can reduce their opportunities for

and likelihood of further perpetration, while effective responses to victims and survivors can reduce the impact of victimisation and prevent revictimisation (Chamberlain 2008: 4).

*Now men in general are being addressed as 'partners' in prevention*

Other shifts characterise the violence prevention field. Contemporary violence prevention also includes increased emphases on comprehensive approaches which address multiple levels of the social order, a stress on the need for evaluation and evidence of effectiveness, and the targetting of the determinants or causes of violence against women associated with particular settings, communities and social dynamics (Walker *et al.* 2008).

An emphasis on the need to engage men and boys is increasingly well established in the violence prevention field. The report now turns to this.

## Involving men in prevention

Around the world, there are growing efforts to involve boys and men in the prevention of violence against women. Efforts to prevent violence against girls and women now increasingly take as given that they must engage men. While men who use violence have long been addressed in secondary- and tertiary-based based interventions as perpetrators, now men in general are also being addressed as 'partners' in prevention. There are growing efforts to involve boys and men in various capacities associated with the prevention of violence against women: as participants in education programs, as targets of social marketing campaigns, as policy makers and gatekeepers, and as activists and advocates. There is a steadily increasing body of experience and knowledge regarding effective violence prevention practice among boys and young men, often grounded in wider efforts to involve men in building gender equality.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See for example publications by Bannon and Correia (2006), Esplen (2006), Family Violence Prevention Fund (2004), Greig and Peacock (2005), Instituto Promundo (2002), Ruxton (2004), and World Health Organization (2007). Also see footnote 7 regarding guides to engaging men in violence prevention, and Appendix 1.

There is a powerful rationale for addressing men in ending violence against women. This has three key elements.

First, efforts to prevent violence against women must address men because largely it is men who perpetrate this violence. Most men do not use violence against women, particularly in its bluntest forms, but when violence occurs, it is perpetrated overwhelmingly by men. National data from the ABS tells us that, of all females who experienced physical assault in the last 12 months, 81 per cent were assaulted by males and 8 per cent by both males and females (ABS 2006: 30).<sup>5</sup> (This data does not allow determination of what proportion of the *sexual* assaults females experience is perpetrated by males.<sup>6</sup>) Thus, to make progress towards eliminating violence against women, we will need to address the role of *men* – specifically, the attitudes, behaviours, identities, and relations of those men who use violence.

*Men with sexist and hostile attitudes are more likely to perpetrate violence against women than men with more equitable attitudes.*

Second, constructions of masculinity – of what it means to be a man – play a crucial role in shaping violence against women. This is true at the individual level, in families and relationships, in communities, and societies as a whole. A wide variety of studies have found for example that men's adherence to sexist, patriarchal, or sexually hostile attitudes is an important predictor of their use of violence against women (Murnen *et al.* 2002, Sugarman and Frankel 1996, Schumacher *et al.* 2001, Stith *et al.* 2004). Putting it simply, men with such attitudes are more likely to perpetrate violence against women than men with more equitable attitudes. While masculine attitudes are one factor, another is gender inequality itself. Male economic and decision-making dominance in families and relationships is one of the strongest predictors of high levels of violence against women (Heise 1998; Heise 2006: 35).

These first two insights boil down to the point that we have no choice but to address men and masculinities if we want to stop violence against women.

However, violence prevention work with men has been fuelled also by a third and more hopeful insight: that men have a positive role to play in helping to stop violence against women.

<sup>5</sup> During the last 12 months, a total of 242,000 females experienced physical assault. Of these, 195,300 females (81%) experienced physical assault by a male perpetrator, 19,800 females (8%) experienced assaults by both male and female perpetrators, and 66,500 females (27%) experienced physical assault by a female perpetrator (ABS 2006: 30).

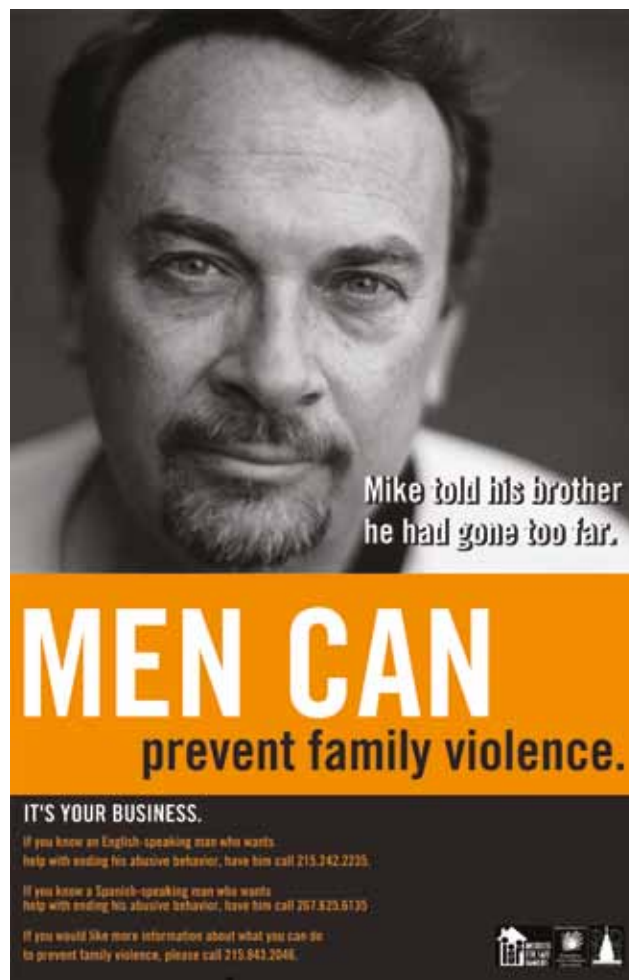
<sup>6</sup> Page 33 of the ABS report gives data for various categories of perpetrator, including current or former partner, family or friends, and so on, but does not break these down by sex (ABS 2006: 33).

## Men's positive roles

Men themselves can play important roles in helping to reduce and prevent men's violence against women. There are three key forms of action men can take:

- (1) Avoiding the personal use of violence against women, or to put this more positively, practising non-violence;
- (2) Intervening in the violence of other men; and
- (3) Addressing the social and cultural causes of violence (Berkowitz 2004: 1).

The first involves men looking critically at their own lives and behaviour. Men can 'put their own house in order', taking responsibility for violent behaviour and attitudes and striving to build respectful relations with the women and girls (and other men and boys) in their lives.



The second form of action involves men as positive 'bystanders', taking steps to reduce or prevent violence against women. This may mean intervening in incidents of violence or their precursors, supporting victims, challenging perpetrators, or other actions. It overlaps with the third form of action.

In the third form of action, men contribute particularly to the primary prevention of violence against women. Here, men take part in challenging the attitudes and norms, behaviours, and inequalities which feed into violence against women. Men may advocate for and champion change in their workplaces and organisations, participate in campaigns and networks, and take other steps to build gender-equal and gender-just communities and societies.

Thus, men themselves can help to reduce and prevent violence against women by living non-violently, being active bystanders, and becoming advocates for social change.

So far, we have focused on men themselves taking action, and this is an important aspect of male involvement in the prevention of violence against women. It can be described as 'men changing'. Another, although overlapping, aspect involves 'changing men'. Here, we are referring to programs and policies which engage and change men, whether as participants in education programs, audiences for communications campaigns, objects of lobbying and advocacy, or husbands and fathers and workers whose lives are shaped by policy initiatives.

This report does not offer detailed guidance on effective strategies for men changing or changing men. However, such instruction can be found in a range of increasingly comprehensive manuals and guides.<sup>7</sup>

## Violence against women is a men's issue.

**Violence hurts the women and girls we love.**

**Violence against women makes all men seem a potential threat**

**Violence hurts our communities.**

**Violence against women is the product of narrow, dangerous norms about being a man which also limit men.**

**Men are bystanders to other men's violence.**

**Some of us have used violence ourselves.**

**Challenging violence is part of challenging inequalities of power and oppression**

**Ending violence against women is part of the struggle to ensure safety and justice for all.**

<sup>7</sup> See for example publications or online guides by Berkowitz (2001, 2004a, 2004b), EngenderHealth (2008a, 2008b), Family Violence Prevention Fund (2004), Flood (2009), Funk (2006), Greig and Peacock (2005), Instituto Promundo (2002), Texas Council on Family Violence (2010), and UNIFEM (2010). Also see Appendix 1 to this report.

<sup>8</sup> Sections of the following were first published in Voice Male, Summer 2009.

## A men's issue

Violence against women is a men's issue. Violence against women is of course a deeply personal issue for women, but it is also one for men.<sup>8</sup>



Violence against women is a men's issue because it is men's wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, and friends whose lives are limited by violence and abuse. It's a men's issue because, as community leaders and decision-makers, men can play a key role in helping stop violence against women. It's a men's issue because men can speak out and step in when male friends and relatives insult or attack women. And it's a men's issue because a minority of men treat women and girls with contempt and violence, and it is up to the majority of men to help create a culture in which this is unacceptable.

*Violence hurts the women and girls we love, and makes all men seem a potential threat.*

While most men treat women with care and respect, violence against women is men's problem. Some men's violence gives all men a bad name. For example, if a man is walking down the street at night and there is a woman walking in front of him, she is likely to think, "Is he following me? Is he about to assault me?" Some men's violence makes all men seem a potential threat, makes all men seem dangerous.

Violence against women is men's problem because many men find themselves dealing with the impact of other men's violence on the women and children that we love. Men struggle to respond to the emotional and psychological scars borne by their girlfriends, wives, female friends and others, the damaging results of earlier experiences of abuse by other men.



Violence is men's problem because sometimes men are the bystanders to other men's violence. Men make the choice: stay silent and look the other way when male friends and relatives insult or attack women, or speak up? And of course, violence is men's problem because sometimes men have used violence themselves.

Men will benefit from a world free of violence against women, a world based on gender equality. In their relations with women, instead of experiencing distrust and disconnection they will find closeness and connection. Men will be able to take up healthier, emotionally in-touch and proud ways of being. Men's sexual lives will be more mutual and pleasurable, rather than obsessive and predatory. And boys and men will be free from the threat of other men's violence.

While men in general will benefit from the elimination of violence against women, there are also things which some men will have to give up. Men systematically using violence and control against partners receive such 'benefits' as social and sexual services and support, decision-making control, and reinforcement of a powerful sense of self (Stark 2010: 207). In ceasing their violence, perpetrators must give these up. More generally, men will have to give up the unfair privileges associated with violence and gender inequality: the privilege to dominate one's relationships and families, the 'right' to expect sex on demand from a partner, and the 'pleasures' of treating women as second-class citizens and sexual subordinates.

### Men's roles in creating change

So far, this report has argued that men must be involved in the prevention of violence against women because: (1) this violence is perpetrated overwhelmingly by men; (2) it is based in constructions of masculinity and patterns of gender inequality in which men are involved; and (3) men themselves can help to change the social and cultural foundations of violence against women. There are several elements of men's roles in creating change which deserve further mention:

- Men can change men.
- Men can use institutional power to promote change.
- Involving men means that women do not have to make change alone.



Men's attitudes and behaviour are shaped in powerful ways by their male peers. For example, men who believe that other men are unwilling to act to prevent rape are more likely to be unwilling to intervene themselves, as this report explores below. In addition, male advocates and educators tend to be perceived as more credible and more persuasive by male participants (Flood *et al.* 2009: 47-49, 54). While this unfortunately reflects the status and cultural legitimacy granted to men's voices in general (Flood 2005: 464), it also can be used to strategic advantage in changing men. At the same time, women can work very effectively with boys and men, men should also hear the voices of women, and there are benefits to women and men working together.

*Senior male leaders can be effective 'champions' for violence prevention in their organisations.*

A second element of men's capacity to create social change towards gender equality comes out of gender inequalities themselves. In Australia as in many countries, it is true that as a group, men have greater access to institutional power than women as a group. Decision-making and powerful positions in Australia, whether in Parliament or local Councils, are dominated by men. Men in general receive higher wages than women, reflecting such factors as inequalities in parenting and domestic work and occupational segregation. (Of course, many men in Australia are anything but powerful, and gender inequalities intersect with other inequalities of class, ethnicity, sexuality, and so on.) Men with influence and privilege can be powerful advocates for the prevention of violence against women, mobilising resources and garnering institutional support. Senior male leaders

can be effective 'champions' for violence prevention in their organisations, using their personal influence to encourage take-up of violence prevention initiatives (Rogers 2002: 992). Indeed, their advocacy can have flow-on effects for other males' support for such work. For example, in schools where teachers and other staff intervene in bullying, students themselves are more likely to intervene (Powell 2010: 21).

Patterns of men's institutional privilege also mean that men involved in anti-violence work at times have been able to attract levels of support and funding rarely granted to women (Landsberg 2000: 15). Men's anti-violence work must be done in consultation with and accountable to relevant women's groups and networks.

