

Aleta Kilner



06 May 2015

Royal Commission Into Family Violence
 P.O. Box 535
 Flinders Lane
 VICTORIA 8009

To Whom It may Concern

My name is Aleta Kilner and I am writing to you to express my concerns about areas in systems that I think need to be improved regarding Family Violence.

Family Violence: The name for this type of violence has been Domestic Violence for years and to me this did not include the whole family unit. As violence against a man, a child, same sex partner or a parent was never included or recognised. Some years ago, in 2009 I wrote and asked the government of the day if the name could be changed from Domestic Violence to Family Violence as I felt that all family members should be included. The government aide returned my letter and stated that "men" do not understand the word Family and do not interpret it as violence. I strongly recommend that all types of violence be accepted as Family Violence it is not just "a man being violent towards a woman". The term Domestic should be dropped.

During the period of 27th of March and the 27th of April 2015 I personally counted the number of people who were murdered / killed by a person who would have loved them, and at some stage would have told them so. I wanted to use these figures in my submission to show the extent of Family Violence that is present in Australia. I set up guidelines for my count these being:

- murdered or killed by some one who loved them
- the murder took place in a residential environment being house, unit, or family property
- the person who committed the crime was charged for the offence
- if it was a murder /suicide the perpetrator was family or closely known to the person
- the case is reported in televised news

During this calendar month 16 murderers were reported. Of these 16 murders only 1 was a man killing a woman. The others were, same sex boyfriends killed each other with knives and found by a mother, son shot father and then shot himself, jilted lover she stabbed grand child and then waited 10 hours to stab grand mother, wife killed husband, boyfriend killed boyfriend, ex girlfriend killed ex boyfriend, The part that I found disturbing as I counted these sad deaths was, I would often only hear the crime reported in the 5 am news. Therefore every day I got up early to listen to this news bulletin and 13 of these cases, the report of the murder/crime was never repeated again during the day time. The crime would be only reported in "prime time news" if the crime involved children, or was particularly gruesome.

With all things it is a pyramid shape. The above is examples of extremes. What is happening in many more homes with in Australia. Many, many of these incidences are not being reported. What was happening in the homes and within the relationships prior to these murders. How can more cases be reported. How do men report violence. Therefore my heart breaks for the family members left to pick up the pieces, resume life, grieve, personally work through emotions, but as the systems stand at the moment where do these people get help. No where as services, as they currently are, do

not recognise these situations as abuse.

In 2013 I had to attend Bendigo magistrates court to renew / extend an AVO. I am unable to use a solicitor in Bendigo as all have been made a "conflict of interest" so I have to always represent myself. So I become privileged to court information that you may not be able to access if you have a solicitor to act for you. On this day there were 15 applications for AVO. I was the only person seeking an AVO from the perspective of a woman to a man. Everybody else was either sister to a brother, son to a father, boyfriend to a girlfriend, mother to a daughter, father to a son in law, this is when I started to become concerned to what and where the system really lacks awareness and support.

Homelessness: The most common cause of homelessness is Family Violence this was reported on ABC television 03.05.2015. Predominantly most people that are homeless are men. This can be confirmed through the Salvation Army. Therefore what services are available to men to get help with housing, financial assistance, counselling, and general support and help with recovery. In Melbourne I have found through research and asking Lifeline, 1 agency is available to men. The sign above the door reads Family Violence and Incest Resource Center. How does/ is a male person to feel comfortable when on entering the building with the words Incest above them as they enter.

On the 05 May 2015 I attended the Royal Commission submissions sessions, in Bendigo at the Capital Theatre. From 10am -12pm. I was asked to provide information about my court case for an AVO at Melbourne Magistrates Court in 2010.

[REDACTED] The order would be served via email. He did not attend court.

I attended the Melbourne Magistrates Court in August and September 2010 on 3 occasions My case was reported to the review panel at Melbourne Magistrates Court by Debbie from the agency Emerge situated in Mentone, and the court appointed helpers. The first magistrate was a female. The next 2 were males. If this is not enough information please contact me.

I have a quote that I would like to close my submission with and live in hope that one day this will be true and we all will live by this moto
Hurt people, Hurt people,.....that is how the pain patterns get passed on, generation, after generation, after generation. Break the chain today. Meet anger with sympathy, contempt with compassion, cruelty with kindness. Greet grimaces with smiles, forgive and forget about finding fault. Love is the weapon of the future. Yehuda Berg.

Finally I would like to thank all involved in the Royal Commission for your time and efforts to make change that will benefit all effected by Family Violence. I have experienced and still do experience Family Violence but I am trying to make a change for everyone. Please find enclosed copies and extracts of studies and information that I have collected to support my views.

[REDACTED]

Aleta Kilner

Thursday, April 30, 2015

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NEWS

Men need to report attacks

BY ADAM HOLMES

A BENDIGO magistrate has encouraged more men to report violence against them in the home after a woman was fined for throwing items at her boyfriend during a minor dispute.

The 23-year-old Eaglehawk woman pleaded guilty in the Bendigo Magistrates' Court on Tuesday to the charge of discharging a missile during the incident on July 5 last

Violence on men not reported: Magistrate

year.

The court heard an argument started between the two after the woman refused to give her then-boyfriend a lift to another town after she refused to let him use her vehicle.

She had a nap after the initial argument, which then re-ignited when she returned to the kitchen, prosecutor

Sergeant Mark Snell said.

He said the two started to argue again, causing the woman to start throwing pieces of a baby capsule at her boyfriend, who told her to "stop throwing stuff".

The court heard the woman called the man a "piece of s***" and threw a butter knife at him.

The man went to leave the house when the woman

threw a coffee mug, which hit the man in the back of the head.

Children were also present in the house but did not witness the incident, the court heard.

Police were called to the property and the woman made full admissions to throwing the objects at the man.

The man did not have any

noticeable injuries, the court heard.

Magistrate Patrick Southey said domestic violence remained a serious problem in Bendigo.

He said instances of violence against men were under reported, along with domestic violence in general.

"It's obvious there is far too much domestic violence in the community, whether it's

women against men or men against women," he said.

"Violence from women against men remains under reported, as men can be embarrassed or ashamed to make a report.

"In this case, the man has decided to take the matter to court."

Mr Southey said the guilty plea resulted in a reduced sentence.

The woman was fined \$400 and did not receive a conviction.



Mayor Christine Henderson.

Modest rate rise feature of 2015-16 council budget

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Australian Government

THE CHALLENGE OF
CHANGE

2015 INTERGENERATIONAL REPORT

AUSTRALIA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE
LIES NOT IN OUR RESOURCES,
BUT OUR RESOURCEFULNESS.

