



One in Three Campaign

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Dear Mr McClelland,

## PROPOSED FAMILY VIOLENCE AMENDMENTS

We wish to express our concerns about the process used by the Government which has led to the development of the exposure draft of the Family Law Amendment (Family Violence) Bill 2010. In addition, while we welcome the expansion of the definition of family violence to include a wider range of abusive behaviours, we are concerned about the removal of the "reasonableness clause" and worry that, by the removal of the central idea of dominating or controlling another family member, the new definition captures much normal conflict in separating families.

The One in Three Campaign aims to raise public awareness of the existence and needs of male victims of family violence and abuse; to work with government and non-government services alike to provide assistance to male victims; and to reduce the incidence and impacts of family violence on Australian men, women and children.

## RECENT FAMILY VIOLENCE RESEARCH SHOWS THAT AT LEAST ONE IN THREE VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE IS MALE (PERHAPS AS MANY AS ONE IN TWO)

The Australian Bureau of Statistics *Personal Safety Survey* (2006)<sup>1</sup> is the largest and most recent survey of violence in Australia. Its data shows that:

- Physical assaults in the home were experienced almost equally by men and women
- Physical assaults by family or friends were by far the most prevalent form of family violence in Australia, followed by assaults by "boyfriends, girlfriends, or dates" or previous partners; and lastly by current partners
- Males made up the vast majority of victims of physical assault by "other known persons" (including ex-boyfriends or girlfriends); half of victims of physical assault by "family or friends"; a third of victims of physical assault by boyfriends, girlfriends, or dates; more than a quarter of victims of previous partner assault; and around one in seven victims of current partner assault
- Overall, women (61%) were slightly more likely to experience family violence than men (39%)

"I was petrified to come home from work and would see her car in the drive and have to drive away and sit for an hour or so by myself to prepare for the likely barrage to come. I lived in terror walking on eggshells around her for nigh on 20 years. I attempted suicide a number of times."

(Dan)

- 9,700 men (29% male victims) and 91,900 women (57.4% female victims) had children in their care when experiencing abuse from a current partner
- 176,900 men (55.1% male victims) and 645,500 women (62.4% female victims) had children in their care when experiencing abuse from a previous partner.

The Australian Institute of Criminology (2008)<sup>2</sup> found that 48.7% (almost one in two) adult victims of family homicide and 35.4% (over one in three) victims of intimate partner homicide in 2006-07 were male.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies' evaluation of the 2006 family law reforms (2009)<sup>3</sup> found that 39% (more than one in three) victims of physical hurt before separation were male; and 48% (almost one in two) victims of emotional abuse before or during separation were male.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies (1999)<sup>4</sup> observed that, post-separation, fairly similar proportions of men (55 per cent) and women (62 per cent) reported experiencing physical violence including threats by their former spouse. Emotional abuse was reported by 84 per cent of women and 75 per cent of men.

The *Young People and Domestic Violence* study (2001)<sup>5</sup> surveyed young people aged 12 to 20 and found:

- while 23% of young people were aware of domestic violence against their mothers or step-mothers by their fathers or step-fathers, an almost identical proportion (22%) of young people were aware of domestic violence against their fathers or step-fathers by their mothers or step-mothers
- an almost identical proportion of young females (16%) and young males (15%) answered "yes" to the statement "I've experienced domestic violence"
- an almost identical proportion of young females (6%) and young males (5%) answered "yes" to the statement "my boyfriend/girlfriend physically forced me to have sex".

**"Up until dad left, she held the reins in the house. It was unbearable; her pedantic scrutinies were like police interrogations. He practically made the bloody money, he would give her the lot and then beg for pocket money. Everyone knew of her moods, and dad played always by ear and we managed to get by with little disruption on her part. But there were times when it didn't work. Then... poor dad. I had seen him walking naked in the back yard at night all upset and embarrassed; and I had seen him crawling under the bed to escape her vicious attacks, and I have seen him nursing his fresh wounds in the toilet, and he would say no word against her... When he left mom, I was very sad because I knew that I would miss him, but I felt also happy, because I knew that he was a decent man and that he deserved better."**  
(Son talking about his parents)

A University of Melbourne / La Trobe University study (1999)<sup>6</sup> found that men were just as likely to report being physically assaulted by their partners as women. Further, women and men were about equally likely to admit being violent themselves. Men and women also reported experiencing about the same levels of pain and need for medical attention resulting from domestic violence.