A further reason to involve men in the prevention of men's violence against women concerns the positive effects of male inclusion and the detrimental effects of male exclusion. Given that women already interact with men on a daily basis in their households and public lives, involving men in building equitable gender relations can make interventions more relevant and workable and create lasting change. Male inclusion increases men's responsibility for change and their belief that they too will gain from gender equality, and can address many men's sense of anxiety and fear as traditional, violence-supportive masculinities are undermined (Chant and Guttman 2000). Excluding men from work on violence and gender can provoke male hostility and retaliation. It can intensify gender inequalities and thus leave women with yet more work to do among unsympathetic men and patriarchal power relations (Chant and Guttman 2000).

None of this means that every effort to address violence against women must directly involve or address men. There continue to be reasons why women-only and women-focused efforts are vital: to support those who are most disadvantaged by intimate partner violence and pervasive gender inequalities, to maintain women's solidarity and leadership, and to foster women's consciousness-raising and collective empowerment. Failing to direct violence prevention efforts to women would be to miss the opportunity to increase women's critical understandings of intimate partner violence and to build on women's already-existing skills in recognising, resisting, and rejecting violence. In addition, educating women can change men: by shifting women's expectations of partners and intimate relations, interventions may increase the pressures on and incentives for heterosexual men to adopt non-violent practices and identities. Interventions can harness

men's motivations to be accepted and liked by women, by encouraging women's unwillingness to associate with sexist and aggressive men (Adams-Curtis and Forbes 2004). Yes, this is unfair, but it is no more unfair or damaging than the consequences of current gender relations.

There is no doubt that involving men in the work of preventing violence against women involves potential dangers: the dilution of a feminist agenda, the lessening of resources for the victims and survivors of this violence, and the marginalisation of women's voices and leadership. These dangers overlap with those associated with involving men in gender-related programming and policy in general (Flood 2007). At the same time, there is also a compelling feminist rationale for addressing men.

So, where do men stand in relation to violence against women? We can answer this question by focusing on four key dimensions of men's relations to violence against women: the use of violence, attitudes towards violence, immediate responses when violence occurs, and efforts to prevent violence. To put this differently: How many men use violence against women? What do men know and think about violence against women? What do men do when violence against women occurs? And what steps are men taking to reduce and prevent violence against women?

### Most men do not practise violence against women.

What proportion of men in Australia have actually used violence against a partner or ex-partner? There is very little data with which to answer this. The two most significant surveys of violence in relationships and families in Australia – the Personal Safety Survey and the International Violence Against Women Survey – gather data only on victimisation, not perpetration. These generate valuable information on the extent of violence against women, but are less helpful in directly assessing how many men have perpetrated such violence.

However, three other studies do provide some limited data on males' use of violence against female partners. All three use an instrument for measuring violent behaviours called the Conflict Tactics Scale, which focuses on violent 'acts'. As noted in more detail below, this generates limited and in some ways problematic data on violence.

- *International Social Science Survey Australia (1996-97)*: In a survey of 1,643 respondents in the International Social Science Survey Australia 1996/97 who had been partnered in the last year, men and women were asked whether, in the last year, they or their spouse had ever done any of three sets of violent acts to each other. Among men, (1) 3.1% had slapped, shaken, or scratched their partner; (2) 2.2% had hit her with a fist or with something held in the hand or thrown; and (3) 1.6% had kicked her. In total, 3.4% of men had perpetrated any physical assault against a partner in the last year, while 96.6% had not (Headey *et al.* 1999: 60).<sup>9</sup>
- *Crime Prevention Survey (2001)*: The Crime Prevention Survey was an Australian survey of 5,000 young people aged 12-20. It used a modified version of the Conflict Tactics Scale to ask about a series of violent acts, covering both perpetration and victimisation. Among young males who have ever had a 'dating' relationship, around one in ten have pushed, grabbed or shoved a girlfriend; thrown, smashed, kick or hit something; or tried to control a girlfriend physically e.g. by holding her. Smaller proportions – two to three per cent – report that they have tried to force a girlfriend to have sex or physically forced her to have sex. At least according to their own reports, two-thirds to three-quarters of males aged 12 to 20 have never used these forms of violence or abuse against a girlfriend (National Crime Prevention 2001: 115-118). Appendix 2 provides further detail.<sup>10</sup>

- *International Dating Violence Study (2008)*: An international study using the revised Conflict Tactics Scale among university students included an Australian sample of 214 students, with a mean age of 23.5 years. Among the Australian sample, 18.4% of males had perpetrated 'minor' assault on a dating partner in the last year. This means that they had committed at least one of the following acts: (1) pushed or shoved her, (2) grabbed, (3) slapped, (4) thrown something at her, or (5) twisted her arm or hair. Again among males in the Australian sample, 7.9% had perpetrated 'severe' assault in the last year. This means that they had committed at least one of the following acts: (1) punched or hit a partner, (2) kicked, (3) choked, (4) slammed her against a wall, (5) beat her up, (6) burned or scalded her, or (7) used a knife or gun on her (Straus 2008: 257).<sup>11</sup>

These studies give us some idea of what proportions of men have used particular violent acts against a female partner. However, they do not tell us how many men have engaged in the pattern of behaviour which many describe as 'domestic violence': a systematic pattern of power and control, involving the use of a variety of physical and non-physical tactics of abuse and coercion, in the context of a current or former intimate relationship (Flood 2006: 8).

The three studies above tell us little about the character, dynamics, meaning, context, or impact of the violent acts they measure. The method they use for assessing violence, the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), is subject to considerable criticism:

- The CTS does not tell us whether violent acts were a single incident or part of a pattern of violence, ignores who initiates the violence, omits violent acts such as sexual abuse, stalking and intimate homicide, ignores the history of violence in the relationship, and neglects the question of who is injured (Dobash and Dobash 2004: 329-332; Flood 2006: 7-9).

<sup>9</sup> For women, the equivalent proportions were (1) 2.7%, (2) 2.8%, (3) 1.3%, and (4) 3.6% (Headey *et al.* 1999: 60).

<sup>10</sup> According to the Crime Prevention Survey, females' self-reported use of violence or abuse against a boyfriend is at similar levels to that by males against girlfriends. For example, based on victimisation experience, males were more likely than females to be slapped, and males and females were equally likely to have been kicked, hit, or bitten. On the other hand, females were more likely than males to have been put down or humiliated, controlled physically, or experience a partner throwing, smashing, hitting or kicking something (National Crime Prevention 2001: 118).

<sup>11</sup> The equivalent figures for females for minor and severe assault were 20.7% and 8.7% (Straus 2008: 258).



- The CTS depends only on reports *either* by the male partner *or* the female partner, despite some evidence of lack of agreement between them. In the National Crime Prevention survey for example, the extent to which males report perpetrating such violence is lower than extent to which females report experiencing such violence, suggesting that males under-report the violence they perpetrate.<sup>12</sup>
- The samples in CTS studies are shaped by high rates of refusal particularly among individuals either practising or suffering severe and controlling forms of intimate partner violence, what some call ‘intimate terrorism’ (Johnson 2010: 213). Individuals using violence against a partner, *and* those suffering violence at a partner’s hands, are less likely than others to participate in such surveys, particular where more severe violence is involved (Headey *et al.* 1999: 61).<sup>13</sup>
- CTS studies exclude incidents of violence that occur after separation and divorce, although Australian and international data show that it is the time around and after separation which is most dangerous for women.

Studies using the Conflict Tactics Scale are most likely to pick up on a pattern of aggression which Johnson (2010: 213) terms ‘situational couple violence’, involving arguments which escalate to verbal aggression and ultimately to physical aggression (Johnson 2010: 213). Here, the violence is relatively minor, both partners practise it, it is expressive (emotional) in meaning, it tends not to escalate over time, and injuries are rare. In situations of ‘intimate terrorism’ or ‘coercive controlling violence’ on the other hand, one partner (usually the man) uses violence and other controlling tactics to assert or restore power and authority. The violence is more severe, it is asymmetrical, it is instrumental in meaning, it tends to escalate, and injuries are more likely. CTS studies are only a weak measure of levels of minor ‘expressive’ violence in conflicts among heterosexual couples. They are poorer again as a measure of ‘instrumental’ violence, in which one partner uses violence and other tactics to assert or restore power and authority (Johnson 1995: 284-285).

<sup>12</sup> For example, 19 per cent of girls say that their boyfriends have threatened to hit them or to throw something at them, whereas only seven per cent of boys admit to having done this to their girlfriend (National Crime Prevention 2001: 117). Individuals using violence are likely to under-report this given its generally socially unacceptable character. In turn, victims are more likely to perceive violence and abuse when they take place, to name them as abusive, and to recall them. There is some sign here that young men are more likely than young women to under-report the violence they perpetrate in intimate relationships. The gap between perpetrators’ acknowledgment of perpetration and victims’ reports of victimisation was greater for male-to-female violence than female-to-male violence (National Crime Prevention 2001: 118). The data from the International Social Science Survey Australia also showed poor interspousal reliability, although in this case with potential under-reporting instead by women (Headey *et al.* 1999: 60).

<sup>13</sup> In the National Crime Prevention survey for example, there was a high level of non-response for experiences of violence in intimate relationships and particularly for questions about perpetrating violence, and this was higher for male than female respondents (National Crime Prevention 2001: 117).

Because of the limitations of the Conflict Tactics Scale, many CTS studies find an apparent gender ‘symmetry’ or ‘equivalence’ in intimate partner violence, at least in men’s and women’s overall use of particular violent acts. This is true of the three sources of Australian data above. Because the CTS treats violence in a highly decontextualised and abstracted way, the method produces findings of apparent gender equality in domestic violence, while obscuring the actual patterns, meaning, and impact of violence by men or women (Dobash and Dobash 2004: 332).

CTS-based studies find an *apparent* gender equality in men’s and women’s perpetration of violent behaviours: roughly similar numbers of men and women report that at least once in a specified time period, they have engaged in at least one of the violent behaviours listed. However, even in these general samples, it is clear that men’s violence produces more physical injuries, more negative psychological consequences, and more fear than women’s violence (Johnson 2010: 213). In the National Crime Prevention survey for example, about one-third of all boys and girls who had been in a dating relationship had experienced some measure of physical violence in one or more of those relationships. However, of all the young people who had experienced threats of, or actual, physical violence, 25% of girls and only 6% of boys had been frightened by the physical aggression they experienced, and 24% of girls and only 5% of boys had been both frightened and hurt (National Crime Prevention 2001: 122-123).

*We do not really know how many men are engaged in the systematic use of violence and other strategies of power and control against their female partners or ex-partners.*

While the three Australian sources of data on perpetration above all omit sexual violence, other international data does give some idea of what proportion of men have perpetrated this. International research suggests that significant numbers of men have used sexual coercion against women. While the vast majority of men will say in surveys that they have never ‘raped’ a woman, many have committed acts which meet the legal definitions of rape or sexual assault.

Most famously, Koss *et al.’s* (1987) national study of college students in the US found that 7.7% of the men reported that they had committed an act that met the

standard legal definition of attempted or completed rape since the age of 14. In more recent studies at individual universities and colleges, up to 15% of men surveyed indicate that they have perpetrated rape and up to 57% indicate that they have perpetrated some form of sexual assault (Abbey *et al.* 1998: 275).

In community samples of men, various studies find that anywhere from three to 22% of men have perpetrated sexual assault. As Abbey *et al.* (1998: 275) summarises;

- In a survey among 65 young men (average age of 19) in rural Georgia in 1997, 22% reported committing a sexual assault, and 6% reported committing an act that met the standard definition of completed rape;
- Among 1754 adult, male U.S. Navy recruits surveyed in 1998, 15% reported that they had perpetrated rape or attempted rape before entering the service;
- In a sample of 195 men from one small Canadian city in 2000, 27% had perpetrated some form of sexual assault during their lifetime, and 8% reported committing an attempted or completed rape.

So, having asked what proportion of men in Australia have actually used violence against a partner or ex-partner, we do not really know how many men are engaged in the systematic use of violence and other strategies of power and control against their female partners or ex-partners. In addition, a single-minded focus on physically aggressive acts ignores the *non-physical* behaviours which men (or women) may use in relationships which harm their partners or ex-partners. We do not know, for example, what proportions of men routinely insult and degrade their wives or girlfriends, monitor and control their movements and contact with others, or dominate their everyday decision-making in relationships and families. In turn, we do not know what proportions of men routinely treat their wives and partners with respect, offer intimacy and support, and behave fairly and accountably.

The report turns now to men's attitudes towards violence against women.

## Part 3: Men's attitudes towards violence against women

### Most men do not tolerate violence against women.

The second dimension of men's relations to violence against women concerns their attitudes. Men's attitudes towards violence against women are important because these attitudes shape men's perpetration of violence against women, women's responses to victimisation, and community and institutional responses to violence against women (Flood and Pease 2006). Attitudes are not the whole story of violence against women, but they are an important part of the story (VicHealth 2009: 15-19).

