

What about the men? White Ribbon, men and violence.

(Note: All statistics are drawn from the ABS Personal Safety Survey 2005, unless noted otherwise)

The White Ribbon Campaign is about engaging men in positive ways to prevent men's violence against women, it does this by encouraging men to examine and change the current attitudes and behaviours associated with masculinity that excuse and sustain violence.

This document outlines the issues related to gendered violence with the aim of shedding some light and clarity around this complex and emotional issue.

Below we have highlighted the key points to help your understanding of the issue; and following, you will find more detailed answers to some commonly asked questions.

Key points:

- White Ribbon acknowledges that there many forms of violence; however the causes of the different types of violence are complex and require a range of solutions.
- **Whilst domestic violence is experienced by both men and women, it is clear that men and women do not assault each other at equal rates or with equal effect.**
- Of the men who experienced violence, **only 4% of assaults were by a female current or former partner.**
- The majority of perpetrators of violence are men. Around 80% of all violent assaults (including sexual assaults) are carried out by some **men against other men and women.**
- Male victims are most likely to be assaulted by other men and most assaults are single incidents in public places (such as in a pub or on the street). 74% of physical assaults on men were carried out by male strangers.
- In contrast to men's experience of violence, **male violence against women generally takes place within family** and other relationships and is often part of a **pattern of longer term abuse.**
- One common cause of men's violence against both men and women is in the way we currently express masculinity – rigid masculine norms promote and excuse aggression and this has the potential to damage and limit both young men and women.
- ***The best way to prevent violent assaults on men is to change the behaviour of other men.***

Answers to common questions

Q. Is it true that one in three victims of family violence are men?

- Some men are victims of intimate partner violence
- Estimates vary but in instances of intimate partner violence the breakdown is 25% to 75% male victims to female victims i.e. men are victims in one in four of these kinds of assaults (although this could include violence from both male and female perpetrators).
- To put this ratio in broader context, of the men who experienced violence at all, only 4% of reported assaults on men were by a female current or former partner. 74% of all physical assaults on men were carried out by male strangers.
- People are three times more likely to experience violence by a man than by a woman.

Q. Should male victims of violence be supported and given access to services?

- Yes, of course! To do this effectively you also have to consider how most assaults happen and make sure services meet those needs.
- Since around 65% of physical assaults on men are by male strangers in the open or in licensed premises and not related to family violence, placing emphasis on support for men experiencing family violence wouldn't necessarily benefit male violence victims most effectively.
- Around 80% of all reported violent assaults (including sexual assaults) are carried out by men towards other men and women.
- People are 3 times more likely to experience violence by a man than by a woman.
- So the best way to prevent violence assaults on men is to change the behaviour of other men.

Q. Men are more at risk from violence so why not focus on them?

- There has yet to be any work done on the impact of violence on men's overall health, i.e. its contribution to the burden of disease. We, therefore, don't yet know the impact of men's violence against men from a public health point of view.
- White Ribbon believes that a public health approach to prevention of male violence (focusing on how to create behaviour change), would supplement the current criminal justice system, and be very valuable. We see this as a potentially critical role for men's health organisations, and one which White Ribbon would support fully. At present this issue is a glaring omission in the current development of a National Men's Health Policy.

Q. Why does White Ribbon only campaign to end violence against women?

- The White Ribbon Campaign and the UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, November 25, is about preventing violence against women because this is internationally recognised as a significant social problem worldwide and in Australia – with one in three women experiencing violence in her lifetime.
- This type of violence has its roots in the inequalities of power and control related to our gender roles – some men use violence against women because they feel they want or need to put or keep women 'in their place'. The campaign began in Canada in 1991 by a group of progressive men in response to the killing of 14 women and girls, by a young man because they had dared to study engineering.
- Whilst domestic violence is experienced by both men and women, it is clear that men and women do not assault each other at equal rates or with equal effect.
- Women constitute 77 % of reported family violence victims and 92% of reported rape victims are women and girls (Victoria Police Crime Statistics 2008-09)
- Women are three times more likely than men to experience physical violence from an intimate partner.