An extensive study of dominance and symmetry in partner violence by male and female university students in 32 nations by Murray Straus (2008)<sup>7</sup> found that, in Australia, 14 per cent of physical violence between dating partners during the previous 12 months was perpetrated by males only, 21 per cent by females only and 64.9 per cent was mutual violence (where both partners used violence against each other).

The Queensland Government Department of Communities (2009)<sup>8</sup> reported that 40% of domestic and family violence protection orders issued by the Magistrate Court were issued to protect males.

A study of risk factors for recent domestic physical assault in patients presenting to the emergency department of Adelaide hospitals (2004)<sup>9</sup> found that 7% of male patients and 10% of female patients had experienced domestic physical assault. This finding shows that over one in three victims were male (39.7%).

The Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission (2005)<sup>10</sup> found that 32.6% (almost one in three) victims of family violence reported to police were male.

The SA *Interpersonal Violence and Abuse Survey* (1999)<sup>11</sup> found that 32.3% (almost one in three) victims of reported domestic violence by a current or ex-partner (including both physical and emotional violence and abuse) were male

The Victorian Victims Support Agency (2008)<sup>12</sup> found that 31% (almost one in three) persons admitted to Victorian Public Hospitals for family violence injuries were male.

The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (2005)<sup>13</sup> reported that police statistics showed 28.9% (almost one in three) victims of domestic assault were male.

## **A MISGUIDED PROCESS BASED ON FALSE ASSUMPTIONS**

The process used by the Government to arrive at the exposure draft of the Family Law Amendment (Family Violence) Bill 2010 was based on the false assumption that only women and children need protection from family violence. Many of the reports commissioned into the 2006 family law reforms, and how the family law system deals with family violence, contained terms of reference that focused only upon women and children – entirely excluding the experiences of family violence of male victims and their children.

Not only did this “research” ignore between one-third and one-half of victims of family violence, it can only be described accurately as “advocacy research” designed to come to a pre-determined conclusion. By commissioning many studies on the impact of family violence against women and children in the context of family law and *not a single study* on the issue of false allegations of violence and abuse (themselves serious forms of family violence), the Government has made it clear that it has always had a pre-determined agenda and was never interested in an open inquiry. A new public inquiry into the entire Family Law industry, similar to that held in 2003, is absolutely essential if such a large proportion of the population – especially children - is to be affected by the proposed changes.

## **THE EXPERIENCE OF MALE VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE**

### **Barriers to disclosing**

Male victims of family violence and abuse - like women - often face many barriers to disclosing their abuse. Male victims are only one-third as likely as female victims to report their abuse<sup>14</sup>:

- They are likely to be told that there must be something they did to provoke the perpetrator’s abuse
- They can suffer shame, embarrassment and the social stigma of not being able to protect themselves
- They can fear that if they disclose the abuse there will be nowhere for them and their children to escape to
- They can fear that if they disclose the abuse or end the relationship, their partner might become more abusive and/or take the children
- They can feel uncertain about where to seek help, or how to seek help
- Services are less likely to ask whether a man is a victim of family violence, and when they do ask, they are less likely to believe him (indeed many state health departments have mandatory domestic violence screening for young women, but no such screening for young men)
- Male victims can be falsely arrested and removed from their homes because of the assumption that because they are male, they must be a perpetrator and not a victim. When this happens, children can be left unprotected from the perpetrator of the violence, leading many men to suffer the abuse in silence in an attempt to protect their children.