Violence-supportive attitudes and beliefs are those which support violence against women. They work to justify, excuse, minimise, or hide physical or sexual violence against women. For example, community attitudes may *justify* the perpetrator's use of violence, *excuse* the perpetrator's use of violence, *trivialise* the violence and its impact, *deny* or *minimise* the violence, blame the victim, or *hide* or obscure the violence (VicHealth 2009: 16).

Australia now has very good data on community attitudes towards violence against women. Two national surveys have been conducted, in 2009 and 1995, as well as a range of smaller studies. The most recent national survey, titled the National Survey on Community Attitudes to Violence Against Women, was undertaken by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth).<sup>14</sup> The following draws on both published and unpublished data from this national survey, to provide a profile of men's attitudes towards violence against women.

#### Men's definitions of violence

Most men in Australia recognise a variety of harmful behaviours in relationships as part of domestic violence. There is near-universal agreement that physically aggressive behaviours are part of domestic violence.



Most men (83%) agree that forcing the other person to have sex always is domestic violence, and nearly all the remainder agree that it is 'always' or 'sometimes' domestic violence.<sup>15</sup> Most men agree that stalking also is a form of violence against women.

However, while most men understand that domestic violence is constituted by both physical and non-physical forms of violence and abuse, many are less sure that particular non-physical forms of abuse can be counted as domestic violence. Less than half (43%) agree that controlling the social life of the other partner by preventing them from seeing family and friends always is domestic violence.<sup>16</sup> Less than half agreed that repeatedly criticising a partner to make them feel bad or useless always is a form of domestic violence.<sup>17</sup> Only half agree that harassment via repeated phone calls is a form of violence against women.<sup>18</sup>

*Many men are less sure that non-physical forms of abuse can be counted as domestic violence.*

Among both men and women in Australia, non-physical forms of abuse are the least likely 'always' to be considered domestic violence (VicHealth 2009: 27).

#### Men's perceptions of the prevalence and seriousness of violence against women

Just under two-thirds of men (65%) see violence against women as common, and the vast majority (95%) see violence against women as serious (McGregor 2009: 48). VicHealth's attitudes survey included interviews with members of 'selected culturally and linguistically diverse' communities – Italian, Greek, Chinese, Vietnamese and Indian – and together these comprise the 'SCALD' sample. Men in the SCALD communities are less convinced of the prevalence of violence against women, with less than half seeing it as common.

<sup>14</sup>The National Survey on Community Attitudes to Violence Against Women involved telephone interviews with over 10,000 people across Australia, with a minimum of 1,000 interviews conducted in each state/territory. The 2009 survey included 16 and 17-year-old respondents where a parent consented. It also included further telephone interviews with an additional 2,500 first and second-generation members of the Italian, Greek, Chinese, Vietnamese and Indian communities (known as the 'selected culturally and linguistically diverse' or 'SCALD' samples), and face-to-face interviews with 400 Indigenous Australians conducted in nine metropolitan and regional locations across Australia.

<sup>15</sup>83% chose 'Yes always', 8% chose 'Yes usually', and 6% chose 'Yes sometimes' (McGregor 2009: 25).

<sup>16</sup>Among men, 43% responded 'Yes always', 19% 'Yes usually', and 15% 'Yes sometimes' (McGregor 2009: 26).

<sup>17</sup>Among men, 42% responded 'Yes always', 21% 'Yes usually', and 17% 'Yes sometimes' (McGregor 2009: 27).

<sup>18</sup>Among men, 51% responded 'Yes always', 19% 'Yes usually', and 13% 'Yes sometimes' (McGregor 2009: 29).

On the other hand, indigenous men show the highest support for the belief that violence against women is common (VicHealth 2009: 29).

Most men see a range of violent behaviours as 'very serious'. In line with patterns in the community in general, men are less likely to see non-physical behaviours such as yelling abuse or criticising and controlling behaviours as very serious. As the table below shows, one-fifth of men do not regard 'criticising a partner to make them useless' as serious, and one-quarter do not regard 'yelling abuse at a partner' or 'controlling a partner by denying them money' as serious.

**Table 1: Belief that behaviour is NOT serious**

Behaviour is not serious	Male (%)	Female (%)
Forcing partner to have sex	3	1
Threatening to hurt family members to scare or control partner	3	1
Stalking	4	1
Throwing or smashing objects near the partner to frighten or threaten them	7	4
Slapping or pushing partner to cause harm or fear	8	4
Harassment by phone	9	5
Harassment by email	14	8
Controlling the social life of partner by preventing them from seeing friends or family	18	7
Criticising partner to make them feel bad or useless	20	9
Yelling abuse at partner	26	14
Controlling partner by denying them money	29	14

Source: McGregor 2009: 50

## Men's understandings of who perpetrates and who is affected by domestic violence

When domestic violence occurs, it is perpetrated largely by men, and most of its victims are female. While women do perpetrate intimate partner violence and men are sometimes its victims, in most cases the victims are female and the perpetrators are male (VicHealth 2009: 33). Seventy per cent of men, like 80 per cent of women, perceive correctly that domestic violence is perpetrated mainly by men. However, one-quarter (26%) believe that domestic violence is committed equally by men and women. Despite this, 90 per cent of men believe that women suffer most physical harm from domestic violence, showing agreement with women here, with only seven per cent of men believing that women and men suffer harm equally (VicHealth 2009: 35).

## Men's acceptance of justifications and excuses for violence

Do men believe that physical violence against a partner or ex-partner can be justified or excused? Respondents in the National Survey on Community Attitudes to Violence were asked if a man would be justified in using physical force against his wife, partner or girlfriend under various circumstances.

*90% of men believe that women suffer most physical harm from domestic violence.*

The vast majority of men do not believe that physical force against a current or former wife, partner or girlfriend can be justified under any circumstances. The circumstance for which the highest proportion of men agree that physical force can be justified is when a current wife, partner or girlfriend 'admits to having sex with another man'. Only one in twenty men (5%) in the general community sample see physical force as justified in this situation.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, one in seven men (14%) in the SCALD sample see physical force as justified in this situation, and 10 percent see force as justified where a partner 'makes him look stupid or insults him in front of his friends' (VicHealth 2009: 38).

<sup>19</sup>The Technical Report gives a figure of 5% (p. 56), while the Summary Report gives this figure as 4% (p. 38).



Similarly, most men also believe that there are no circumstances under which physical force against a partner or ex-partner can be excused. However, men show a greater willingness to excuse domestic violence than to justify it explicitly. For example, a significant minority of men excuse domestic violence in terms of 'anger' and a 'loss of control', despite the evidence that neither is central to domestic violence (VicHealth 2009: 40). Over one-quarter of men are sympathetic to excuses too in terms of 'regret'. Such beliefs among men serve to diminish perpetrators' responsibility for domestic violence. This is even more apparent when it comes to sexual violence.

Over one-third of men agree that 'Rape results from men being unable to control their need for sex'. The high level of support for this belief, one men share with women, reflects the pervasiveness of notions of male sexuality as an uncontrollable or barely controllable force. Substantial minorities of men also excuse perpetrators of sexual violence from responsibility by shifting blame to the effects of alcohol or drugs.

**Table 2: Men's beliefs that domestic and sexual violence can be excused**

	Agree (%)
<b>Domestic violence</b>	
Domestic violence can be excused if the offender is heavily affected by alcohol	8
Domestic violence can be excused if the victim is heavily affected by alcohol	9
Domestic violence can be excused if it results from people getting so angry that they temporarily lose control	20
Domestic violence can be excused if, afterwards, the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done	27
<b>Sexual assault</b>	
A man is less responsible for rape if he is drunk or affected by drugs at the time	7
Rape results from men being unable to control their need for sex	38

Source: VicHealth 2009: 41

*The vast majority of men do not believe that physical force against a current or former wife, partner or girlfriend can be justified under any circumstances.*

Another dimension of violence-supportive beliefs concerns those which blame the victim, based on the idea that women somehow 'provoke' or 'deserve' the violence they experience. Very few men, about one in twenty, agree that women often 'ask' to be raped. More are prepared to believe that 'women often say "no" when they mean yes', perhaps reflecting common cultural stereotypes of women as 'playing hard to get' and acting as dishonest sexual gatekeepers. Even more men, albeit still a minority, think that female rape victims who are affected by alcohol or drugs are partly responsible for their victimisation.

**Table 3: Men's victim-blaming**

	Agree (%)
Women who are raped often ask for it	6
Women often say 'no' when they mean yes	13
If a woman is raped while she is drunk or affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible	16

Source: McGregor 2009: 68.

Men seem more willing to believe that women make false accusations of violence than to believe explicitly that violence against women can be justified. Most men (56%) agree that women rarely make false accusations of rape, but one-quarter disagree, suggesting that they think false accusations of rape are common.

Men's belief in women's dishonesty or malice is even stronger when it comes to family law contexts. It is depressing to report that more than half of all men agree that 'women going through custody battles often make up or exaggerate claims of domestic violence in order to improve their case'. Such beliefs in false accusations of violence are bluntly contradicted by the evidence. Most accusations of domestic violence and sexual assault, including those made in the context of family law proceedings, have been made in good faith and with evidence for their substantiation (VicHealth 2009: 43-45).

*Men's belief in women's dishonesty or malice is even stronger when it comes to family law contexts.*

Feminist and other efforts to name intimate partner violence as a public issue rather than a private matter have borne fruit. The vast majority of men, like women, recognise that domestic violence is a crime. Most, although a smaller majority, reject the idea that 'domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family', as Table 4 below shows. Similarly, few men believe that women who are sexually harassed 'should sort it out themselves rather than report it'.

However, both men and women have much poorer understandings of women's experiences of living in violent relationships and the factors which prevent women from leaving them. Over half of men, and close to half of women, agree that 'most women could leave a

violent relationship if they really wanted to'. This reflects an ignorance of the barriers to women leaving violent relationships, including:

the fears that victims share about matters such as offender retribution, feeling ill-equipped or ill-informed about the legal process, fear of having their confidentiality breached or being approached by media, and a general lack of faith in the criminal justice or legal system to address their safety or the impact of what has occurred [... and] the risk of escalated violence to themselves or their children, homelessness, and economic hardship (VicHealth 2009: 46)

**Table 4: Beliefs about responses to violence against women**

	Males Agree (%)	Females Agree (%)
Domestic violence is a criminal offence	96*	99
Domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family	15*	10
It's a women's duty to stay in a violent relationship in order to keep the family together	8	5
Women who are sexually harassed should sort it out themselves rather than report it	12	11
In domestic situations where one partner is physically violent towards the other it is entirely reasonable for the violent person to be made to leave the family home	88*	92
Most women could leave a violent relationship if they really wanted to	55*	45
It's hard to understand why women stay in violent relationships	82	78

\*Sex difference within sample significant to p<0.01  
Source: McGregor 2009: 65.



A final aspect of men's attitudes towards violence against women concerns their willingness to intervene in situations of violence and their responses to victims and perpetrators. This is addressed in the section below on 'Men preventing violence against women'.

Having mapped men's attitudes towards violence against women, how do these compare with women's attitudes?

## Men are more likely than women to hold violence-supportive attitudes.

Men's attitudes towards and understandings of intimate partner violence are poorer than women's. VicHealth's recent survey, like a range of other studies, finds a gender gap in attitudes towards violence. Men tend to have narrower definitions of domestic violence than women, they attach a lesser degree of seriousness to most forms of domestic violence, and they are more likely to agree with violence-supportive statements.

One of the most consistent findings to emerge from studies of attitudes towards violence against women is the gender gap in attitudes. Sex is a consistent predictor of attitudes that support use of violence against women, according to both national and local Australian studies and the international literature. As Flood and Pease (2009: 127-8) summarise,

A wide range of international studies find a gender gap in attitudes towards domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of violence against women. In general, men are more likely than women to agree with myths and beliefs supportive of violence against women, perceive a narrower range of behaviors as violent, blame and show less empathy for the victim, minimize the harms associated with physical and sexual assault, and see behaviors constituting violence against women as less serious, inappropriate, or damaging.

Gender differences in definitions and perceptions of violence are evident too with regard to particular forms of violence against women, such as sexual harassment, date rape, and wife assault. Moreover, cross-gender differences in attitudes in many countries are stronger than differences associated with other social divisions such as socioeconomic status or education (Flood and Pease 2009). In other words, the gap between men's and women's attitudes to violence is bigger than the gap between richer and poorer people's or between those with high and low levels of education.

VicHealth's 2009 survey documents a range of sex differences in attitudes. Compared to women, men:

- Have lower levels of recognition that domestic violence is a public issue and a criminal offence rather than a private matter;
- Are less likely to believe that non-physical forms of violence, such as repeated criticism, controlling the degree of social connection with family and friends and controlling finances, are 'always' forms of domestic violence;
- Are less likely to believe that the various forms of physical and non-physical violence are 'very serious';
- Show higher levels of support for excuses for domestic violence, such as if the violent person is later regretful about violence;
- Show greater support for victim-blaming beliefs such as the notion that 'women who are raped often ask for it';
- Are less likely to intervene if a neighbour they don't know well or close friend or relative is being physically assaulted by her partner (VicHealth 2009: 56).