Violence Against Women and Men in Australia

What the Personal Safety Survey can and can't tell us

Michael Flood

A survey of physical and sexual violence against women and men (Personal Safety Survey Australia 2005) has recently been released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). It has already generated controversy, with some men's rights groups claiming that it shows that women are almost as violent as men in relationships. In this article, Michael Flood responds to these claims and provides a detailed analysis of the findings and their limitations.

The Personal Safety Survey (PSS) reveals that there are still unacceptably high levels of violence experienced by women and men in Australia. In the last 12 months, one in 20 women and one in 10 men were the victims of violence. Women are most at risk in the home, and from men they know. Men are most at risk in public spaces, and from men they do not know.

Drawing on data from the survey, I address four points. First, PSS data suggest that rates of violence against women in Australia have declined. Second, the PSS shows that there are high rates of violence against males, and there is a striking contrast in women's and men's experiences of violence. Third, PSS data may be (mis)used to claim that one-quarter of the victims of domestic violence are men. Finally, I examine the limits of the PSS's definitions and measurements of violence, and the constraints they impose on our claims about the extent of domestic violence against women and women's versus men's subjection to domestic violence.

Declining Rates of Violence against Women?

The release of a national survey measuring the extent of violence against women typically is an occasion for bad news, and the Personal Safety Survey is no exception.

It documents that over 440,000 women experienced physical or sexual violence in the last year. Violence against women in Australia continues to be a significant social problem.

However, there is also good news. The survey data do suggest that rates of violence against women have declined in Australia. Comparing this and the last national survey by the ABS in 1996 (Women's Safety Australia 1996), smaller proportions of women experienced physical or sexual violence in the last 12 months than in the survey nine years ago. In other words, the numbers of women who experienced violence each year has declined over time. Of course, we should keep in mind that we are still talking about hundreds of thousands of women.

Some may respond that this apparent decline is because of a decline in rates of reporting, but the ABS data do not support this. In fact, the PSS finds that women are more likely to report domestic violence to the police than they were ten years ago - and if they are willing to report it to the police, presumably they are also willing to report it anonymously in a survey conducted by the ABS. In 1996, 18.5 per cent of women who experienced physical assault reported the most recent incident to the police, but this rose to 36 per cent in 2005. Focusing on physical assaults by a previous partner, 34.6 per cent of women reported the most recent incident to the police in 1996, but this rose to 61.1 per cent in 2005 (ABS 2006a: 21).

1. 'Violence' here can be physical, involving the occurrence, attempt or threat of physical assault, or sexual, involving the occurrence or attempt (but not threat) of sexual assault (ABS 2006b: 3-4, 57-9).

Personal Safety Survey

There are further signs of positive shifts in women's risks of violence. Women's feelings of safety have increased: women now feel safer traveling on public transport alone at night or walking after dark than they did ten years ago. But it is still the case that most women do not feel safe: 85 per cent do not feel safe using public transport alone after dark.

Why might Australia's rates of violence have declined? Rates of violence against women are shaped by a wide variety of factors, at macro and micro-social levels, and we can only guess as to the influences at work. One factor may be growing community intolerance for violence against women. A national survey of community attitudes in 1995 documented broad improvements in both men's and women's attitudes to and understandings of violence against women since the last national survey in 1987 (ANOP Research Services 1995). Data from the just-released survey of Victorians' attitudes towards violence against women suggest that these generally positive trends have continued, although there is still a significant minority who hold violence-supportive attitudes and some attitudes have even worsened (VicHealth 2006).

Another factor may be the presence and influence of domestic violence services themselves, and their role in allowing women to escape relationships in which otherwise they would continue to be abused. In other words, it may be that growing numbers of women now are able to leave violent relationships or leave them earlier, producing an overall decline in the numbers of women subject to violence each year.

Another factor may be growing gender equality in heterosexual relationships and families. We know that one of the most significant predictors of violence against women is male economic and decision-making dominance in the family (Heise 1998: 270-271, Michalski 2004: 667).

Women's increasing entry into paid work and growing financial independence may have shifted intimate power relations and lessened men's willingness or ability to enforce their dominance through violence and abuse.

On the other hand, there are other social trends which are likely to be associated with increased rates of violence against women. These include shifts in family law which are exposing women and children to ongoing contact with violent ex-husbands and fathers, increases in poverty, unemployment, and economic marginalisation, and increased exposure to sexist and violence-supportive discourses in some internet pornography and elsewhere.

Gender Contrasts

One of the most striking findings in the PSS is the high rate of violence against men. In the last 12 months, twice as many men as women experienced violence. About one in 20 women (5.8 per cent) and one in 10 men (10.8 per cent) experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence. Data on lifetime experiences of violence further demonstrate this pattern. Since the age of 15, 39.9 per cent of women and 50.1 per cent of men have experienced at least one incident of violence (ABS 2006a: 5-7). Thus the victims of violence often are male, as evidence from crime victimisation surveys, police records, and hospital statistics corroborates.

There are both similarities and differences between women's and men's experiences of violence. The most obvious similarity concerns the sex of the typical perpetrator: both women and men are most at risk of violence from (other) men. The most obvious difference concerns the perpetrator's relationship to the victim – in other words, which men assault other men or assault women. Among the large numbers of men physically assaulted each year, in the most recent incident almost 70 per cent were assaulted by a stranger and less than

five per cent were assaulted by a female partner or ex-partner. In contrast, among the female victims of physical assault, 24 per cent were assaulted by a stranger and 30 per cent were assaulted by a male partner or ex-partner (ABS 2006a: 30).² For both male and female victims of physical assault, perpetrators unknown to them were more likely to be male than female, as Table 1 shows below.

While I have focused on physical assaults by partners or ex-partners, a substantial proportion of assaults on women - nearly as many as those by partners or ex-partners - are perpetrated by other male family members and friends. Of all females physically assaulted in the last 12 months, in 27.7 per cent of cases the most recent incident involved a male family member or friend. Among men on the other hand, only 10 per cent involved a male family member or friend.

Another gender contrast concerns the location of or context for violent incidents. Most violence to men is public violence, taking place in streets, outside licensed premises, and in other public spaces. The most common location for violence to women is domestic: their homes, their partners' homes, or other familiar locations.

This is no surprise, given that men are more likely to be assaulted by (male) strangers and women are more likely to be assaulted by (male) partners or ex-partners. Men's vulnerability to male-male violence in public places has been graphically illustrated in recent years by such incidents as the fatal assault on cricketer David Hookes (Flood 2004) and the riots in Cronulla, Sydney.