**“My wife would not let me see the kids. She accused me of sexually molesting my daughter. I was devastated. After a Court hearing which lasted ten days, the judge found that my ex-wife herself had molested my daughter in an effort to generate evidence against me. Despite this, she was still allowed custody.”**

(George)

Because of these barriers, men are much less likely to report being a victim of family violence than are women (and women also frequently don’t report violence against them).

## Forms of abuse

Abuse of men takes many of the same forms as it does against women - physical violence, intimidation and threats; sexual, emotional, psychological, verbal and financial abuse; property damage and social isolation. Many men experience multiple forms of abuse. Men often experience legal and administrative abuse - the use of institutions to inflict further abuse on a victim, for example, taking out false restraining orders or not allowing the victim access to his children.

## Impacts on male victims

The impacts of family violence on male victims include:

- Fear and loss of feelings of safety
- Feelings of guilt and/or shame
- Difficulties in trusting others
- Anxiety and flashbacks
- Unresolved anger
- Loneliness and isolation
- Low self-esteem and/or self-hatred
- Depression, suicidal ideation, self-harm and attempted suicide
- Use of alcohol or other drugs to cope with the abuse
- Physical injuries
- Sexual dysfunction and/or impotence
- Loss of work
- Loss of home
- Physical illness
- Loss of contact with children and/or step-children
- Concern about children post separation.

**“She reduced me to a state of total powerlessness. I couldn’t function as a husband, as a father. I did everything she wanted and got abused for it. The more I gave in to her the more she destroyed me. I became like a little man just towing the line. I had to ask permission to go and see a friend. I was just her slave in the relationship.”**  
(Nigel)

To add insult to injury, male victims of family violence often find it distressing to see social marketing campaigns such as *Violence Against Women Australia Says No* (Federal) and *Don’t Cross the Line* (SA), which suggest that men are the only perpetrators of family violence and women and children the only victims.

## Children of female perpetrators

Children of female perpetrators of family violence can suffer the same impacts as children of male perpetrators, including

- The abuse of witnessing family violence by their parents or step-parents
- Direct violence and abuse themselves
- Negative impacts on their behavioural, cognitive and emotional functioning and social development
- Harm to their education and later employment prospects
- Shaping their attitudes to violence in positive or negative directions
- The possibility of being more likely to grow up to perpetrate violence or become victims of violence in their own relationships (the majority however do not).

## DEFINING FAMILY VIOLENCE

The existing definition of family violence in the Family Law Act 1975 is:

*family violence means conduct, whether actual or threatened, by a person towards, or towards the property of, a member of the person's family that causes that or any other member of the person's family reasonably to fear for, or reasonably to be apprehensive about, his or her personal wellbeing or safety.*

The new definition in the proposed bill omits the requirement that fear must be reasonable, and spells out a list of behaviours that the term now includes:

*family violence means behaviour by a person (the first person) towards a member of the person's family (the second person) that:*

*(a) causes death or personal injury; or*

*(b) is an assault; or*

*(c) is a sexual assault, or another form of sexually coercive behaviour; or*

*(d) torments, intimidates or harasses the second person, including (for example) where that effect on the second person is caused by:*

*(i) repeated derogatory taunts, including racial taunts; or*

*(ii) intentionally causing damage to, or destruction of, property;  
or*

*(iii) intentionally causing death or injury to an animal; or*

*(e) controls, dominates, deceives or coerces the second person unreasonably, including (for example) where that effect on the second person is caused by:*

*(i) denying the second person the financial autonomy that he or she would have had but for the conduct; or*

*(ii) withholding financial support, if the second person is entirely or predominantly dependent on the first person for financial support to meet his or her, or his or her child's, reasonable living expenses; or*

*(iii) preventing the second person from making or keeping connections with his or her family, friends or culture; or*

*(iv) unlawfully depriving the second person, or any member of the second person's family, of their liberty; or*

*(f) causes the second person to feel fear for his or her safety or for the safety of another person;  
or*

*(g) causes the second person to feel threatened (whether because of a threat to engage in conduct that would be covered by any of paragraphs (a) to (f), or for any other reason); or*

*(h) involves the first person threatening to commit suicide or self-harm, with the intention of tormenting or intimidating the second person.*

*Note: None of the paragraphs of this definition is intended to limit any of the other paragraphs, and a particular incident of conduct may be covered by 2 or more of the paragraphs.*

**"In my relationship with Deborah, I didn't like to admit that I was scared - in fact it took me a long time to admit that I felt scared and was affected by her abuse. That admission was challenging to my own identity as a male. I could not even admit to my close and supportive friends how much her behaviour was hurting me."**

(Mervyn)

We welcome the expansion of the definition of family violence to include a wider range of abusive behaviours. However, there are two serious problems with the proposed definition.