*There is a consistent gender gap in attitudes towards violence.*

An earlier and again substantial national survey, this time among younger Australians, shows a similar gender gap in violence-supportive attitudes. This 2001 survey involved 5,000 young people aged 12-20. It found that young males are less likely than young females to consider particular behaviours to be domestic violence, more likely to see them as normal conflict, less likely to rate a range of forms of violence as very serious, and more likely to agree with statements which excuse or justify violence (National Crime Prevention 2001: 58-70). The following table highlights the contrast in beliefs between boys and young men on the one hand and girls and young women on the other. Various smaller Australian studies corroborate these findings (Flood and Pease 2006: 20-21).

**Table 5: Young males' and females' agreement with violence-supportive beliefs (National Crime Prevention survey 2001)**

	Male (%)	Female (%)
It's okay for a boy to make a girl have sex with him if she has flirted with him or led him on.	14	3
It is okay to put pressure on a girl to have sex but not to physically force her.	15	4
Most physical violence occurs in dating because a partner provoked it	32	24
Guys who get the most respect are those who will fight when they need to.	34	24
If a guy hits a girl he loves because he is jealous, it shows how much he feels for her.	14	8
It's alright for a guy to hit his girlfriend if she makes him look stupid in front of his mates.	7	2

Source: National Crime Prevention 2001: 64-65

Boys and young men were also more tolerant of *females'* violence against *males*. Close to one-third (31%) agreed that 'when a girl hits a guy it's not really a big deal', compared to 19% of females) (National Crime Prevention 2001: 65). This may reflect a more general tolerance for violence espoused by young males.

## Men with more conservative attitudes towards gender have worse attitudes towards violence against women.

It is not sex – whether one is male or female – but gender – gender identities and relations – that shapes men's and women's contrasting understandings of violence against women. There is a powerful association between attitudes towards violence against women and attitudes towards gender. The most consistent predictor of attitudes supporting the use of violence against women

is attitudes towards gender roles, that is, beliefs about appropriate roles for men and women, as a wide range of studies have documented (as cited in Flood and Pease 2006: 21-22; Flood and Pease 2009: 128).

Especially among men, traditional gender-role attitudes are associated with greater acceptance of violence against women. The relationship between allegiance to conservative gender norms and tolerance for violence has been documented among males in a wide variety of communities and countries, both Western and non-Western. The more that men have egalitarian gender attitudes, the better are their attitudes towards violence against women. Such men are more likely to see violence against women as unacceptable, to define a wider variety of acts as violence or abuse, to reject victim-blaming and to support the victim, and to hold accountable the person using violence (Flood and Pease 2006: 22).

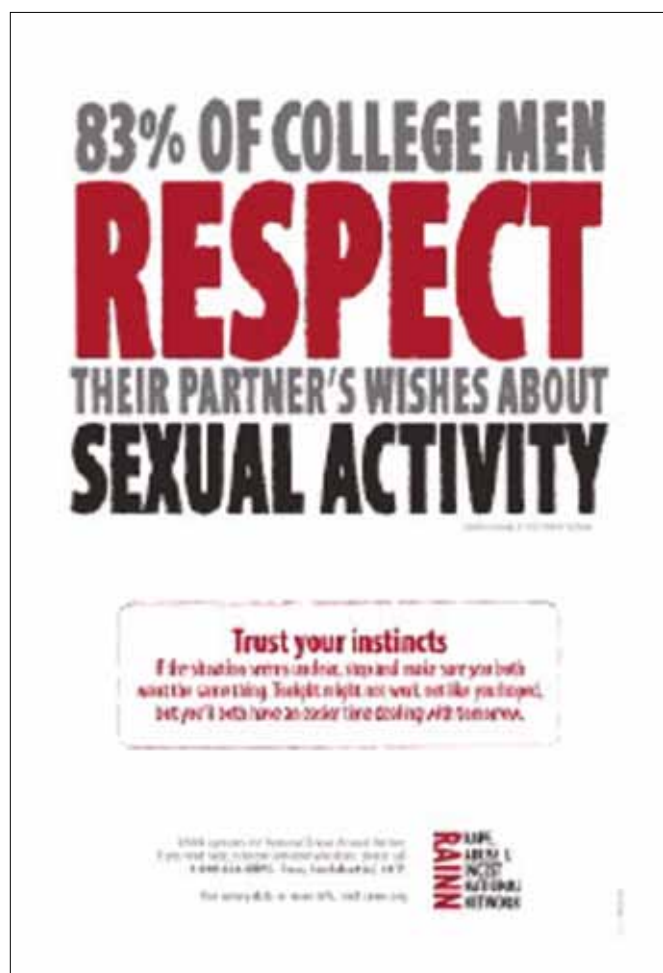
*Especially among men, traditional gender-role attitudes are associated with greater acceptance of violence against women.*

Australian data bears out the relationship between attitudes towards violence against women and attitudes towards gender equality. VicHealth's 2009 survey finds that high support for gender equality and gender equity is the most powerful predictor of holding less violence-supportive attitudes (VicHealth 2009: 54).<sup>20</sup> Earlier Australian studies, among both adult men and young men, report similar findings (De Judicibus and McCabe 2001; National Crime Prevention 2001; Pavlou and Knowles 2001; VicHealth 2006).

Perceptions of violence against women are shaped by wider norms of gender and sexuality. Men are more likely to condone, excuse, or justify rape and domestic violence to the extent that they believe that men should be dominant in households and intimate relationships and have the right to enforce their dominance through physical aggression, men have uncontrollable sexual urges, women are deceptive and malicious, or men have rights of sexual access to their wives or girlfriends. Such beliefs have a long history in Western and other cultures, and have been enshrined in Western legal systems and social norms (Flood and Pease 2006: 23-24; Flood and Pease 2009: 128-129).

<sup>20</sup> People's support for gender equality and gender equity was assessed on the basis of their responses to a series of attitudinal statements about women and their role in society. A high gender equity score represents support for the notions women should be afforded the same rights, roles and opportunities in society as men, while low scores indicate less support for women receiving equal treatment and equal access to resources (VicHealth 2009: 27, 68).

Social norms which explicitly justify men's domestic violence against or sexual assault of women are relatively rare in Australia. At the same time, there are ways in which violence-supportive norms and relations are part and parcel of everyday sexual, intimate, and family relations. For example, three studies among youth in the US, New Zealand and Britain document that violence, and the precursors of violence, are woven into the romantic heterosexual relationships experienced by early adolescent boys and girls. For many boys and girls, sexual harassment is pervasive, male aggression is normalised, there is constant pressure among boys to behave in sexually aggressive ways, girls are routinely objectified, a sexual double standard polices girls' sexual and intimate involvements, and girls are compelled to accommodate male 'needs' and desires in negotiating their sexual relations (Hird and Jackson 2001; Tolman *et al.* 2003).



The 2009 VicHealth survey itself shows that the myths which feed particularly into sexual violence against women are still widely held among people in Australia;

- One-third (34%) believe that 'rape results from men being unable to control their need for sex';

- One-quarter (26%) disagree that 'women rarely make false claims of being raped';
- 13% agree that women 'often say no when they mean yes'; and
- One in six (16%) agree that a woman 'is partly responsible if she is raped when drunk or drug-affected'.

## Men's attitudes are getting better.

Overall, men's attitudes towards violence against women are changing and becoming less tolerant of violence. This reflects the general pattern of improvement in community attitudes towards violence against women. Results of the 2009 survey can be compared with the previous national survey of community attitudes towards violence against women, undertaken by the Office of the Status of Women in 1995.

There are various signs of improvement in men's attitudes towards and understandings of violence against women. Men's perceptions of what constitutes domestic violence have broadened significantly since 1995. Today most understand that domestic violence is constituted by both physical and non-physical forms of violence, and that it may include physical and sexual assault, threats of harm to family members, and psychological, verbal and economic abuse. Men are more likely than they were in 1995 to see intimate partner violence as serious and as a crime. Men are more likely to reject a series of violence-supportive myths.

Compared to 14 years ago, men and women are now more likely to:

- Agree that physical and sexual assault, and threats, are domestic violence;
- Recognise the spectrum of domestic violence behaviours as 'very serious';
- Agree that domestic violence is a crime;
- Agree that forced sex in an intimate relationship is a crime;
- Reject the myth that women 'ask' to be raped;
- Support public rather than private ways of dealing with violence and harassment;
- Report that they would intervene in some way in a situation of domestic violence.

However, not all the news is good. Attitudes that condone, justify or excuse violence against women persist among substantial numbers of men, as VicHealth's 2009 survey documents. It is even more troubling to report that there are some ways in which men's attitudes actually have *worsened*.

Men's attitudes have gone backwards in a number of ways;

- Men are two and a half times more likely than they were in 1995 to believe that domestic violence is perpetrated equally by both men and women.
  - Over one-quarter (26%) now believe this, compared to 10% in 1995, while the proportions believing that domestic violence is perpetrated mainly by men dropped from 84% to 70% (VicHealth 2009: 34).
- Fewer men believe that slapping and pushing a partner to cause harm or fear is a 'very serious' form of violence.

So far, this discussion has addressed the first two dimensions of men's relations to violence against women: men's actual use of violence, and their attitudes towards violence. The report turns now to the third, men's responses when violence occurs and their efforts to prevent this violence.

*There are some ways in which men's attitudes actually have worsened.*

What roles do men *actually* play in responding to, and indeed seeking to prevent, men's violence against women? How do men respond when they know that a woman is being assaulted or raped? And what are men doing to prevent such violence from occurring in the first place?

In the following, consideration is first given to efforts which take place *after* violence has already taken place or is already under way. The discussion then moves to efforts which can *prevent* violence from occurring in the first place.



## Most men are willing to intervene in situations of domestic violence.

One of the most obvious roles men can play in addressing men's violence against women is to intervene in incidents or situations of domestic violence when they occur, to offer support to victims, and to seek to change perpetrators' violent behaviour. VicHealth's 2009 survey provides data on men's preparedness to intervene in situations of domestic violence, and their knowledge of where to seek outside help.

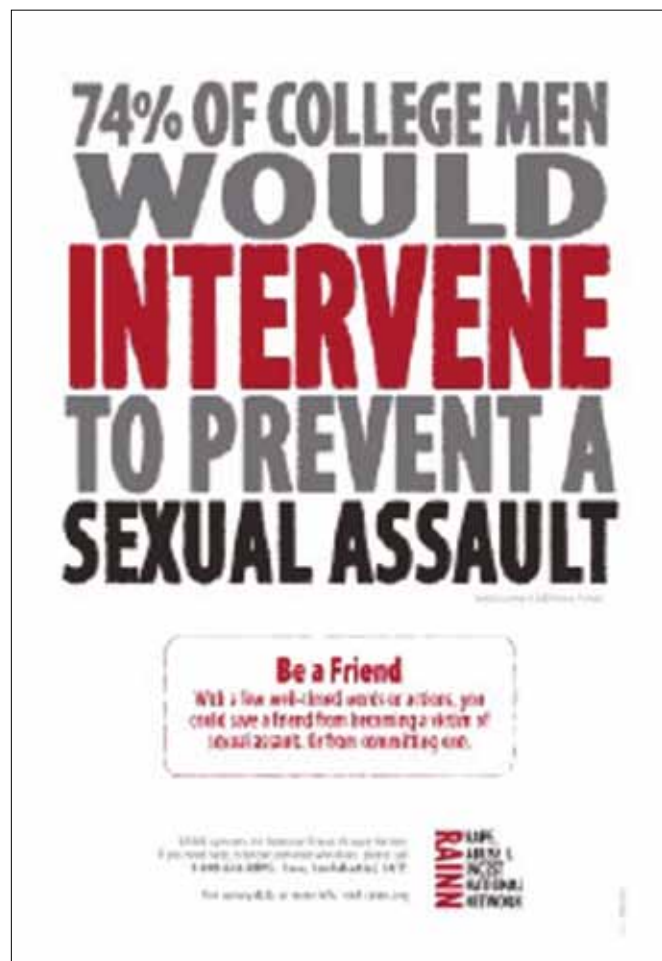
Most men agree that they would intervene in some way in a domestic violence situation, as Table 6 below shows. Like women, men are more likely to intervene with greater familiarity with the victim. Men are most likely to intervene if a family member or friend is a victim of domestic violence, and less likely (although still very likely) to do so if the victim is a woman they do not know being assaulted in public. In fact, men are more willing than women to intervene in public situations where a woman is being assaulted. This may reflect men's greater sense of personal safety in public spaces, their greater endorsement of direct forms of intervention (see below), or their comfort and familiarity with confrontation and aggression in general.

**Table 6: Willingness to intervene in situations of domestic violence**

Agree they would intervene	Male %	Female %	Persons %
If a woman that you didn't know was being physically assaulted by her partner in public	83*	78	81
If a neighbour, that you didn't know all that well, was being physically assaulted by her partner?	86	86	86
If you became aware that a family member or close friend of yours was currently a victim of domestic violence	94*	95	95

\*Sex difference within sample significant to  $p < 0.01$   
Source: McGregor 2009: 81.