A further gender contrast concerns the type of violence to which women and men are subjected. Over their lifetimes, men are more likely than women to be subjected to physical assault and less likely than women to be subjected to sexual assault. Since the age of 15, 41 per cent of men experienced physical assault, compared to 29 per cent of women. On the other hand, 16.8 per cent of women experienced sexual assault, compared to 4.8 per cent of men (ABS 2006a: 7). This gender contrast holds for other forms of sexual coercion and violence. Greater proportions of women than men have experienced obscene phone calls, indecent exposure, and unwanted sexual touching (ABS 2006a: 24).

Table 1: Perpetrator of physical assault against male and female victims

Perpetrator of physical assault in previous 12 months	Male stranger	Male current or previous partner	Male family member/ friend	Male other known person	Female stranger	Female current or previous partner	Female family member/ friend	Female other known person
Male Victims	65%	—	10%	19%	*3%	*4%	*7%	*2%
Female Victims	15%	31%	28%	12%	9%	—	9%	10%

Source: ABS (2006a), Table 16, p. 30. Figures have been rounded to whole numbers. They add to more than 100 as some males and females have experienced physical assault by more than one category of perpetrator.

* Estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

2. To calculate these figures, use Table 16 on page 30 of the Personal Safety Survey. Divide the total number of males or females physically assaulted in the previous 12 months by the particular type of perpetrator in question. For example, a total of 485,400 males were physically assaulted in the last 12 months. Of these, 316,700 were assaulted by a male stranger and 21,200 by a female current or previous partner.

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Violence against Women and Men

The data from the PSS show clearly that both men and women are most at risk of physical violence from men. Among male victims of physical assault in the last 12 months, five times as many were assaulted by males as by females, and 20 times as many were assaulted by nonpartner males or females than by female partners and ex-partners (ABS 2006a: 30). Among the males who were physically assaulted in the last 12 months and suffered physical injury (about half of them), 86 per cent were injured by male perpetrators.³ Such facts should put an end to the myth, propounded by some men's and fathers' rights advocates, that men face a risk of violence by women which is equal to the risk of violence women face from men. If such advocates have a genuine concern for male victims of violence, they should be focused on ending violence to men by other men.

The ABS's initial release of the PSS erroneously perpetuated the myth of gender symmetry in domestic violence, through the inclusion of inaccurate text in the report's summary. This was corrected in a re-release several days later. The revised version is available online, although some people may have obtained only the initial, incorrect version.

The summary text in the initial report stated at one point that '38 per cent of women were physically assaulted by their male current or previous partner compared to 27 per cent of men who were physically assaulted by their female current or previous partner'. This sentence reads as if similar proportions of women and men were assaulted by opposite-sex partners. It was intended to be a comment on what proportion

3. Calculated from Table 15, p. 30. This does not provide detail regarding whether perpetrators were strangers, family members, partners, etc.

of perpetration by a perpetrator of the other sex involves perpetration by a current or previous partner. In other words, the percentage figures concerned physical assaults reported by women which were perpetrated by men, and physical assaults reported by men which were perpetrated by women, and commented on what proportion of these were perpetrated by current or previous partners. While the summary text has been corrected, the Table 16 may still be misinterpreted by some readers, if they do not realise that the percentage figures in each column refer to perpetration by a specific sex of perpetrator rather than all perpetrators.

What percentage of all victimisation is represented by perpetration by current or former partners, for women and men? Using the raw numbers in the PSS, we find that 4.4 per cent of all males physically assaulted in the last 12 months were assaulted by a current or previous female partner in the most recent incident, while 30 per cent of females were physically assaulted by a current or previous male partner (ABS 2006a: 30). Thus, while substantial proportions of adult men in Australia are subject to physical assault, only a tiny proportion of this is perpetrated by female partners or ex-partners, and most is perpetrated by other men. For women on the other hand, close to one third of the physical assaults they experience are perpetrated by male partners or ex-partners.

However, there is another aspect to the PSS's data on domestic violence which will be more problematic for feminist work on domestic violence. I have noted that if we compare women's and men's entire experience of violence, then domestic violence is a much more significant problem for women than it is for men. But there is another way to divide up the data. If we focus on the population of 'victims of domestic violence' - any woman or man subjected to violence by a current or former partner - we may arrive at much more problematic conclusions about domestic violence.

To assess people's experience of physical violence, the survey asks if they have ever experienced one or more of a series of physical acts. Have they been pushed, grabbed or shoved; slapped; kicked, bitten or hit with a fist; hit with something else that could hurt them; beaten; choked; stabbed; shot; or subject to any other kind of physical assault (being burnt, hit by a vehicle, etc.) (ABS 2006b: 57)? We could assume that any person who has experienced any physically violent act by a partner or ex-partner has experienced 'domestic violence'. This would exclude assaults by other family members, and sexual assaults by a current or previous partner. And it would define domestic violence only in terms of violent 'acts', rather than the presence of fear or injury or other forms of power and control. But let us leave these for the moment.

From the PSS data, a total of 73,800 females and 21,200 males experienced at least one incident of physical assault by a current or previous other-sex partner in the last 12 months (ABS 2006a: 30). (There are no figures on physical assaults by same-sex partners, suggesting that the numbers are too low to be recorded.) These figures would be weighted more heavily towards women as victims of domestic violence if we included sexual assault. Domestic violence often is accompanied by sexual assault and coercion, and indeed, some definitions of domestic violence include sexual coercion and sexual violence. A total of 29,300 females were sexually assaulted in the last 12 months by a current or previous partner (ABS 2006a:33)⁴.

However, we cannot simply add the numbers of women who were physically assaulted by a current or previous partner and the numbers of women who were sexually assaulted, to arrive at a total number of women assaulted by a partner or ex-partner, because some will be the same women. In other words, we would be doublecounting those women who were physically and sexually assaulted in separate incidents.

PSS data do tell us that females comprise 78 per cent and males comprise 22 per cent of victims of physical assault by a current or former partner in the last year. Perhaps it is not surprising that one can already see press releases on fathers' rights websites asserting that 'one-quarter of domestic violence is against men'. This claim will be used for example to call for allocating one-quarter of domestic violence resources to male victims. The problem is that the definitions and measures of violence used in the PSS are limited in important ways, as the next section discusses.

Defining Domestic Violence

The PSS tells us that 95,000 people experienced at least one incident of physical assault by a current or former partner in the last year. Because of the narrow way in which the PSS measures violence, these figures do not tell us whether this violence was part of a systematic pattern of physical abuse or an isolated incident, whether it was initiated or in self-defence, whether it was instrumental or reactive, whether it was accompanied by (other) strategies of power and control, or whether it involved fear. (In addition, we only know the relationship to the perpetrator for the most recent incident.) In this regard, the PSS is similar to many other quantitative studies using measurement instruments that focus on violent acts. Instruments such as the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) focus on 'counting the blows', although most CTS-based studies provide more information than the PSS on the severity of the physical acts involved.