## Removing the ‘reasonableness’ clause

The current definition of family violence requires that any fear or apprehension about a person’s personal wellbeing or safety be *reasonable*. Fear and apprehension are very subjective terms. In order to prevent false allegations of family violence being used as a strategy in Family Law proceedings, the ‘reasonable apprehension’ clause must be retained. Without it, anyone can claim to be in fear or apprehension of their (ex-)partner without any reasonable basis for this emotion. And with the current law reform process based on the (incorrect and misguided) assumption that only women and children are victims of family violence, it will be more likely that women will be able to successfully apply this strategy.

## Removing any overall requirement of fear, apprehension, control or dominance

The proposed bill removes the essential overall requirement that family violence involves an ongoing patterns of behaviour aimed at controlling one’s partner (or other family member) through fear or domination. The draft bill’s definition is that family violence is simply behaviour towards a member of a person’s family that has any of the characteristics listed in the various paragraphs. It therefore captures much normal ‘situational’ conflict in separating families as well as the abusive behaviours of ongoing dominance and control that must be addressed. It is unrealistic not to expect heightened emotions, and even raised voices and “put-downs”, in most relationship breakdowns. There needs to be a distinction between this normal behaviour and the abuse of physical assault and emotional terrorism.

## A proposed definition

We would recommend that any new definition of family violence be based upon a *modified* version of the ALRC/NSWLRC’s proposed definition. Our proposed definition is as follows:

*Family violence is violent or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour, that dominates or controls another family member or causes that family member to reasonably be fearful. Such behaviour may include but is not limited to:*

- (a) physical violence and intimidation;*
- (b) sexual assault and other sexually abusive behaviour;*
- (c) economic abuse;*
- (d) emotional or psychological abuse;*
- (e) stalking;*
- (f) kidnapping, deprivation of liberty or social isolation;*
- (g) damage to property, irrespective of whether the victim owns the property;*
- (h) causing injury or death to an animal irrespective of whether the victim owns the animal;*
- (i) using legitimate institutions to inflict abuse; and*
- (j) behaviour by the person using violence that causes a child to be exposed to the effects of behaviour referred to in (a)–(i) above.*

“Almost everything I did that wasn’t done with her constituted a threat to her. By the end of the relationship I had no friends. I had no outside activities. I had nothing, because everything that I was interested in, every friendship I had, threatened her. She would make things so difficult for my friends that they just drifted away.”

(Scott)

Our proposed definition differs from the ALRC/NSWLRC’s proposed definition in the following important respects:

1. We have replaced the term “coerces” with the term “dominates” in order to better capture the serious ongoing nature of the abuse. Simple coercion in a relationship by “digging one’s heels in” or by bribing or whinging does not necessarily reflect family violence. To illustrate with a trivial example, if I coerce my partner to mow the lawn or do the ironing instead of watching TV by whinging until they relent, I might not be acting with maturity but am I really committing family violence?

2. We have added the term “reasonable” to avoid spurious allegations of family violence based on entirely subjective claims of fear (such false allegations themselves being a serious form of family violence).
3. We have added the term “intimidation” to point (a) in order to reflect the fact that much abusive behaviour involves threats of violence as a means of control, even if actual violence is rarely used.
4. We have added the term “social isolation” to point (f) in order to better capture the common practice by abusers of denying victims access to their regular social circle of family and friends.
5. We have added a 9th point (i) “using legitimate institutions to inflict abuse” to capture legal-administrative abuse: a person using legitimate services in a way that abuses the rights of other family members. Legal-administrative abuse refers to such issues as making false accusations in order to obtain a violence restraining order, denying a parent access to their children and undertaking vexatious actions in the Family Court or through the Child Support Agency.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we urge you and the Federal Government to abandon the proposed changes to the Family Law Act and to commission an open and transparent public inquiry into the 2006 amendments, and any further changes that are needed to improve Family Law for all Australians.