Research among young people finds that most boys, faced with a situation in which a girl was being sexually coerced by a boy, would support the girl. Two-hundred Year 8 and 9 students in Adelaide, with an average age of 13.5 years, were presented with a scenario in which a boy is forcing himself physically and in a sexual way upon an unwilling girl (Rigby and Johnson 2004).



*Most men agree that they would intervene in some way in a domestic violence situation.*

Most boys report that they would not support the boy's action, although it is troubling that more than one in eight (13%) report that they would. Boys were less likely than girls to object to the boy's action or tell a teacher, more likely to support the boy, and less likely overall to agree with stopping the coercive sexual harassment (Rigby and Johnson 2004: 13-14). Students' attitudes to victims emerged as a significant predictor of readiness to help the girl directly or indirectly, with poorer attitudes associated with a lesser willingness to help.

**Table 7: Boys' and girls' projected responses as bystanders to sexual coercion (%)**

	Boys	Girls
Agree they would certainly or probably...		
Object to the boy's action	45	61
Ignore it	28	25
Tell a teacher	21	30
Support the boy	13	2

Source: Rigby and Johnson 2004: 14

Participants in the VicHealth survey were asked how they would intervene if a family member or close friend was a victim of domestic violence, and offered a series of options. Respondents could choose more than one option.

Men's proposed responses to situations of domestic violence are largely in step with expert advice. The two most frequent forms of intervention men endorse are (1) offering support and advice and talking to the victim; and (2) reporting the situation to police or authorities. However, men are less likely than women to endorse either of these, as well as such interventions as suggesting places to go for help, support or counselling, or offering shelter or refuge to the victim and getting her to leave.

On the other hand, men are more likely than women to report that they would 'step in between the parties' or 'confront the perpetrator'. It is impossible to know what kind of intervention or confrontation men imagine here. On the one hand, men may be reporting that they would use creative strategies to interrupt the dynamics of violence, and would confront the perpetrator in constructive and non-violent ways. On the other hand, men may be proposing that they would use verbal or physical aggression to end the perpetrator's violence or even punish him for it.

Men tend to offer less helpful responses than women to female victims of intimate partner violence, according to other research. When they encounter friends, family members or others who are victims of violence, men's responses are more likely than women's to be characterised by anger and revenge-seeking, excessive advice-giving, trivialising, and victim-blaming (West and Wandrei 2002). This reflects a number of factors, including greater adherence to victim-blaming and lesser skills in nurturance. From research for example

among American college and university students, males are more likely than females to believe victim-blaming explanations of rape, while females are more likely to cite male hostility and male dominance (Cowan 2000), and males' explanations can inform less sympathetic responses to victims. Men's less helpful responses to victims also may reflect wider gender differences in emotional communication, empathy, and skills in providing nurturance and acceptance (West and Wandrei 2002: 982).

Men in general are not well informed about where to go for outside help to support someone regarding domestic violence. Over one-third (38 per cent) report that they would not know where to go for outside help, like 32 per cent of women. The youngest and oldest categories of men are the least likely to report that they would know where to seek help (McGregor 2009: 83).

The report now offers a 'stocktake' of men's involvement in efforts to prevent men's violence against women, its achievements and its limitations.



## Part 5: Men's involvement in violence prevention

To what extent are men actively taking part, or being engaged, in efforts to reduce and prevent violence against women?

This report begins with one of the simplest, and yet challenging, steps men can take in helping to prevent violence against women: raising the issue, and challenging others' violence-supportive attitudes.

### Men find it hard to speak about the issue.

Most men believe that violence against women is wrong. Yet many do not speak up. While most men see violence against women as unacceptable, at least privately, and most say they will intervene when a family member, friend, or other woman is being assaulted, few are prepared to raise the issue with others. In short, most men stay silent. They do not raise the issue of men's violence against women as one about which they and other men should be concerned. When mates, colleagues and others make violence-supportive comments, most men hold their tongues or laugh along. And they do not challenge violence-supportive dynamics and situations. What stops men from intervening is discussed below.

*When mates, colleagues and others make violence-supportive comments, most men hold their tongues or laugh along.*

A powerful example of men's inability or unwillingness to speak up about violence against women comes from a NSW campaign aimed at men. "Violence Against Women — It's Against All the Rules" was a media and community education campaign targeted at men aged 21 to 29, run from 2000 to 2003 by the Violence Against Women Specialist Unit of the NSW Attorney General's Department. The campaign took the form of posters, booklets, and radio advertisements, using high profile sportsmen and sporting language to deliver the message to men that violence against women is unacceptable. While the campaign achieved high recognition among its target audience, it was unsuccessful in encouraging men to talk about violence against women. Ninety percent of men in the target group who had seen or heard something of the campaign reported that violence against women was not an issue they would talk about with their peers. Aboriginal men were the exception: they felt that violence against women is an issue that should

be discussed by men (Hubert 2003: 32-34). This reflects a growing conversation in indigenous communities about family violence and sexual abuse.

Among men, there are powerful barriers to raising the issue of violence against women, let alone to actually challenging violence-supportive comments or working to shift violence-supportive cultures. The inspirations for – and barriers to – men's involvement in preventing violence against women are discussed below.

### Most men believe that they can help to end violence against women.

Other than information on men's willingness to intervene in actual situations of domestic violence, there is no Australian data on men's readiness to take action to reduce or prevent violence against women. However, if Australian men are similar to those in the US, then a majority believe that they can help make a difference. US data suggest that most men believe that they can play a personal role in addressing domestic violence and sexual assault.

In a national US telephone survey of 1,020 men, commissioned by the Family Violence Prevention Fund, most of the men surveyed (57%) reported that they believed they can personally make a difference in ending sexual and domestic violence. Seventy-three percent (73%) of men think they can make at least some difference in promoting healthy, respectful, non-violent relationships among young people (Hart Research Associates, Inc. 2007: 2).

*Most men believe that they can play a personal role in addressing domestic violence and sexual assault.*

Men are willing to take time to get involved in a variety of efforts to address the problem of domestic violence and sexual assault and promote healthy, violence-free relationships. For example:

- Seventy percent (70%) are willing to make time to talk to children about healthy, violence-free relationships (up from 55% in 2000).
- Sixty-six percent (66%) would sign a pledge to promote respect for women and girls.
- Sixty-five percent (65%) would sign a petition or contact elected officials to urge them to strengthen laws against domestic violence.

This US research also found that many men already are taking action by talking to children (their own and others) about healthy, violence-free relationships:

- Sixty-eight percent (68%) of fathers have talked to their sons about the importance of healthy, violence-free relationships, and 63% of fathers have talked to their daughters.
- Fifty-five percent (55%) of all men have talked to boys who are not their sons; 47% have talked to girls who are not their daughters (Hart Research Associates, Inc. 2007: 2).

Most men report that they are willing to express their disapproval when individuals – either friends or celebrities – make jokes or comments which demean or exploit women. In the US poll, at least three in five men indicate that there is a good chance that they would say or do something to protest or withdraw support in situations where a favourite music artist releases a song or video that demeans or exploits women, a radio disc jockey or TV host makes a joke about rape or wife-beating, or a favourite movie actor is convicted of sexual assault or domestic violence. Slightly fewer, 70%, say that they would state their objections to a friend's joke that made light of domestic violence or sexual assault (Hart Research Associates, Inc. 2007: 9).

There is little or no data on the extent to which men *actually* take the steps they endorse to reduce or prevent violence against women. It is likely, however, that far smaller proportions of men actually show protest or disapproval in the face of violence-supportive comments and actions. Other research finds that rates of actual intervention in bullying for example are usually far lower than rates of self-reported intention or willingness to intervene (Rigby and Johnson 2004: 14-15).

## A small number of men have joined the effort to end violence against women.

### Men are mobilising, in groups, networks, and campaigns.

Male involvement in violence prevention has momentum, energy, and some degree of political support. There are two aspects to men's involvement: first, men's direct involvement as advocates and activists, and second, violence prevention efforts which address men and boys as targets of education.

Around Australia, a small but significant number of men are taking an active and public role in efforts to end

violence against women. In fact, the numbers involved are greater than at any other time in Australia's history.

Male involvement in efforts to end violence against women has a short history in Australia. Men's anti-violence groups first formed in the late 1980s. They overlapped with men's anti-sexist groups, with such names as Men Against Patriarchy (MAP), Men Opposing Patriarchy (MOP), and the Men's Anti Gender Injustice Group (MAGIC). These grassroots men's groups were small and scattered. Men's involvement in collective efforts regarding violence against women intensified in the early 1990s, with the formation of Men Against Sexual Assault (MASA) groups in most capital cities. MASA groups held rallies under such banners as 'Men Can Stop Rape', conducted educational programs in schools and among men in workplaces, and held three annual national gatherings.<sup>21</sup>



The first White Ribbon Campaign in Australia was organised under Men Against Sexual Assault's auspices. The White Ribbon Campaign is the first large-scale male protest against violence in the world. It began in 1991 on the second anniversary of one man's massacre of 14 women in Montreal. Working with and inspired by women's groups, a handful of Canadian men began a White Ribbon campaign to urge men to speak out against violence against women.

<sup>21</sup> More detail on this early history can be found in the pages of the now-defunct profeminist men's magazine XY: Men, Sex, Politics.

They distributed 100,000 white ribbons to men across Canada, and promoted widespread community discussion about violence in personal relationships. The White Ribbon Campaign has now spread to the USA, Europe, Africa, Latin America, and Australia. The White Ribbon Campaign first arrived in Australia in 1992. Men Against Sexual Assault groups around the country took up the White Ribbon Campaign in 1992 and 1993, selling ribbons and holding rallies and marches.

At the height of this first wave of men's anti-violence activism, there were major White Ribbon events in various capital cities, small levels of state government funding in Brisbane, Canberra and elsewhere, and a level of national networking. In 1993 for example, Melbourne MASA's rally attracted 400-500 participants to a rally and march in the city centre. There were perhaps 40-60 men around the country involved in a substantial and regular way as organisers of MASA groups and activities. However, these men's anti-violence groups suffered the same fate as many volunteer-based, grassroots groups, losing members and momentum, such that MASA groups had all but ceased to exist by the mid-1990s.



The second wave of men's anti-violence activism really only began in earnest early this century. And this time, at least in the beginning, it was organised by women and women's organisations. The Office of the Status of Women ran small White Ribbon events in 2000, 2001 and

2002. In 2003, the Australian branch of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, UNIFEM, took up the campaign. Women in UNIFEM, working in collaboration with men, began coordinating a national White Ribbon Campaign. They formed a National Leadership Group, coordinated the large-scale production of white ribbons and the development of a range of print, radio and TV materials, and later formed the White Ribbon Foundation to raise funds to sustain the Campaign. Activities focus on and around November 25th, a day declared by the United Nations General Assembly as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (IDEVAW).

*The contemporary White Ribbon Campaign in Australia represents the most substantial manifestation of men's involvement in preventing violence against women this country has seen.*

The contemporary White Ribbon Campaign in Australia represents the most substantial and significant manifestation of men's involvement in preventing violence against women this country has seen. It has achieved very substantial institutional presence and support, distributed over 200,000 ribbons in each of the last five years, and generated significant media coverage and community awareness. As a VicHealth report (2009: 61) notes,

The campaign's reliance on publicly recognisable men to show leadership in addressing violence against women through becoming a White Ribbon Ambassador has successfully raised the profile of the issue and has influenced private corporations, business and governments to sponsor or support White Ribbon events.

Compared to its manifestation in the early 1990s, the contemporary White Ribbon Campaign involves far greater numbers of men (and women), has far greater reach in national media, embodies greater involvement by senior men who are leaders in their fields (whether business, policing, media, or elsewhere), and enjoys greater funding and institutional support. The White Ribbon Campaign also involves productive partnerships between women's organisations, in addition to UNIFEM, and a variety of men-focused networks and male-dominated organisations. A range of other forms of advocacy and mobilisation among men complement the White Ribbon Campaign, including local events and marches.





It is hard to know exactly how many men are directly involved, as advocates and activists, in ongoing efforts to prevent violence against women in Australia. Still, there is no doubt that there has been a groundswell of activity, both in the White Ribbon Campaign and in associated efforts. For example, over 1,200 men have signed up as Ambassadors for the White Ribbon Campaign.

The degree and nature of involvement among male participants varies. Among White Ribbon Ambassadors for example, some have made the prevention of violence against women a significant part of their working week throughout the year, while others' involvement is confined largely to the days on and around November 25th, while still others' is largely tokenistic. Some men involved in violence prevention work have engaged in thorough efforts to build gender-equitable and respectful relations in their own lives, while others have practised less critical reflection and self-transformation.