The narrow assessment of violence used in the PSS has real implications, first, for the ways in which we discuss the extent and impact of 'domestic violence' or 'violence against women' in Australia. Violence prevention advocates typically use the term 'domestic violence' to refer to a systematic pattern of power and control

4. There are no figures on sexual assaults on males by a partner or ex-partner, suggesting that the numbers are too low to be recorded.

5. The PSS's definition of 'physical assault' excludes incidents of sexual assault or threatened sexual assault which also involved physical assault.

Personal Safety Survey

exerted by one person (usually a man) against another (often a woman), involving a variety of physical and non-physical tactics of abuse and coercion, in the context of a current or former intimate relationship. It is simply not the case that every one of the 73,800 women noted above is necessarily living with this. All experienced at least one violent act by a partner in the last year: for some this was part of a regular pattern of violent physical abuse, but for others it was a rare or even reciprocated event. The PSS itself gives us some sense of this. Among women who had experienced violence by a current or previous partner since the age of 15, for a little over half (54.2 per cent) there had been more than one incident (ABS 2006a: 37).

Related to this issue, noting how many women or men were subject to at least one physical assault by a partner does not necessarily tell us much about the impact of violence on the victim. Women may see the emotional impact of physical aggression as more significant than the physical impact, and the emotional impact is influenced as much by judgements of threat and intent to harm and their own self-blame as by the degree of force used or injury caused (Gordon 2000: 759). In addition, women may experience the impact of non-physical tactics of control and abuse – controlling their movements, destroying property, verbal abuse, mind games, and so on – as more damaging than physical aggression. The PSS does allow some slight assessment of the emotional impact of partner violence. For example, among women who had experienced violence by a current partner or a previous partner since the age of 15, close to 20 per cent (19.7 and 18.3 per cent respectively) had experienced anxiety or fear regarding this in the last 12 months (ABS 2006a: 37). This does not tell us about fear or anxiety among women who experienced partner violence in the last year, but it does suggest that large proportions of women who have ever experienced a physically violent act by a partner or its threat are not 'living in fear.'

We can certainly say that every one of the 73,800 women above is a victim of violence, using the definition of violence adopted by the PSS. But to the extent that we use the term 'domestic violence' to refer to women's experience of chronic abuse and subjection by a partner or ex-partner to strategies of power and control, we cannot claim that every woman here is a 'victim of domestic violence'. Domestic violence advocates offer sympathetic images of battered women as victims living in fear of violent, controlling male perpetrators. These images are accurate for much violence between heterosexual partners or ex-partners. But we cannot assume, and should not imply, that they hold for all the women and men identified in the PSS as involved in physical aggression (Gordon 2000: 773).

Gender Symmetry and Acts-based Approaches

For these same reasons, there are also real limits on the extent to which we can use PSS data to adjudicate the debate regarding women's and men's experiences of domestic violence. As Dobash and Dobash (2004: 331-2) note for acts-based approaches such as that used in the PSS, acts 'are stripped of theoretical and social meanings and, as such, provide an inadequate basis for describing or explaining the violent acts of men and women'. In particular, these approaches are unable to distinguish between distinct patterns of violence in heterosexual couples. Some heterosexual relationships suffer from occasional outbursts of violence by either husbands or wives during conflicts, what Johnson (2000) calls 'situational couple violence'. Here, the violence is relatively minor, both partners practise it, it is expressive in meaning, it tends not to escalate over time, and injuries are rare. In situations of 'intimate terrorism' 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. Acts-based 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 power and authority. Because the PSS tells us so little of the extent, dynamics, impact, or context of violence, it is inadequate as a single source of information, whether on female or male victims of domestic violence.

Acts-based approaches, because of the narrow ways in which they define and measure violence, tend to produce claims of gender 'symmetry' and 'equivalence' (Dobash and Dobash 2004: 332). In other words, they predetermine the questions they set out to assess. However, data from other approaches shows clear asymmetries in men's and women's uses of and subjection to intimate partner violence. When it comes to violence by partners or ex-partners, women are far more likely than men to be subjected to frequent, prolonged, and extreme violence, to sustain injuries, to be subjected to a range of controlling strategies, to fear for their lives, to be sexually assaulted, to experience post-separation violence, and to use violence only in self-defence (Flood 2003, Belknap and Melton 2005, Gordon 2000). Dobash and Dobash (2004) provide a clear example of apparent symmetries and actual asymmetries in domestic violence. Using an acts-based approach found that both men and women were physically aggressive to their partners. But interviews with the same men and women documented that men's violence differed systematically from women's in terms of its nature, frequency, intention, intensity, physical injury, and emotional impact.

The Personal Safety Survey does allow comparisons between overall rates of violence against women in Australia in 1996 and 2005. Acts-based instruments like the PSS do have value as surveillance instruments in the general population (Gordon 2000: 776). But they are inadequate for capturing the substance, impact, or dynamics of intimate partner violence, and particularly the more serious forms of this violence. Heterosexual partner violence is not a single, homogenous phenomenon (Johnson 2006: 1004). The PSS does allow some insight into the contrasts between men's and women's patterns of victimisation, but for more substantive comparisons we must turn to other measurement tools and data sources (Schwartz 2000: 822). Finally, in making public claims about the extent of violence against women or men, we must be careful and clear about exactly what we are claiming they have been subject to.

Personal Safety Survey

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Two Steps Forward, One Step Back VicHealth Community Attitudes Survey Released

This survey was based on a random telephone sample of 2,800 Victorians aged 18 years and over. The findings from the survey can be compared to the 1995 national survey by the (then) Federal Office of the Status of Women.

Positive findings:

Most Victorian women and men did not hold 'violence-supportive' attitudes. Since 1995, attitudes had improved on most measures.