Should the proposed changes regrettably proceed, we urge you to revise the proposed definition of family violence so that it retains the “reasonableness clause” and contains the central idea of dominating or controlling another family member.

We have attached, for your information, a series of Fact Sheets that provide more information about male victims of family violence and their children.

Yours sincerely,

Greg Andresen  
Senior Researcher  
One in Three Campaign

**“I had to work long shifts and often when I came home, I’d find my wife had left the children (the youngest was only a few months) and had gone down to the club, drinking and playing the poker machines. Sometimes when I went to get her, she’d smash a glass or a bottle across my head. Several times I had my head cracked open.”**

(Roy)

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# ONE IN THREE VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE IS MALE



## Fact Sheet No.2

### Is men's intimate partner violence (IPV) more severe, and more likely to inflict severe injury?

International studies show that, on average

- Overall, women are injured more than men, but men are injured too, and often seriously<sup>2</sup>
- The overall physical and psychological effects of IPV are similar for men and women<sup>1 2 5</sup>

**“The authors concluded that their findings argued against theories of greater female vulnerability to pathological outcomes.”<sup>8</sup>**

**“we also observe evidence that contradicts the idea that violence by male partners tends to be more serious”<sup>4</sup>**

- Women and men who use IPV hurt their partners in similar ways (kicking, biting, punching, choking, stabbing, burning, etc), however men are as likely or significantly more likely than women to experience assaults using a weapon<sup>2 5 6</sup>
- Male perpetrators are more likely to produce minor injuries, but less likely to produce severe injuries<sup>2</sup>
- Male victims are more likely to suffer serious injuries, while female victims are more likely to suffer minor injuries<sup>1 2</sup>
- Women are slightly more likely than men to seek medical treatment for their injuries<sup>2</sup>
- Men and women bear similar intentions when using IPV, leading to similar results when their average differences in physical strength are taken into account (such as when weapons are used)<sup>3 7</sup>
- Men, having greater strength on average, are more likely to use direct physical violence, while women are more likely to use a weapon to compensate for their lack of strength<sup>2</sup>
- Women are more likely than men to retaliate to IPV<sup>10</sup>

- Reducing women's use of violence will reduce women's rates of injury from violence because a woman's perpetration of IPV is the strongest predictor of her being a victim<sup>7 11 12</sup>
- Children witnessing IPV by either their fathers or their mothers are more likely to grow up to use violence themselves<sup>7</sup>.

### Is focusing on the severity of physical injuries the best approach to reducing violence?

- If men are injured less than women, is this a reason to deny them protection?
- Don't all victims of IPV deserve protection, not just those who are physically injured?
- Does only addressing the outcome of violence (physical injury) distract from addressing the process of violence which can include verbal, emotional, psychological, financial, and other forms of control and abuse?
- Does a focus upon injury ignore the fact that people who use IPV do so to control their partner, not necessarily to injure them? In fact, control of one's partner is often achieved without the use of violence.

**“Concentrating on ‘severe’ violence only ignores the fact that the primary intent of fighting spouses is not to injure their partner... but to hurt... Their focus is on getting their way... and making the partner comply with their demands rather than on causing physical injury.”<sup>9</sup>**

- Does a focus upon injury ignore the fact that victims of IPV are often hurt more by the violation of the bond of trust and love between them and their partner, than by the physical injury itself?
- Does a focus upon injury in effect give a ‘hitting license’ to weaker partners, who may eventually be severely injured, should their stronger partner retaliate (regardless of the gender of the partners)?