*There is a significant backlash against efforts to name and prevent men's violence against women.*

While these are encouraging signs, others are more sobering: the small numbers of men involved in violence prevention, the numbers of men involved in backlashes *against* such efforts, and the lack of community awareness of the White Ribbon Campaign. First, violence prevention work with men and boys remains small and

scattered, although its momentum and sophistication are growing. While the number of men actively involved in efforts such as the White Ribbon Campaign certainly has increased, it remains small. In addition, violence prevention efforts among men are under-developed at key levels of prevention, as discussed below.

Second, there is a significant backlash against efforts to name and prevent men's violence against women, pioneered by anti-feminist 'men's rights' and 'fathers' rights' groups (Flood 2004, 2010). These groups do not have the institutional presence (e.g. in the form of a national network) or the political support shown for example by the White Ribbon Campaign. However, they are energetic campaigners against the White Ribbon Campaign and other efforts focused on men's violence against women, and their efforts are likely to have had some effect on both community perceptions and policy frameworks.

Third, while the White Ribbon Day campaign is the most widespread community-based public education campaign in Australia, less than one percent of men and women report having seen media coverage about it recently (VicHealth 2009: 50) – in fact, only 22 of over 10,000 people (McGregor 2009: 160). In contrast, over 20 per cent of both men and women report having seen the social marketing campaign "Violence Against Women: Australia Says No", the most high-profile contemporary example of such strategies (McGregor 2009: 80).

## Men are increasingly the targets of education and other forms of intervention.

Alongside men's direct participation in advocacy to end violence against women, men and boys increasingly are being addressed as the targets of education and other preventative strategies.

This too represents a significant achievement. It represents a shift in the violence prevention field, such that it is increasingly taken for granted that prevention efforts must include strategies addressed to men and boys. This shift is reflected in both the range of prevention efforts in the community sector which now focus on men and boys and the endorsement of men's involvement in state and Federal government agendas.

There is now a bewildering variety of initiatives aiming to engage or address men and boys in order to prevent violence against women. To make sense of them, the 'spectrum of prevention' provides an invaluable framework. The spectrum of prevention, summarised below, offers a simple framework for understanding and organising prevention initiatives (Davis *et al.* 2006: 7). Used in work aimed at preventing men's violence against women, it also embodies the recognition that this violence is the outcome of a complex interplay of individual, relationship, community, institutional, and societal factors and that violence prevention too must work at these multiple levels.



**Table 8: The Spectrum of Prevention**

Level of Spectrum	Definition
1. Strengthening Individual Knowledge and Skills	Enhancing an individual's capability of preventing violence and promoting safety
2. Promoting Community Education	Reaching groups of people with information and resources to prevent violence and promote safety
3. Educating Providers	Informing providers who will transmit skills and knowledge to others and model positive norms
4. Fostering Coalitions and Networks	Bringing together groups and individuals for broader goals and greater impact
5. Changing Organizational Practices	Adopting regulations and shaping norms to prevent violence and improve safety
6. Influencing Policies and Legislation	Enacting laws and policies that support healthy community norms and a violence-free society

The spectrum of prevention describes violence prevention in terms of six levels of intervention. An overview has been provided elsewhere of strategies involving men in prevention at each of the levels (Flood in-press). Briefly, however, it is worth noting that efforts engaging men and boys in the prevention of violence against women are most well developed in Australia at the second level, community education.

Community education may include face-to-face educational groups and programs, communication and social marketing, local educational strategies such as 'social norms' and 'bystander' approaches, and other media strategies (Flood in-press). However, it is the first of these, particularly schools-based violence prevention education, which is most well established in Australia. A recent review of violence prevention education in schools documents that a wide variety of 'respectful relationships' or 'healthy relationships' programs are under way (Flood *et al.* 2009). These often address boys and young men in schools, both by themselves and in mixed-sex programs.

At the third level of the spectrum of prevention, education among providers and other professionals has a strong rationale. It may shift professionals' everyday involvements in sustaining, or undermining, the norms and relations through which violence against women is maintained. Workplace strategies often involve working with *men*, given that police, law, and medical institutions typically are dominated by men. However, very little primary prevention work has been conducted with men in workplaces in gender-sensitive ways, although there are some promising international instances of such work among sports coaches and police (Flood in-press).

*Very little primary prevention work has been conducted with men in workplaces in gender-sensitive ways.*

At the fourth level of the spectrum of prevention, fostering coalitions and networks, the most prominent Australian example is the White Ribbon Campaign. There is a strong argument for engaging, strengthening, and mobilising communities in order to prevent violence against women. While a variety of initiatives are under way around the world, engaging male community leaders and mobilising men in campaigns and networks, very few have been evaluated (Flood in-press).

At the fifth level, changing organisational practices, two prominent examples in Australia which are addressed largely to men involve two of the country's largest sporting codes, the Australian Football League (AFL) and the National Rugby League (NRL).

Following a series of allegations of sexual assault perpetrated by AFL players in 2004, the AFL adopted a "Respect and Responsibility" strategy, formulated and managed in collaboration with violence prevention agencies. The strategy represents a model of systematic organisational change, including the introduction of model anti-sexual harassment and anti-sexual discrimination procedures across the AFL and its Clubs, the development of organisational policies and procedures to ensure a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for women, changes to AFL rules relating to problematic or violent conduct, the education of players and other Club officials, dissemination of model policies and procedures at community club level, and a public education program (AFL 2005). In 2008, AFL Victoria extended this with the program "Fair Game –Respect Matters". This is intended to foster cultural

change throughout the sporting code, in encouraging community clubs to assess their own cultures and inviting players, coaches and supporters to improve their attitudes and behaviours towards women. In rugby league too, education programs addressing violence against women now are being rolled out to players in the rookie camps and the national youth competition. In both codes, players themselves are being recruited and trained to educate their peers.

Still at this fifth level, other promising examples of violence prevention which focus on or largely involve male audiences include interventions intended to:

- Involve (male) faith leaders and faith communities in prevention;
- Strengthen the organisational capacity of male-dominated workplaces in a trucking company to develop and implement policies and programs aimed at promoting respectful relationships between men and women;
- Integrate violence prevention into the activities and policies of local Councils.

At the sixth level of the spectrum of prevention, regarding policies and legislation, a shift towards an emphasis on involving men in preventing violence against women again is visible. The report turns to this now.

## **Men's involvement in violence prevention is on the public agenda.**

While there is a groundswell of violence prevention activity directed at men and boys, there is also significant political support for such work. Male involvement in violence prevention is on the policy agenda. This is most visible in relation to respectful relationships education in schools, but also receives wider emphasis. A series of recent plans of action at both Federal and state levels offer both general endorsements of the need to involve men and boys in the prevention of violence against women and girls and specific recommendations regarding engaging men and boys in such settings as schools, sports and workplaces and through such strategies as education and social marketing. Relevant plans and frameworks include, in chronological order:

- The *National Framework for Sexual Assault Prevention* (Office of the Status of Women 2004);
- VicHealth's prevention framework *Preventing Violence Before It Occurs* (2007);



- *Time For Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009–2021* (2009);
- *A Right to Respect: Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2010–2020* (2009);

One early expression of this endorsement was the Office of the Status of Women's *National Framework for Sexual Assault Prevention* (2004: 9), which identifies the value of promoting positive identities and understandings among boys as they develop their gender identities. VicHealth's (2007) framework for the primary prevention of violence against women offers a well-developed and influential agenda for violence prevention, including a more systematic approach to engaging men and boys in prevention. The framework emphasises that male dominance and masculine gender norms are key determinants of men's violence against women. It identifies men and boys as an important population group for intervention, and discusses a variety of settings in which to engage them. The background document which informs VicHealth's framework offers more detail regarding these (Flood 2007).

*Time for Action*, a national plan for the reduction and prevention of violence against women and their children, was released by the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children in 2009. The plan identifies the promotion of non-violent and positive behaviours among men as one of five key strategies to achieve the first of its six desired outcomes, 'Communities are safe and free from violence' (National Council 2009: 49, 51).

Since 2009, two state plans and a Federal government plan for violence prevention have been released in quick succession. Emphasising that men are 'partners in prevention', the Victorian Government's plan states that:

Non-violent men have a positive role to play in ending violence against women, and shaping the attitudes and behaviours of children and other men, including peers, colleagues and friends. Non-violent men from marginalised groups can act as champions for the prevention of violence against women in particular cultures or contexts. (Office of Women's Policy 2009: 19-20)

In contrast, the NSW Government's domestic and family violence action plan, *Stop the Violence End the Silence* (June 2010), does not offer any explicit endorsement of men's positive roles in violence prevention, although it does endorse strategies which will by their nature engage males, including respectful relationships education in schools and programs in which football

players give the message that violence against women is unacceptable (NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet 2010: 34-35). The Western Australian and Queensland Government state plans are similar.

The Federal Government's *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children*, released in August 2010, echoes much of the vision and strategies of the proposed national plan released a year before, *Time for Action*. In its second national outcome, 'Relationships are respectful', the National Plan outlines the intention to 'promote positive male attitudes and behaviours'. While the actual strategies associated with this goal are not well developed, they include support for the White Ribbon Campaign to expand to regional and rural areas. In another expression of high-level support for this campaign, the then Prime-Minister Kevin Rudd spoke at its White Tie Dinner in 2008 (Rudd 2008).

*There is an international mandate for engaging men and boys in policy and programming dedicated to building gender equality.*

More widely, there is an international mandate for engaging men and boys in policy and programming dedicated to building gender equality and social justice. National governments and international agencies have affirmed the need to involve men in work addressing gender equality, violence, sexual and reproductive health, parenting, HIV/AIDS, and a host of other issues (Flood *et al.* 2010: 12-13).

## Violence prevention efforts among men do work.

Violence prevention efforts among men and boys can make a difference. Done well, they can shift the attitudes among boys and men that lead to physical and sexual violence. They can even shift behaviours, reducing males' actual perpetration of violence.

Evaluations of violence prevention too often are either absent or lacking. Most primary prevention efforts, intended to prevent violence against women before it occurs, have not been evaluated, including those engaging men in prevention (Flood 2005-2006). Where impact evaluations *have* been done, often they are limited in methodological terms (Flood in-press).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Impact evaluations often are poorly designed, limited to retrospective reports of participants' satisfaction, or only assess proxy variables associated with violence against women rather than this violence itself. In most cases, post-intervention assessments are made only immediately after the program or only weeks later and there is no longer-term follow-up. Evaluations often assess only attitudes, not behaviours or social and sexual relations, and do not address the intervention's impact on actual perpetration or victimisation. Evaluations rarely examine the mediators of changes in attitudes, behaviours or other factors, that is, of the causal processes through which the program achieves change (Flood in-press).

However, there is a growing evidence base for the effectiveness of violence prevention strategies among men and boys. There is an increasing body of evidence that well-designed interventions can make a difference to males' violence-related attitudes and behaviours.<sup>23</sup>

A recent international review by the WHO, titled *Engaging Men and Boys in Changing Gender-Based Inequity in Health* (2007), documents 57 interventions with evaluations. The review covered interventions engaging men and addressing violence, health, and other domains. It reports that well-designed programs *do* show evidence of leading to change in behaviour and attitudes (WHO 2007: 4). Programs which are gender-transformative – which seek to transform gender roles and promote more gender-equitable relationships between men and women – had a higher level of effectiveness, as did programs which were integrated within community outreach, mobilization and mass-media campaigns and thus reached beyond individuals to their social contexts (WHO 2007: 3-4; 11). A follow-up review documents 12 further programs or interventions promoting gender equality and positive masculinities. Most were effective, with gender-transformative programs more effective than others (IPPF 2010).

In engaging men and boys in violence prevention, the largest body of evidence for effectiveness concerns education programs delivered in schools and universities. This partly reflects the fact that such programs are a common form of violence prevention. In other words, the level of evidence supporting their use reflects both their widespread adoption and their genuine effectiveness. Another strategy, social marketing or media campaigning, also has a sizeable body of evidence. There are other strategies which have strong rationales for use in violence prevention among men and boys, such as community development and community mobilisation, which have been implemented only rarely and evaluated even less often. At the same time, their powerful rationale makes them critical elements in future violence prevention efforts.

*There is an increasing body of evidence that well-designed interventions can shift men's and boys' violence-related attitudes and behaviours.*

What are some examples of violence prevention efforts among men and boys which have been shown to make a positive difference?



*Community education:* A wide range of evaluations of violence prevention education, delivered in schools and universities in particular, document that they can have positive effects on participants' attitudes towards and participation in intimate partner violence. For example, male school and university students who have attended rape education sessions show less adherence to rape myths, express less rape-supportive attitudes, and/or report greater victim empathy than those in control groups. Some programs have reduced men's reported likelihood to rape, while some have reduced men's actual perpetration of sexual aggression (Flood in-press). To give some examples;

- In Brazil and Mexico, young men exposed to weekly educational workshops and a social marketing campaign showed improved attitudes towards violence against women and other issues (Pulerwitz *et al.* 2006);
- In India, young men in the intervention sites showed declines in their support for gender-inequitable norms and in self-reported violence against a partner relative to a comparison group (Verma *et al.* 2008);
- In South Africa, men who participated in workshops run by the Men As Partners project were less likely than non-participants to believe that it is acceptable to beat their wives or rape sex workers (White *et al.* 2003: 22);
- In the Democratic Republic of Congo, in a program engaging male community leaders in the prevention of rape as a weapon of war, participants showed improvement in both attitudes and behaviours, with this confirmed by women's groups (IPPF 2010: 70-71).
- In the US, among adult men in a multi-module education program, five months after the program, while some men had 'rebounded', others continued to show improvement on attitudinal and behavioural measures (Heppner *et al.* 1999).