Challenges:

A significant minority held attitudes which may serve to either condone or trivialise violence against women or undermine efforts to address it. Findings include:

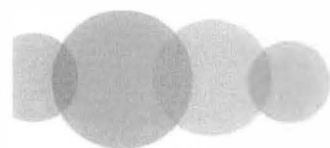
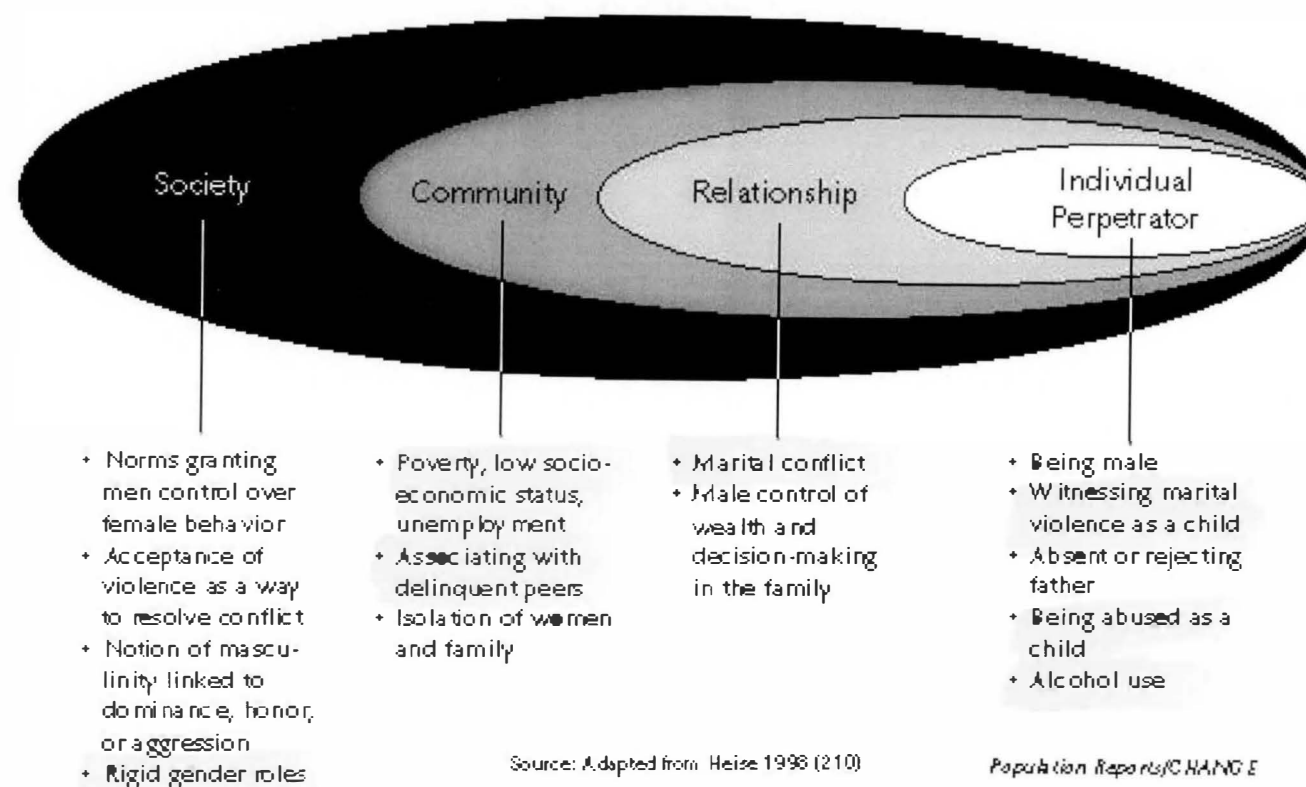
- 20 per cent believed that domestic violence is perpetrated equally by both men and women (compared with only 9 per cent who believed this in 1995).
- Nearly one in four believed that domestic violence can be excused if the perpetrator genuinely regrets it or if the violence results from a loss of control.
- There was a lack of understanding of other forms of emotional abuse.
- Those most likely to hold attitudes that may serve to support violence were men and people who were born overseas.

The survey can be downloaded from VicHealth's website www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

A comprehensive review of the findings will be provided in the Autumn 2007 edition of DVIRC Quarterly

6:

An Ecological Model



Power and Control	Relationship Equity
<p><u>Peer Pressure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threatening to expose someone's weakness or spread rumours. • Telling malicious lies about an individual to peer group. 	<p><u>Respect</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening non-judgementally. • Being emotionally affirming and understanding. • Valuing opinions.
<p><u>Isolation/Exclusion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controlling what another does, who he/she sees and talks to, what he/she reads, where he/she goes. • Limiting outside involvement. • Using jealousy to justify actions. 	<p><u>Independence and Autonomy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising independence. • Awareness of dependency needs. • Accepting individual 'separateness' as non-married persons. • Fostering individual identity.
<p><u>Sexual Coercion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manipulating or making threats to get sex. • Getting her pregnant. • Threatening to take the children away. • Getting someone drugged or drunk to get sex. 	<p><u>Trust and Support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting each other's goals. • Respecting each other's rights to individual feelings, friends, activities, opinions. • Overcoming issues of envy and resentment.
<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt another. • Threatening to leave, to commit suicide, to report him/her to police. • Pressuring so other will drop charges. • Making threats to coerce other to do illegal things. 	<p><u>Non-threatening behaviour</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking and acting to make your partner feel safe to express himself/herself. • Commitment not to use threats or manipulative actions.
<p><u>Minimise / Deny / Blame</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making light of the abuse and not taking concerns about it seriously. • Saying the abuse didn't happen. • Shifting responsibility for abusive behaviour, saying he/she caused it. 	<p><u>Sharing responsibility</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making decisions together. • Sharing parenting responsibilities if there are children.
<p><u>Intimidation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engendering fear by using looks and gestures. • Smashing things and destroying property. • Using manipulative tactics to influence the other's behaviour. • Abusing pets. Displaying weapons. 	<p><u>Communication</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating openly and truthfully. • Being honest to oneself and about one's feelings.
<p><u>Using social status</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treating her like a servant. • Making all the decisions. • Acting like the 'master of the castle.' • Being the one to define men's and women's roles. 	<p><u>Negotiation and fairness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking mutually satisfying resolutions to conflict. • Being willing to compromise.
<p><u>Anger / Emotional abuse</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting him/her down. • Criticising/comparing leading to lowered self-esteem. • Name calling. • Inconsistent, unpredictable behaviour so that others think he/she is crazy. Playing mind games. • Humiliating the other. • Blaming other for problems so he/she feels guilty. 	<p><u>Honesty and accountability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking and acting to make your partner feel safe to express himself/herself. • Commitment not to use threats or manipulative actions. • Accepting of situation.

Understanding Abuse Sibling Abuse

"My brother would begin by hitting me, biting me, or placing a pillow over my face. He would demand that I say uncle or beg him to stop. When I did, he only hurt me more. If I didn't do what he said, he'd hurt me more. I was in a no-win situation. I felt helpless because I was helpless."