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- 12 While this may sound like ‘victim-blaming’, it is simply stating the research evidence finding that women who perpetrate violence suffer greater injuries than those who do not. If a woman hits her partner who then hits her back and injures her, both people are responsible for their own use of violence. Perpetrating violence is a risk factor for women's injury.



# ONE IN THREE VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE IS MALE



## Fact Sheet No.3

### Is women's intimate partner violence (IPV) more likely to be self-defence or a pre-emptive strike against a violent male partner?

Although it cannot be denied that there are cases in which women and men abuse their partner in self-defence, international studies have found that

- Self-defence is cited by women as the reason for their use of IPV (including severe violence such as homicide) in a small minority of cases (from 5 to 20 per cent)<sup>1 2 3 5 6 7 9 10 12</sup>

**“Studies... found that a relatively low percentage of women endorsed self-defence as a primary motive for violence.”<sup>13</sup>**

**“Women report using violence against male partners repeatedly, using it against non-violent male partners, and using it for reasons other than self-defence.”<sup>3</sup>**

- In a study where self-defence was given as a reason for women's use of IPV in a large number of cases (42%), it was cited as a reason for men's IPV more often (56%)<sup>12</sup>
- Rather than self-defence, reasons commonly given by both women and men for their use of IPV include
  - ✦ coercion (dominance and control)
  - ✦ anger
  - ✦ punishing a partner's misbehaviour
  - ✦ jealousy
  - ✦ confusion
  - ✦ “to get through” (to one's partner)
  - ✦ to retaliate
  - ✦ frustration<sup>6 7 8 9 12</sup>
- Rather than self-defence, reasons commonly given by women for their use of IPV include
  - ✦ disbelief that their male victims would be injured or retaliate

- ✦ they wished to engage their partner's attention (particularly emotionally)
- ✦ their partner not being sensitive to their needs
- ✦ their partner being verbally abusive to them
- ✦ their partner not listening to them<sup>3 8 9</sup>
- Reciprocal partner violence (which makes up approximately 50 per cent of all IPV and is the most injurious to women) does not appear to be only comprised of self-defensive acts of violence<sup>2 3 13</sup>
- Men and women initiate IPV (both minor and severe) at around the same rates and women are equally likely or more likely to perpetrate violence against a non-violent partner<sup>2 3 11</sup>
- Women are more likely than men to hit back in response to provocation<sup>2</sup>
- Women are more likely than men to kill their partner in self-defence, however overall, only 10 to 20 per cent of women's partner homicides are carried out in self-defence or in response to prior abuse<sup>4 11</sup>

**“Important is the finding that women's allegations of DV were proven to be false. In most cases, the initial allegations of DV were modified considerably by them during the course of the study, particularly when they were faced with the accounts of their children and mothers, admitting in the end that they were neither victims of violence nor acting in self-defence.”<sup>10</sup>**

- Women's use of IPV, rather than being reactive to male violence, is predictable by kindergarten age, and certainly by the teenage years. Aggressive girls grow up to be aggressive adults. High incidence rates of personality disorders are found in both male and female court-mandated samples of IPV perpetrators. Women who kill their husbands are just as likely to have criminal records as women who kill in other circumstances.<sup>2 4 11 12</sup>

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# ONE IN THREE VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE IS MALE



## Fact Sheet No.4

Is men's violence towards women most often an attempt to control, coerce, humiliate or dominate by generating fear and intimidation, while women's intimate partner violence (IPV) is more often an expression of frustration in response to their dependence or stress, or their refusal to accept a less powerful position?