<sup>23</sup> Some of the following is drawn from Flood (in-press).

Not all evaluation results are positive. Existing evaluations show that not all educational interventions are effective, the magnitude of change in attitudes often is small, changes often ‘rebound’ to pre-intervention levels one or two months after the intervention and some even become worse, and improvements in men’s violence-supportive attitudes do not necessarily lead to reductions in their perpetration of violence.

Nevertheless, it is possible to produce lasting change in attitudes and behaviours. For example, evaluations of the Safe Dates program among American adolescents (which included a ten-session school curriculum, a theatre production performed by peers, and a poster contest) found that four years after the program, adolescents who had received the program continued to report less physical and sexual dating violence perpetration and victimisation than those who had not (Foshee *et al.* 2004).

*Communication and social marketing:* There is evidence that social marketing campaigns can produce positive change in the attitudes and behaviours associated with men’s perpetration of violence against women (Donovan and Vlais 2005). For example;

- Men Can Stop Rape’s “My strength is not for hurting” campaign uses media materials, in tandem with schools-based Men of Strength (MOST) Clubs for young men and other strategies, to build norms of sexual consent, respect, and non-violence. An evaluation of the Californian campaign documents that students exposed to the campaign had slightly more respectful and equitable attitudes, while schools with MOST Clubs had more favourable social climates (Kim and White 2008).
- In Nicaragua, a mass media campaign among heterosexual men aged 20-39 generated increased support for the ideas that men can prevent gender-based violence and that men’s violence affects community development (Solórzano *et al.* 2000).



Two further communication-based strategies include ‘social norms’ and ‘bystander intervention’ approaches. ‘Social norms’ campaigns seek to close the gap between men’s perceptions of other men’s agreement with violence-supportive and sexist norms and the actual extent of this agreement. ‘Bystander intervention’ approaches seek to foster a sense of community responsibility for violence prevention. Again, such strategies can be effective among men:

- After a recent social norms initiative on a US university campus, college males reduced their overestimation of other males’ sexist beliefs and comfort with sexism, although the intervention had less impact among acquainted than unacquainted males (Kilmartin *et al.* 2008).
- Experimental evaluations among US undergraduates show that approaching men (and women) as potential bystanders or witnesses to behaviors related to sexual violence can improve attitudes, knowledge and behaviour (Banyard *et al.* 2007).

This report returns now to men’s active involvement in efforts to prevent men’s violence against women. What inspires men to become involved in this work? And what prevents men from taking action?

## Inspirations for, and barriers to, men’s involvements in violence prevention

How do men come to be involved as advocates and activists in violence prevention work? There is a small body of research among men involved in anti-violence and gender equality advocacy. It suggests that there are some common themes among men with long-term dedications to such efforts: exposure to or personal experiences with issues of sexual or domestic violence; support and encouragement from peers, role models and specifically female mentors; and social justice ideals or other politically progressive commitments (Casey and Smith 2010: 956)

Recent research from the US highlights the factors which shape men’s initial entry into and involvement in violence prevention work. Casey and Smith (2010) interviewed 27 men who had recently begun involvement in an organisation or event dedicated to ending sexual or domestic violence. Most were involved either in employment/volunteer work in a domestic or sexual violence-related program or government agency or in a campus-based anti-violence group or effort. This research found that three factors are critical in shaping men’s initial



entries into anti-violence work: (1) personal, 'sensitising' experiences which raise men's awareness of violence or gender inequalities; (2) invitations for involvement; and (3) making sense of these experiences in ways which are motivating.

### **Sensitising experiences**

First, many men have some kind of 'sensitising' experience which makes the issue of men's violence against women more real or pressing. Common experiences include the following:

- Hearing women's disclosures of violence;
- Closeness and loyalties to particular women;
- Political and ethical commitments to justice, equality, and related ideals;
- Exposure to feminist ideas;
- Non-traditional peers and relatives;
- Violent victimisation.

One of the most common sensitising experiences is hearing from women about the violence they have suffered. Among the men in Casey and Smith's (2010) study, many had heard a disclosure of domestic or sexual violence from a close female friend, family member, or partner, or witnessed violence in childhood (Casey and Smith 2010). Similarly, Canadian young men who joined in gender equity work had been inspired in part by seeing or learning of the effects of violence or abuse on female family members (Coulter 2003: 137-140).

*One of the most common sensitising experiences is hearing from women about the violence they have suffered.*

Other sensitising experiences also are influential. Some men come to anti-violence involvements because their closeness to a particular woman in their lives — a mother, a partner, a friend, a sister — has forged an intimate understanding of the injustices suffered by women and the need for men to take action (Stoltenberg 1990: 11-12). Some men have a pre-existing commitment to social justice, gender equality, or a related set of principles or values (Casey and Smith 2010). Canadian young men involved in anti-sexist activism also had been inspired by intellectual engagement with feminist ideas and teachers and a sense that gender equity is 'right' or

'fair' (Coulter 2003: 137-140). Some men are exposed to materials about violence against women, for example in a prevention education program, or have been moved or troubled by stories of victims/survivors (Casey and Smith 2010). Research in Brazil also finds evidence for the influence of non-traditional peers. Some young men questioned prevailing gender injustices because of relationships with a relative, family friend or other person who modeled non-traditional gender roles, membership of an alternative peer group with more gender-equitable norms, and their own self-reflection (Barker 2001: 96). Some men become involved through dealing with their own experience of sexual violence or sexual abuse from other men and sometime women, perhaps as children or teenagers (Stoltenberg 1990: 11-12).

### **Opportunities for involvement**

A tangible opportunity to participate in an anti-violence group, job, or other involvement also seems influential. In Casey and Smith's research, this happened through formal invitations, having friends or community members involved in anti-violence work, searching for groups which can 'make a difference', or taking up paid or voluntary work (Casey and Smith 2010: 960-1).

### **Making meaning**

However, whether or not initial sensitising events and involvements lead to ongoing involvements in anti-violence work also is shaped by the meanings men give to these initial experiences. Casey and Smith's research among US men found three main themes in the meanings men gave. Some men gave these meanings to their initial sensitising experiences, while for others these meanings arose out of their involvement in anti-violence work, and most men identified more than one (Casey and Smith 2010: 961).

Some men involved in violence prevention work describe themselves as *compelled to action*. They now feel that they no longer have a choice to do nothing, that doing nothing contributes to the problem, that they can make a difference, and that they have strengths and skills which can help (Casey and Smith 2010: 961-2).

Some men describe a *changing worldview*, a profound shift in their own thinking. They now see violence as relevant to their own lives and to the women they care for. They now connect violence against women to other issues of social justice or equality. And they reassess how they have responded to violence in the past (Casey and Smith 2010: 963-5).

Finally, and still from the US research, some men now see anti-violence work as a way to *join with others*. Involvement allows them to build connections with others, particularly other men, and to foster community and mutual support. And it allows them to have friendships with other men and 'do masculinity' in ways different from 'traditional' approaches (Casey and Smith 2010: 965-6).

Having described some of the inspirations for men's involvement in preventing violence against women, what are the barriers?

### Barriers to taking action

What prevents men from taking action to reduce or prevent men's violence against women? Here, we focus on the barriers to ordinary men's participation in everyday actions which interrupt or challenge violence and violence-supportive behaviours, rather than men's participation in collective advocacy or activism.

There are a wide range of small steps men can take to help prevent violence against women. Various lists of 'what men should do' invite men to: intervene when violence or abuse is occurring or likely, challenge violence-supportive and sexist comments and jokes, talk to other men about violence against women, look critically at their own violence and sexism, and so on.<sup>24</sup>

To the extent that men take such action to reduce or prevent men's violence against women, they can be described as *active* or *pro-social bystanders*. In violence prevention and elsewhere there is growing attention to 'bystanders' – individuals who observe an act of violence, discrimination, or other problematic behaviour but are not its direct perpetrator or victim (Powell 2010: 6). Bystanders may fail to act or intervene, or may take action. Active or pro-social bystanders may take action to:

- 1) Stop the perpetration of a specific incident of violence;
- 2) Reduce the risk of violence escalating, and prevent the physical, psychological and social harms that may result;
- 3) Strengthen the conditions that work against violence occurring (Powell 2010: 6-7).

Most attention to bystanders has focused on their action or inaction at the time of specific violent incidents. However, an emphasis on the *primary* prevention of men's violence against women redirects our attention to the third category of action above. It invites a focus on

the roles men can play, not just in responding directly to victims and perpetrators, but in challenging the attitudes and norms, behaviours, and inequalities which feed into violence against women.

*Some men describe themselves as compelled to action. They no longer have a choice to do nothing, they can make a difference, and they have strengths and skills which can help.*

What barriers are there to individual men taking steps to reduce or prevent men's violence against women? As this report already has documented, most men do not use the bluntest forms of violence against women, most regard violence against women as unacceptable, and at least from US data, most are willing to take action to reduce or prevent violence against women. At the same time, it is likely that only a minority take any kind of action to help reduce or prevent violence.

### Support for sexist and violence-supportive attitudes and norms

One key factor is support for sexist and violence-supportive attitudes and norms. The same factors which shape some men's *use* of violence against women, and other men's *tolerance* for violence against women, also shape men's lack of involvement in efforts to address this violence. To state the obvious, to the extent that an individual man sees domestic or sexual violence as rare, trivial, excusable, or even justified, he is unlikely to participate in efforts to reduce and prevent such violence.

Remember too that violence-supportive norms may be subtle and invisible. They are buttressed by common norms of gender in which male aggression and female vulnerability is taken for granted. Many men insist vehemently that they condemn domestic violence and rape, and yet they subscribe to beliefs which allow domestic violence or rape to continue: some women ask to be raped, men have uncontrollable sex drives, some women provoke violence against them, victims could leave if they really wanted to, women often make false accusations of violence, and so on.

<sup>24</sup> A collection of such lists can be found here: <http://www.xyonline.net/content/what-men-can-do-stop-sexism-and-male-violence>. Also see this material on 'taking action as a bystander': [http://toolkit.endabuse.org/GetToWork/WhatMenAndBoys/TakingAction/document\\_view.html](http://toolkit.endabuse.org/GetToWork/WhatMenAndBoys/TakingAction/document_view.html).



## Overestimation of *other* men's comfort with violence and their unwillingness to intervene

Another influential factor is that men routinely overestimate the extent to which their peers agree with violence and sexism. Men overestimate each others' comfort with sexist, coercive and derogatory comments about and behaviour towards women (Fabiano *et al.* 2004: 106; Kilmartin *et al.* 2008; Stein and Jerrold 2007: 82).

'Social norms' theory suggests that people often are negatively influenced by misperceptions of how other members of their social group act and think. In making decisions about behaviour, individuals take into account what 'most people' appear to be doing (Kilmartin *et al.* 2008: 264). Men's misperceptions of other men's tolerance for violence and sexism can feed into 'pluralistic ignorance' or 'false consensus'. In the first, men may go along with violence-supportive behaviours because they believe mistakenly that they are in the minority in opposing them. Men and boys keep their true feelings to ourselves and do not act on them, becoming passive observers of other men's problem behaviors. In the second, men who use violent and violence-supportive behaviours continue to do so because they believe falsely that they are in the majority. They incorrectly interpret other men's silence as approval, thus feeling emboldened to express and act violently towards women (Berkowitz 2002).

*Many men insist vehemently that they condemn domestic violence and rape, and yet they subscribe to beliefs which allow domestic violence or rape to continue.*

Men also underestimate other men's willingness to intervene in violence against women. In a study among students at a Washington university, Fabiano *et al.* (2004: 109) found that the only significant predictor of men's willingness to intervene in behaviours that could lead to sexual assault was their perception of *other* men's willingness to intervene. The less that men believed that other men would intervene, the less likely they were to be willing to intervene themselves. In another study among male first-year university students living on campus, most were willing to act to prevent rape, but most also believed that their friends had more rape-supportive attitudes and behaviours than their own and were less willing to prevent rape (Stein and Jerrold 2007: 82-83). Thus, men's perceptions of social norms exert a

strong influence on their own consideration of sexual assault and their willingness to intervene.

## Fears of others' reactions to intervention

One reason why men do not intervene when violence or abuse is occurring or challenge violence-supportive comments is that they are afraid of what may happen if they do. Men fear various things: violence, stigma and homophobia, and social discomfort.