"I believed everything my sister told me: I was dumb, homely, stupid, fat. No one would ever love me."

"It usually started with him [my brother] yelling at me. Then he would hurt me somehow—cut me, hit me, etc. Then he would overpower me to rape me. After this, he always told me this was my fault."

These words, written by adults reflecting back on their childhoods, document a little-recognized problem called sibling abuse.

Don't overlook cruel behavior

Sexual abuse of children, even between siblings, is now recognized as unacceptable. However, we often consider emotional and physical abuse between siblings a normal experience of growing up. "That's just the way kids are," "Kids will be kids," and "They'll grow out of it" are common parental responses to what may be vicious and cruel behavior between children in the same family.

With awareness and understanding, parents can intervene in abusive behaviors between their children. They can create an atmosphere in which siblings nurture and value each other.

Parents often ignore, deny, or overlook cruel behavior between their children. Thousands of adult survivors of sibling abuse tell of the far-reaching negative effects that such unchecked behavior has had on them as children and adults.

Sibling violence appears to occur more frequently than violence between parents and children or spouse abuse. As many as 53 of every 100 children abuse a brother or a sister. Outside the home, much of this mistreatment would be considered assault. Between siblings, it usually is ignored.

Pm 1478-8 | Reprinted | October 1994

Children often abuse a brother or sister, usually younger than themselves, to gain power and control. Why? Perhaps the abusive child feels powerless, neglected, or insecure. He or she may feel strong only in relation to a sibling being powerless. The feeling of power children experience when they mistreat a brother or sister often reinforces their decision to repeat the abuse.

Society pays a high price when sibling abuse goes uncorrected. Many adult survivors have low self-esteem and difficulty in relationships. They continue to blame themselves for being victimized. They stay angry toward the perpetrator. Too often the roots of sexual dysfunction, eating disorders, alcoholism, and drug problems lie in sibling abuse.

Characteristics of sibling abuse

Physical

Physical abuse may involve hitting, biting, slapping, shoving, and punching; tickling to excess; and injurious or life-threatening behavior such as choking or being shot with a BB gun.

Emotional

This includes teasing, name calling, belittling, ridiculing, intimidating, annoying, and provoking. Children also destroy personal possessions or torture and kill pets to get an emotional response from their victim. (Parents, although they dislike emotional abuse, usually excuse it as sibling rivalry. They mistakenly accept this mistreatment as normal childhood behavior.)

Sexual

Sexual abuse includes unwanted touching, indecent exposure, attempted penetration, intercourse, rape, or sodomy between siblings. Physical, emotional, and sexual abuse may occur in any combination. Emotional abuse is present in all forms of sibling abuse, and its effect can be very damaging.

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How to identify sibling abuse

Victims often respond to abuse from a brother or sister by:

- Protecting themselves
- Screaming and crying
- Separating themselves from the abuser
- Abusing a younger sibling in turn
- Telling their parents
- Internalizing the abusive message
- Fighting back
- Submitting

How should parents respond?

Children feel betrayed by the common responses given by parents. A parent may minimize or ignore the seriousness of the problem that the victim brings to his or her attention. Sometimes parents blame and even punish the child who is the victim. An effective parental response involves the following steps.

Bring all children involved into a problem-solving process.

- Get enough fact and feeling information to accurately assess the problem.
- Restate the problem to make sure you understand it clearly.
- Help children to arrive at a child-set goal. (Goals set by parents often become rules that children will not follow.)
- Figure out alternative solutions to the problem.
- Work together to set up a contract which states the rights and responsibilities of each child. Specify appropriate ways of acting and consequences should abusive behavior occur in the future.

Distinguishing sibling abuse from normal behavior

1. Identify the behavior. Isolate it from the emotions associated with it and evaluate it.
2. Is the behavior age-appropriate? Remember that generally you should confront fighting and jealousy even if you tend to think it is "normal."
3. How often does it happen and how long does it go on? Acceptable behavior that is long and drawn out may become abusive over time.
4. Is there a victim in the situation? A victim may not want to participate, but may be unable to stop the activity.
5. What is the purpose of the behavior? If it tears down another person, it is abusive.

Prevention

Sibling abuse can happen in any family. Parents often can trace their own behavioral, emotional or sexual problems to sibling abuse they experienced as children.

Listen to and believe your children. They may be trying to tell you that they are being mistreated. Provide good supervision for children when you are not there. Teach them the difference between good and bad touches, and teach them to say no to bad ones. Encourage an open climate for airing and discussing problems.

If you are having trouble with sibling abuse in your family, consider professional help. Violenceproof your home by monitoring what your children watch on TV. Reward sensitive, positive behavior among brothers and sisters. When you praise positive interactions, the potential for sibling abuse is reduced. Most importantly, make it a point to be a model of honest and esteembuilding behavior.

Reference and suggested Reading

Wiehe, V. (1991). *Perilous Rivalry: When Siblings Become Abusive*. Lexington MA: Lexington Books.

Faber, A.; E. Mazlish. *Siblings Without Rivalry*. (1988). Avon Books.

Adapted for use in Iowa by Lesia Oesterreich, Extension Human Development and Family Studies Specialist, and Karen Shirer, Extension Assistant Director to Families, from materials prepared for the University of Kentucky Extension Service by Vernon Wiehe, Professor, UK College of Social Work; Sheila Brown, UK Graduate Student; and Sam Quick, Human Development and Family Relations Specialist. (1991, FSES-I1)

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Key Findings

Across the 11 years of police data reported through this database there has been an 82 per cent increase in the number of family violence incidents reported to Victoria Police, from 19,597 incident reports in 1999–2000 to 35,720 incident reports in 2009–10.

While we can not effectively measure the prevalence of family violence in the community, this dramatic increase is unlikely to represent an increase in family violence incidents occurring in the community, rather an increase in the number of reports made to police and police increasingly taking a proactive approach to family violence as outlined elsewhere in this report (Victoria Police Crime Statistics 2010–11).

intervention orders and reporting incidents

- There are early indications that the implementation of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* including police-issued Family Violence Safety Notices, has had a positive impact on reporting family violence. From 2008–09 to 2010–11 there was a 21 per cent increase in family violence incident reports to police and a 13 per cent increase in affected family members (AFMs) subject to finalised family violence intervention order applications.
- Consistently across the years, two out of five affected family members who report to police indicate that the family violence had been occurring for more than two years.
- Since 2007–08 police have increasingly laid criminal charges against the perpetrator, increasing from one in six incidents to one in three.
- According to the police data for 2008–09 and 2009–10, fewer than one in five adult females and approximately one in ten adult males had an active intervention order at the time of police attendance for family violence.
- In 2009–10 more than half of adults experiencing violence had never reported previous violence to police.
- Since 2006–07 around one quarter of incidents had a history of between one and three previous reports of family violence to police (similar for female and male victims).
- Since 2006–07, police have increasingly become the primary applicants for intervention orders on behalf of the victim. A further reporting boost occurred in 2009–10, likely due to the introduction of Family Violence Safety Notices (FVSNs).
- Across the four years in which the Family Violence Court Division has been operating, one in ten applicants went through these courts.
- Across the VLA family violence matters where information is recorded, just over one quarter (27%) of matters resulted in intervention orders.