International studies show that,

- Dominance by either partner is a risk factor for IPV (both minor & severe). It is the injustices and power struggles that are associated with inequality in relationships that give rise to violence, not just the inequality of male dominance<sup>1 2 9 13</sup>

**“The results of this study suggest important conclusions about two widely held beliefs: that partner violence is an almost uniquely male crime and that when men hit their partners, it is primarily to dominate women, whereas partner violence by women is an act of self-defence or an act of desperation in response to male dominance and brutality. These beliefs were not supported by the results of this study.”<sup>9</sup>**

- Empirical research on American couples has found that the vast majority of relationships involve equal power between partners. Relationships in which one partner is dominant are in the minority, and are just as likely to be female-dominant as male-dominant<sup>9</sup>.
- Egalitarian couples are the least violent, while both male and female dominance are associated with increased IPV<sup>13</sup>
- Both husbands and wives who are controlling are more likely to produce injury and engage in repeated violence<sup>5</sup>
- Coercion (control and domination) is a frequently cited reason by women for their own use of IPV, and by male victims for their partner's use of IPV<sup>9</sup>

**“Abuse was not just a sum of violent acts, but in almost all cases it constituted a system that was imposed upon the abused spouse, that dominated his whole life. The study reported that abusive women assumed total control of the relationship, e.g. by getting hold of power producing resources, imposing themselves upon the husband by enforcing authority over him or indirectly making serious threats to frighten him into submission.”<sup>10</sup>**

- Even in research samples selected for high rates of male aggression (such as shelter samples), women sometimes report using comparative frequencies of controlling behaviour<sup>7 9</sup>

**“Partner violence is more a gender-inclusive systemic problem than it is a problem of a patriarchal social system which enforces male dominance by violence.”<sup>13</sup>**

- Risk factors for IPV for both women and men include dominance, but also include youthfulness, self-defence, angry and antisocial personalities; alcohol and illicit drug use; conflict with partner; communication problems; criminal history; jealousy; negative attributions about the partner; partner abuse, sexual abuse and neglect histories; relationship satisfaction; stressful conditions; depression; traditional sex-role ideology and violence approval<sup>2 9 11</sup>.
- Factors associated with the use of controlling behaviours include socioeconomic status, ethnicity, education level, age and length of marriage (but not gender)<sup>5</sup>
- Female IPV is not a response to male aggression but, like male IPV, follows developmental trajectories including crystallising into personality disorders. Aggressive girls grow up to be aggressive adults (as do aggressive boys)<sup>1</sup>
- After analysing for verbal aggression, fear, violence and control by each gender, husbands are found to be no more controlling than wives<sup>1 2 7 9 13</sup>. Men and women may differ in their methods of control, but not their motivation to control<sup>5</sup>. Men are more likely to prevent their partner from knowing about or having access to family income even when they ask; and prevent their partner from working outside the home. Women are more likely to insist on knowing who their partner is with at all times; insist on changing residences even when their partner doesn't want or need to; and try to limit their partner's contact with family and friends. Relatively few men or women engage in any of these controlling behaviours<sup>4</sup>.

**“The... hypothesis that dominance by either partner, not just the male partner, is a risk factor for violence was also supported. In fact, this study found that dominance by the female partner is even more closely related to violence by women than is male-dominance. The results on dominance as a risk factor for violence, like the results on symmetry and asymmetry in perpetration, apply to both minor violence and severe violence. This contradicts the belief that when women hit, the motives are different, and that male-dominance is the root cause of partner violence. Thus, the results in this paper call into question another basic assumption of most prevention and treatment programs.”<sup>13</sup>**



# ONE IN THREE VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE IS MALE



**“The same distortion of the scientific evidence by selective citation applies to discussion of dominance and control. Only studies showing male use of violence to coerce, dominate, and control are cited despite a number of studies showing that this also applies to violence by female partners.”<sup>3</sup>**

- Controlling behaviours exhibited by abusive women include
  - the use of threats and coercion (threatening to kill themselves or their husbands, threatening to call the police and have the husband falsely arrested, threatening to leave the husband)
  - emotional abuse (making the victim feel bad about himself, calling him names, making him think he is crazy, playing mind games, humiliating him, making him feel guilty)
  - intimidation (making him feel afraid by smashing things, destroying his property, abusing pets, displaying weapons)
  - blaming the men for their own abuse or minimising the abuse
  - using the court system to gain sole custody of the children or falsely obtain a restraining order against the victim
  - isolating the victim by keeping him away from his family and friends, using jealousy to justify these actions
  - controlling all of the money and not allowing the victim to see or use the chequebook or credit cards<sup>9</sup>
- In a large recent Canadian study, victimisation by repeated, severe, fear-inducing, instrumental violence (often called intimate terrorism) was reported by 2.6% of men and 4.2% of women in the last five years. Equivalent injuries, use of medical services, and fear of the abuser were also discovered, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator and the victim<sup>1</sup>.