Particularly when faced with actual incidents of violence, men may fear a violent response by the perpetrator. This is understandable, as men using violence against a female partner often react angrily and aggressively when this is challenged. Indeed, victims themselves may not welcome men's interventions (Coulter 2003: 141-2).



Men also may fear that their masculinity will be called into question. For example, in a US study, college men aged 18 and 19 were presented with three vignettes regarding violence, two of which involved men's violence against women. The young men emphasised that one key reason they would not intervene in a potential rape was their fear of being perceived as weak and unmasculine (Carlson 2008: 14). Stereotypes about 'real men' can stop men from questioning attitudes and behaviours that harm women and limit men.

Men's inaction is shaped also by homophobia. Some heterosexual men do not speak up or step in because of fears that they will be perceived as gay. Fear of and hostility towards homosexuality, and particularly gay men, is a powerful influence on boys' and men's identities

and relations. Masculinity often is defined against or in opposition to homosexuality, as well as femininity. Homophobic slurs and harassment are routine means for boys and men to police each others' performance of appropriately gendered behaviour (Flood 2003; Flood and Hamilton 2008). In short, homophobia is the dragon at the gates of an alternative masculinity. Homophobia encourages boys and men to exaggerate traditional norms of masculinity, including sexist and violent behaviour (Kimmel 1994: 132-133).

Homophobia is implicated also in men's inaction in the face of other men's violence and abuse. More generally, men and boys who engage in violence prevention may be ridiculed or harassed for lack of conformity to dominant masculine norms (Crooks *et al.* 2007: 231).

Men also may fear the negative social reactions they will face in questioning or challenging peers. When a man hears a mate tell a joke about rape or sees a male friend being cruel and abusive towards his girlfriend, he may stay silent because speaking up is 'breaking the rules' of social interaction. He risks being seen as weird, a wowser, or a party pooper. Thus, individuals may avoid pro-social action because of their investment in managing others' impressions of them or their desire to preserve friendly relations (Powell 2010: 17). Indeed, taking private steps (such as confronting a co-worker) may be harder than public steps (such as going to a rally), particularly as the former involves personally countering ingrained norms of social interaction (Crooks *et al.* 2007: 222).

### **Negative reactions to violence prevention efforts**

Some men's inaction in the face of violent or violence-supportive behaviours is shaped by negative perceptions of violence prevention efforts themselves. Some men perceive anti-violence campaigns as 'anti-male', and for many this reflects a wider perception of feminism as hostile to and blaming of men.

Many men feel blamed and defensive about the issue of men's violence against women (Berkowitz 2004a). This means that many also react with hostility and defensiveness in response to violence prevention efforts, even those which emphasise the positive roles men can play in ending violence against women. For example, men have responded negatively to anti-rape workshops on university campuses by saying that "This is male bashing", and to media campaigns in Australia by emphasising that men are the invisible victims of violence (Flood 2005-06).

Such responses are misplaced, given that violence prevention campaigns addressing men are based on a recognition that most men are not violent and a hope and optimism for both women's and men's lives. Campaigns focused on men's violence against women also acknowledge that men too are the victims of violence, and that ending violence to girls and women and ending violence to boys and men are part of the same struggle — to create a world based on equality, justice and non-violence.

*Men also may fear that their masculinity will be called into question.*

Men's discomfort with violence prevention efforts focused on men's violence against women is informed by negative stereotypes of feminism. It was feminist activism that placed violence against women on community and policy agendas. Indeed, men's violence against women has been a central focus of women's political activism and feminist organising for many years, for example going back 300 years in both the US and England, to 'first wave' feminism and before (Maynard and Winn 1997: 175). Feminist perspectives continue to inform contemporary efforts to address violence against women (Flood *et al.* 2009: 33-35). Like many women, many men support basic ideals of gender equality and yet reject the labels 'feminist' or 'profeminist'. Men's discomfort about or hostility towards feminism is fuelled by many of the same factors as women's. Some have been persuaded by media stereotypes of feminism as anti-male or as about being a victim (Trioli 1996: 50; Hogeland 1994: 18), or the equation of feminism and lesbianism. Men's hostility towards feminism is fuelled above all by feminism's challenge to sexism and male power and the unease and defensiveness this can generate. More generally, many men see violence against women as exclusively a women's issue, one in which men have no place. Such notions produce 'cultural inoculation', in which men are immune to programs designed to engage them (Crooks *et al.* 2007: 228).

## Lack of knowledge of or skills in intervention

There are other, more general factors which shape men's capacity to take action to end violence against women. The capacity to intervene depends on having knowledge of how to intervene, skills in intervening, and the perceived self-efficacy to act. Some men are stopped from speaking up or stepping in because, while they feel uncomfortable or angry about other men's behaviours, they do not know what to say or do. Some lack skills in raising issues of violence against women, challenging violence-supportive comments, or preventing the escalation of situations involving high risks of victimisation. And some men do not feel that they have the courage or determination to take the actions they know or appropriate, or they feel that such actions will be ineffective.

*Men's reasons for lack of involvement include a fear of not being welcome, helplessness, and defensiveness.*

## Lack of opportunity or invitation

Given the evidence above that one factor prompting men's involvement in anti-violence work is receiving a tangible opportunity or invitation to participate, it is not surprising that the lack of such opportunities shapes men's lack of involvement. A US national survey of 1,000 men in 2000 explored the reasons why men do not become involved in violence prevention (Garin 2000). This found that:

- One in five men (21%) reported that they did not actively support community efforts to stop violence against women because no one had asked them to get involved;
- 16% indicated that they did not have time;
- 13% said that they did not know how to help;
- 13% of men reported that their reluctance to get involved stemmed from the perception that they had been vilified and were seen as part of the problem, rather than approached as an important part of the solution;
- 11% indicated that they did not get involved because domestic violence is a private matter and they were uncomfortable getting involved.

This suggests that men's reasons for lack of involvement include a fear of not being welcome, lack of prioritisation,

helplessness, and defensiveness (Crooks *et al.* 2007: 219). As Crooks *et al.* (2007: 219) note, "Some men want to be involved but are unsure of how to operationalize their motivation. Others have doubts about their role or ownership but are not adamant in refusing to participate."

*Men's commitments to the movement against violence against women have grown in a rich soil of deeply felt personal experiences, intimacies and loyalties, and ethical and political commitments.*

Men's commitments to the movement against violence against women have grown in a rich soil of deeply felt personal experiences, particular relationships and intimacies and loyalties, and ethical and political commitments. Men's involvements have been nurtured by tangible opportunities to participate, and sustained by a sense of a mandate for action, a deeper understanding of the issues, and the support of peers and a community. At the same time, there are also powerful barriers to everyday men taking steps to help reduce and prevent violence against women.

Each of these barriers to intervention has solutions. If men overestimate other men's acceptance of violence and sexism, then expose this using social norms campaigns to shift peer beliefs. If men don't know how to get from vague good intentions to a more substantial personal involvement in preventing violence against women, then give them small steps and specific actions, designed to build their awareness of violence and gender inequalities, rather than assuming that they'll walk through the door having already completed a thorough personal reconstruction (Crooks *et al.* 2007: 223-4). If men fear reactions to their positive interventions as bystanders, build their skills in bystander intervention. Offer men a language for articulating their involvement in preventing violence against women, one which negates homophobia and anti-feminist stereotyping. Provide positive reinforcement for men's engagement in violence prevention, including such intrinsic rewards as the benefits of participating in groups and friendship circles with positive identities (Crooks *et al.* 2007: 234). These are just some of the strategies that can help forge men's positive and lasting involvements in reducing and preventing men's violence against women.

## Conclusion

Men have a crucial role to play in preventing the physical and sexual violence that so many women suffer, and men have much to gain from doing so. If we are to end this violence, men themselves will need to take part in this project. A minority of men use violence against women. And too many men condone this violence, ignoring, trivialising, or even laughing about it.

Most males are uncomfortable with violence against women and with the attitudes and behaviours of those men who commit it. Yet many do not act on or express their beliefs, in part because they believe falsely that other men do not feel the same way. A silent majority of men disapproves of violence, but does little to prevent it (Allen 2010: 7-8). And, as this report has documented, significant pockets of men continue to excuse or justify violence against women.

The silence, or worse, the encouragement of male bystanders allows men's violence against women to continue. While some men are *perpetrators* of violence against women, other men are *perpetuators*. In passively accepting other men's abusive behaviour, they perpetuate violence, allowing it to continue (Pease 2008: 13).

*A silent majority of men disapproves of violence, but does little to prevent it.*

Men can play vital roles in helping to reduce and prevent men's violence against women. The majority of men do not commit violence against women. Yet few of these non-violent men are actively involved in violence prevention. To stop violence against women, men of goodwill must do more than merely refrain from violence themselves (Allen 2010: 66-67).

We must 'raise the bar' among men. We must raise the bar for what it means to be a 'decent bloke', one of the 'good guys'. Avoiding violence oneself is a good start, but it is not enough. In the first instance, avoiding violence means avoiding *all* forms of coercive and abusive behaviour and striving for equitable and respectful relationships, rather than merely refraining from the bluntest forms of physical or sexual violence. Moreover, if men are serious about contributing to a world in which women are safe from the threat of violence, they must do more. Men must challenge the violence of other men, and work to undermine the social and cultural supports for violence against women in their communities.

Preventing men's violence against women will require sustained and systematic efforts at the levels of families and relationships, communities, institutions, and societies. Men must be engaged in this work: as participants in education programs, as community leaders, as professionals and providers, and as advocates and activists working in alliance with women.

*We must raise the bar for what it means to be a 'decent bloke'.*

Work with men has demonstrated significant potential in shifting the attitudes and behaviours associated with violence against women. There is some evidence that program and policy interventions can bring about positive change among men, although rigorous evaluation of the impact of violence prevention efforts among men and boys often is absent or limited. There is an increasingly rich collection of guides and manuals for engaging and working with men and boys. And there is growing momentum in the groups and networks of men, and women, working to end violence against women.

However, most violence prevention work with men and boys has been local in scale and limited in scope. To be effective at the societal level – to transform violence against women and girls and the pervasive gender inequalities with which it is associated – work with men and boys will need to be scaled up. To truly transform gender inequalities, we must go beyond scattered, small-scale interventions and efforts (no matter how effective), towards systematic, large-scale, and coordinated efforts.

We will only make progress in preventing violence against women if we can change the attitudes, identities, and relations among some men which sustain violence. To stop the physical and sexual assault of women and girls, we must erode the cultural and collective supports for violence found among many men and boys and replace them with norms of consent, sexual respect and gender equality, and we must foster just and respectful gender relations in relationships, families, and communities. While some men are part of the problem, all men are part of the solution.

<sup>25</sup> Some of the following was first written in Flood (in-press).



## Appendix 1: Key online resources on men's roles in stopping violence against women

### (1) Readings and Resources

XYonline, a major website on men and gender, includes key articles on men's work in helping to stop violence against women, here: <http://www.xyonline.net/category/article-content/violence>.

The site also includes key resources on working with men, including guides and manuals, here: <http://www.xyonline.net/category/article-content/resources>

### (2) Web sites

XYonline also includes a substantial collection of links to other websites on men and masculinities, here: <http://www.xyonline.net/links>

This includes links on men's anti-violence work, here: <http://www.xyonline.net/links#a2>

Australian websites on violence against women: <http://www.xyonline.net/links#ViolenceAustralia>

International websites on violence against women: <http://www.xyonline.net/links#a12>

### (3) Academic references

The Men's Bibliography is a comprehensive bibliography of writing on men, masculinities, gender, and sexualities, listing over 20,000 books and articles. It is free at: <http://mensbiblio.xyonline.net/>.

The bibliography includes a substantial section on men's anti-violence work, here:

<http://mensbiblio.xyonline.net/violence2.html#Antiviolenceactivism>

The bibliography also includes a substantial section on violence prevention, here:

<http://mensbiblio.xyonline.net/violence3.html#Violenceprevention>

## Appendix 2: Self-reported use of violence by young males against a girlfriend

The following table reports on data from an Australian survey of 5,000 young people aged 12-20. It details young males' self-reported use of violence or abuse against a girlfriend, among young males who have ever had a 'dating' relationship.

Behaviour	No	Yes	Once/ Twice	More Often
Yelled loudly at her	49	33	24	8
Put her down / humiliated her	62	19	16	3
Threatened to hit her or throw something at her	74	7	6	2
Threw/smashed/ hit/kicked something	72	9	6	4
Threw something at her	77	4	3	1
Pushed, grabbed or shoved her	72	9	7	2
Slapped her	76	5	4	2
Kicked, bit or hit her	78	4	2	2
Hit or tried to hit her with something	79	3	2	1
Beat her up	80	2	1	1
Threatened her with a knife or gun	80	2	1	1
Used a knife or fired a gun	80	1	1	–
Tried to control her physically e.g. by holding etc	73	8	6	2
Tried to force her to have sex	78	3	2	1
Physically forced her to have sex	80	2	2	1

Source: National Crime Prevention 2001: 115.



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