- In 2010–11, a total of 32 applications for variation of tenancy due to family violence were heard at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). All but one involved a female applicant or protected person and male respondent or other party.
- From 2008–09 to 2009–10, FVSN-initiated intervention orders had the lowest rate of being withdrawn compared with other methods of initiation, and two thirds of FVSN-initiated intervention orders were granted.

gender of victim and perpetrator

- Police and court data across all years shows perpetrators of violence against adult female victims were overwhelmingly male (91–95%), while adult male victims were subject to violence from both male and females (40 and 60 per cent respectively).
- In 2009–10, adult victims included 25,296 females reporting family violence incidents to police compared with 6,992 males, and 16,906 females with finalised intervention orders for family violence compared with 5,097 males.
- Consistently, across the 11 years, around 80 per cent of adult respondents to finalised intervention order applications were male, as were the other party (perpetrator) in family violence incidents reported to police.

r relationship between victims and perpetrators

- Approximately 80 per cent of adult female victims (court and police data) experienced the violence from an intimate partner (including *current* and *former domestic partner* as well as *intimate personal relationship*).
- Adult male victims were more likely to experience violence from *other non-intimate* family members than were adult female victims. This has remained relatively stable over the 11 years for both police and court data.
- From 2005–06 onwards, the proportion of children as victims listed on finalised intervention orders has increased continually and substantially. Children are now the primary affected family member for newly initiated intervention orders (40%) followed by all forms of *intimate partners* (38%).

same sex

- Among the same-sex relationship data for police and courts, a larger proportion of males than females reported family violence from same-sex partners as compared with the overall data reported on in this report. Same-sex partner family violence accounts for four per cent of all male victims and less than one per cent of all female victims.
- In the latest two years of data (2008–09 and 2009–10), a similar number of victims reporting family violence from a same-sex partner to police also applied for an intervention order.

Age of victim and respondents

- Since 2003–04 fewer incidents of family violence have been reported among younger women (aged 25–34 years). Across all data sets, one third of adult female victims were aged 35–44 years, followed closely by women aged 25–34 years.
- The average age of adult male victims is slightly older than adult female victims, with police and court data indicating the largest male victim groups were aged 35–44 years and 45–64 years (relatively consistent over the 11 years of reporting).

Children

- The number of children recorded as affected family members (AFMs) in police family violence incidents reports has tripled since this report commenced. In 1999–2000 there were 915 children recorded as AFMs compared with 2,755 in 2009–10. In addition, children recorded as present at family violence incidents attended by police has also increased, from 18,541 *children present* in 1999–2000 to 24,180 *children present* in 2009–10. This result may be attributed to increased awareness of the impact of family violence on children and acknowledgment of children as victims in their own right.
- The number of children identified in the court data as affected family members (aged 17 years and under) has risen 341 per cent over the 11-year period, from 4,530 children in 1999–2000 to 19,974 children in 2009–10.
- Since 2004, police members are increasingly reporting children they believe are at risk to child protection. Approximately two thirds of children and adolescents aged under 15 years and one third of adolescents aged 15–17 years recorded as primary victims were formally reported to child protection (consistent from 2006–07 to 2009–10).
- An average of 75 children and adolescents per year present to emergency departments with injuries identified as human intended injuries, comprising approximately 12 per cent of all emergency department *human intent injuries*.
- One quarter of Victims Assistance and Counselling Program (VACP) family violence clients were adolescents or children aged 17 years or younger in 2009–10, with the majority aged less than 15 years.
- One in five (20%) of Victorian Legal Aid (VLA) family violence casework clients were children or adolescents under 18 years (12% aged 15 years or less).
- More than half of the women seeking assistance for family violence through a specialist family violence court in 2010–11 had children in their care, and one fifth included a child on their intervention order application.³
- In 2008–09 and 2009–10 there was a large increase in the number of family violence-related SAAP client support periods recorded with accompanying children (approximately 9,000 clients with accompanying children), the largest recorded over the 11 years.

Adolescents as perpetrators of violence against their parents or step-parents

- The rate of incidents where the parent or step-parents are the victim of violence from their children or step children has remained relatively static across all 11 years reported on (around 14%). A majority of these children were adolescents with around one quarter being adult children perpetrating violence toward their parents.
- Similar to adult perpetrators, when a perpetrator is an adolescent against a parent or step-parent, males are more frequently perpetrators of violence than females and victims are more likely to be mothers or step-mothers than fathers or step-fathers (similar within both police and court data).
- Female adolescent perpetrators are more likely to be violent to their mothers than their fathers (police and court data).

type of violence/abuse

- Less than five per cent of incidents reported to police were recorded as breaches of intervention orders.
- Across the six years of VEMD hospital data, approximately 65 per cent of adult females experienced an injury where they were struck by another person, compared with 26 per cent of adult males.
- Adult females within the VEMD hospital data were more than twice as likely to have multiple injuries as were adult male patients.
- In the Police data, 2006–07 to 2009–10, more than half of adult female victims reported being *fearful* of the perpetrator while conversely, more than three quarters of male victims indicated they were *not fearful at all* of the perpetrator.
- Male victims of family violence who were *fearful* of their perpetrator were most often reporting violence from either their *child* or *another relative* (excluding partners).

risk indicators and risk management

- One quarter to one third of family violence incidents reported to police contained at least one *high risk* indicator.
- The most commonly identified high risk indicator recorded by police was *separation* (one quarter of incidents in each year). Separation was identified as a risk for twice as many female victims as males.
- *Controlling behaviour* (by the perpetrator/other party) was one of the most frequently identified risk indicators recorded by police. Controlling behaviour was identified as a risk for twice as many female victims as males.

regional distribution

- In the most recent two years of data, family violence incident reports continue to increase among women residing within all regions of Victoria.