## Do men who are violent in intimate relationships typically underreport their violence?

International studies show that,

- Both sexes tend to over-report minor acts of violence they commit, under-report serious acts they commit, and over-report serious acts they suffer<sup>2</sup>
- The same results are obtained regarding the relative frequency of men's and women's violence regardless of whether men or women are the ones being questioned<sup>2</sup>.

**“The rate of minor assaults by wives was 78 per 1,000 couples, and the rate of minor assaults by husbands was 72 per 1,000. The Severe assault rate was 46 per 1,000 couples for assaults by wives and 50 per 1,000 for assaults by husbands. Neither difference is statistically significant. As these rates are based exclusively on information provided by women respondents, the near equality in assault rates cannot be attributed to a gender bias in reporting.”<sup>12</sup>**



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# ONE IN THREE VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE IS MALE



## Fact Sheet No.5

### Are male victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) far less likely to be afraid or intimidated than female victims?

International studies demonstrate that

- Males are taught by sex-role conditioning not to admit fear, making it appear that women are more fearful simply because they report fear more freely than men<sup>1 2</sup>

**“In most cases, the wife's intent to control and dominate the husband entailed efforts to induce fear in him relating to his personal safety as well as the fate of the children and property in general. She would often threaten to burn the house down, hurt the children or animals, or kill herself, him or the children: she would often drive dangerously to frighten him, and make him realise how serious and dangerous she could be. This generated intimidation, insecurity, and fear in the husbands and the family members in general.”<sup>5</sup>**

- Women and men have different perceptions of danger and use fear-scales quite differently. Women are twice as likely as men to fear death from a partner, when the actual probability of being killed is the same. Women may over-react to objective threat, while men probably under-react<sup>1 2</sup>.

**“Men reported also symptoms such as tightness in the stomach, muscular pain, racing pulse, thought distortion, and panic attacks. Perpetual fear and being 'on guard' were experienced by most participants. Other commonly expressed reactions were, feelings of lack of control and inadequacy and constant denigration of the man, which often caused him to accept his partner's view of him, and to lose self esteem.”<sup>5</sup>**

- Women's greater fear of male violence, where it exists, could also simply stem from the greater average size and strength of men, rather than from any difference in motives between men and women who use IPV<sup>4</sup>.

- Men have rarely had their fear of female violence assessed. One of the few studies to do this found that a substantial minority of male victims of IPV feared their partner's violence and were stalked. Over half the men were fearful that their partners would cause them serious injury if they found out that he had called the domestic violence helpline<sup>2 3</sup>.

**“The feminist view is that all male violence is designed to generate fear to enable coercion. The data suggest a motivational profile for use of violence by either gender is far more complex. The question for feminists remains given that research indicates high levels of female violence, much of it against non-violent males and hence not in self-defence; how is that violence any different from male violence? How can male violence still be depicted as being in pursuit of power and control when female violence is also frequent and, according to the women themselves, not defensive?”<sup>2</sup>**

- Another such study of male victims of IPV found that “perpetual fear and being ‘on guard’ were experienced by most participants”<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that men's fear is often internalised and thus invisible to the outside observer.
- There is little evidence to support the assertion that all male violence is designed to generate fear in women to enable coercion. In fact the data shows that both men and women have much more complex motives behind their use of IPV<sup>2</sup>.

**“Analog studies of fear induction in response to intimate conflicts found that women would report more fear even when exposure to the stimulus (a videotaped conflict between others) could not possibly be threatening or endangering... Men use fear scales differently and are less likely to report fear as opposed to other emotions. Creating police responses based on who is most afraid means perpetrators can be arrested based on reported internal reactions that cannot be corroborated.”<sup>1</sup>**

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