- This does not consider the frequency, severity and impact of violence. While we don't have an Australian statistical analysis of the comparable severity of male and female intimate partner violence, Canadian research tells us that women are three times more likely to be injured, five more times likely to be hospitalised and five times more likely to report fearing for their lives as a result of this type of violence.
- [Statistics Canada (2003) Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2003, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Ministry of Industry, Ottawa, Canada]
- Intimate partner violence (31% of all violence against women) is the leading contributor to death and disability amongst Australian women between 15-44 outranking obesity and smoking as a risk factor (Vic Health, 2004). So from a public health point of view it is very significant.

Q. Why not campaign to end all violence?

- White Ribbon is opposed to all forms of violence; however, the causes of different types of violence are complex.
- Violence against women and male-on-male violence have different contexts and therefore require different solutions. (So, it's a bit like asking the Breast Cancer Foundation why they don't raise awareness about prostate cancer, too.)
- The common cause of men's violence against both men and women is in the way we currently express masculinity – rigid masculine norms promote and excuse aggression and this has the potential to damage and limit both young men and women.
- White Ribbon works to promote and educate about respectful relationships between men and women, boys and girls. In so doing we hope to contribute, albeit indirectly, to reduction in levels of violence overall.

Q. What makes Violence against Women different?

- In contrast to men's experience of violence, male violence against women generally takes place within family and other relationships and is often part of a pattern of longer term abuse. Violence against women is most often sustained, based on maintaining power and control and contextualised by psychological and emotional abuse.
- Women are most likely to be both physically and sexually assaulted in their home either by a partner, former partner, friend or family member
- Intimate Partner Violence is the leading contributor to death and disability among women aged 15 to 44.
- A woman is killed by a male partner or ex-partner every week in Australia (one fifth of all homicides) (National Homicide Monitoring Program Annual Reports).
- Experts agree that one important way to prevent this violence is to change the sexist attitudes to women (and the rigid traditional views of masculinity) that underpin the use of violence.
- Research suggests that men who hold rigid views about 'traditional' gender roles are more likely to use violence against women (Vic Health: One step forwards, two steps back. Community attitudes survey)
- Violence in the home is more likely to have been witnessed by or also co-experienced by children thus having profound impacts across generations.
- Because this violence is part of a pattern of abuse, it can leave some women and girls vulnerable to re-victimisation.

Q. What about women being violent to men?

- White Ribbon is opposed to all violence and through its work to promote respectful relationships would hope to help reduce levels of all intimate partner and dating violence.
- Men are at much more risk of experiencing violence from another man – on the street, who they probably won't know and won't see again. The percentage of assaults on men by current or former female partners is very small – around 4% of all assaults.

Q. Wouldn't men under-report their experience of domestic violence?

- Men are likely to under-estimate and under-report their subjection to domestic violence by women, because admitting such vulnerability is emasculating (George 1994, 149; Stockdale 1998, 63).
- However, there is no evidence that male victims are more likely to under-report than female victims. In fact, men tend to over-estimate their partner's violence and under-estimate their own, while women do the reverse (Kimmel 2001, 10-11).
- We also know that men's violence against women is significantly under-reported. As a society, domestic violence is still very much seen as taboo, and people involved often go to great lengths to cover it up. As a society, we also willingly turn a blind eye to the issue. White Ribbon is working to break that silence and bring it out into the open, where we can find ways to challenge attitudes and behaviours that allow violence to continue.

Q. There are so many statistics bandied about. How do I know what to believe?

- It pays to check with reputable organisations like Vic Health, The World Health Organisation and the Federal Government websites for accurate statistics on this complex issue.
- A number of contributions in the media can be misleading, and statistics can be misinterpreted, or worse misrepresented. Be sure to understand the statistic, its context and source before quoting or believing it. The ABS Personal Safety Survey 2005 is available on line at www.abs.gov.au