Key Findings continued

- While the greatest number of adult females seeking assistance from police and courts were from metropolitan regions, when analysed as a percentage of the population, victims living in non-metropolitan regions sought assistance more often as a proportion of the population.

disability

- The demographics of SAAP family violence clients with a disability have remained largely stable over the 11 years; they are slightly older and less likely to have children accompanying them into services.
- Identification of victims with a disability has increased among police data. In 2006–07 there were 252 incidents identifying disability issues (less than 1% of incidents), rising to 606 reports in 2009–10 (nearly 2% of incidents).
- In 2009–10, no male victims of family violence were recorded in the police data as having a disability.
- An increased emphasis by Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) on completing information about disability among clients saw a dramatic rise in disclosure in the most recent data. Leading up to 2009–10 reporting disability for family violence clients was steady at between two and three per cent of clients and in 2010–11 the rate of identification increased to ten per cent.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)

- In the police data, it is notable that interpreters are more often requested among perpetrators as compared with victims.
- The proportion of applicants and respondents receiving a translation/interpreter service at court for family violence matters is small (less than 5%).
- One in five females receiving support periods through a SAAP service were born in predominantly non-English speaking countries (EP 2-4) compared with around one in ten males.
- Nearly one third of adult VACP clients and one fifth of emergency department patients presenting with human intent injury were born outside Australia.
- All three VLA data files indicate that one in ten family violence clients speak a language other than English (2010–11).

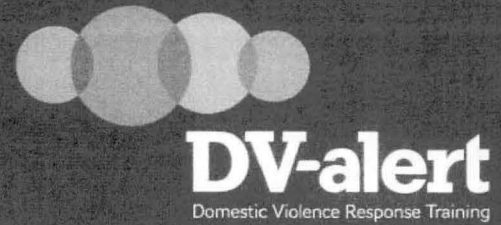
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

- The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients presenting for *human intent injuries* (VEMD data) was quite small and encompassed three per cent of the overall human intent injuries patients. The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients were female.
- The proportion disclosing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background is steady among women seeking SAAP services for family violence and represents between five and seven per cent of the support periods. The number of women increased from 568 women in 2000–01 to 1,178 women in 2009–10.

older persons

- Police data indicates that older persons (65 years plus) are more likely to report abuse from their children or another family member than they are from their partner.
- Support for older people in SAAP services accounts for one to two per cent of female family violence support periods.
- A larger proportion of older women receiving SAAP support speak a language other than English as compared with younger women.

recognise
respond
refer



Adolescent Violence: How can the police help?

All police will respond differently as situations vary. This is the South Australian Police response. Check with your local police station to determine their response and how they can assist families.

Is child violence toward parents a crime?

Adolescent violence toward parents, such as verbal or physical behaviour which aims to control, manipulate, intimidate, hurt and/or threaten, is unacceptable in our community and recognised by the police as a crime. This behaviour can be reported to the police and will be investigated as would any other criminal offence.

But I can't report my child to the police...

Calling the police to come and charge your child is extremely difficult. However, it is important to keep yourself and your family safe. You may feel that you are betraying your child, that you will damage your relationship with them or that this will put their future at risk. You may also be experiencing feelings of guilt, anger, sadness and fear. Calling the police may help to calm the situation, support you to regain control, and begin to rebuild a respectful relationship with your child.

If I call the police what will happen?

The police may help to calm an explosive situation or protect other family members if needed. The police will provide advice and ask what action you want to take, if any.

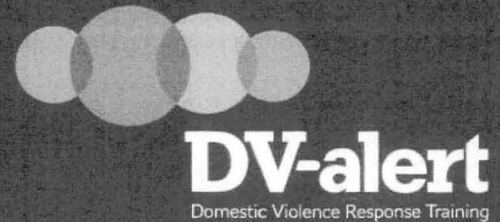
What action can the police take?

If you wish to take further action then the young person will be further interviewed by the police at the nearest police station. The police can then deal with the young person by either an:

- Informal caution
- Formal caution
- Family conference
- Youth Court

If the offence is serious and the young person is arrested and taken into custody, they can apply for bail. If bail is granted they will be released, but it is likely that an adult person will be required to act as surety. If it is not safe for the parents/family for the young person to return home, alternative options will be explored by police.

recognise
respond
refer



At what age can a young person be charged?

A young person aged between 10 and 18 years of age is regarded to be capable of committing a crime and is therefore responsible for his/her actions. Children of this age are dealt with through the Juvenile Justice Process. Young people over 18 years are considered adults and would be dealt with through the Magistrates Court. Children under 10 years of age cannot be charged, but police can still be called for assistance, advice, and to defuse the situation.

If the matter goes to court do I have to give evidence?

If you are called to give evidence against a **close relative**, you can apply to the court to be exempt from the obligation to give evidence. You would need to show that by giving evidence there is a substantial risk of causing serious harm to the relationship between you and your relative or it would cause serious harm to your health. The court will decide in these circumstances whether you will or will not give evidence.

If I don't want to charge my child, what can the police do?

The police keep the matter on file and it can be followed up at a later date – you will be asked to sign a form requesting no further action. Police might be able to give you information about support/counselling services available to you.

What about Restraint Orders?

You can apply for a restraint order at your nearest police station. A restraint order directs the young person not to do various things, such as not coming to your home or workplace, not following or watching you. They can be made specifically for you and your situation. For example, you may wish to maintain contact however not allow the young person to come to your home or work address.

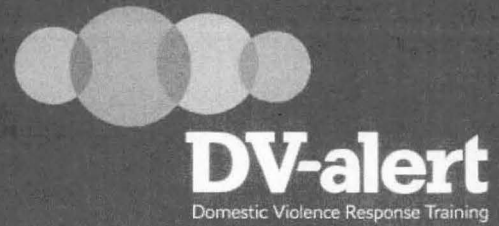
Can you take out a restraint order while your child is still living with you?

You can apply for a condition that states the other person must not assault, intimidate, threaten you and interfere with your peace and comfort. If the young person breaches the restraint order, this is an offence, and should be reported to the police.

But my child has a disability.

For charges to be laid the court must be satisfied that the child has the ability to form the intent to commit the offence. Even if laying charges is not appropriate, the police can still be useful in diffusing a crisis situation. Having a disability does not make it 'ok' for children to be abusive.

recognise
respond
refer



Will charging my child or taking out a restraining order against my child impact on his/her chances of future employment?

If over 18 years. If he/she is charged or breaches a restraining order and is convicted in court, then this would be recorded as part of a criminal history. This information would be released to an employer if a criminal history check is requested.

If under 18 years. If he/she is charged or breaches a restraining order and it is found proved or convicted in court, then this would be recorded as part of a criminal history. This information would be released to an employer if a criminal history check is requested.

Regardless of the future impact on your child, it is important to take action to ensure the safety of yourself and other family members – you all have a right to feel safe.