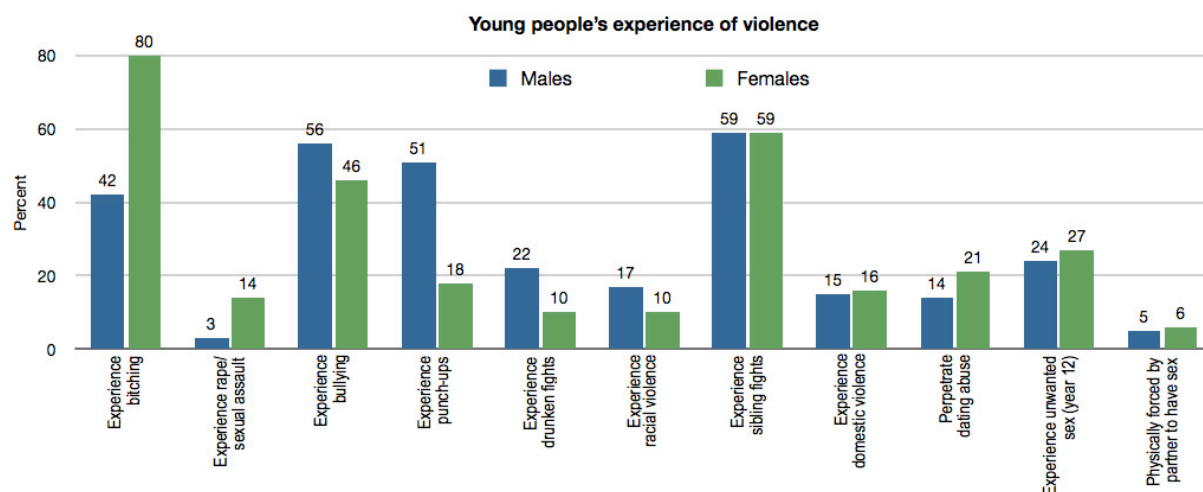


Young People and Domestic Violence

The most recent Australian population survey on young people and domestic violence is “Young people and domestic violence – national research on young people’s attitudes to and experiences of domestic violence”. Published in 2001 by the National Crime Prevention division of the Commonwealth Attorney General’s Department and the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, the national research involved a quantitative survey of 5000 young Australians aged between 12 and 20, and in-depth discussions with special groups, namely homeless youth, victims of domestic violence, and youth from different ethnic backgrounds. This is the largest sample of young people ever surveyed about their experience of and attitudes towards domestic violence in Australia or, most likely, the world.

Exposure to overall violence

Both boys and girls aged 12 to 20 experienced high levels of violence in the home, at school, and in dating relationships. Young males and females were equally likely to have experienced domestic violence and physical fights between brothers and sisters. Young males were more likely than young females to have experienced bullying, punch-ups between people at school/college, drunken fights in pubs/clubs and racial violence; while young females were more likely than young males to have experienced rape/sexual assault and ‘bitching.’



Exposure to parental domestic violence

The survey looked at young people’s experience of parental domestic violence. The principal aim was to provide a baseline measure of the extent to which young people in Australia are directly exposed to domestic violence between carers. Some of the results of the survey are presented in the following tables and graphs.

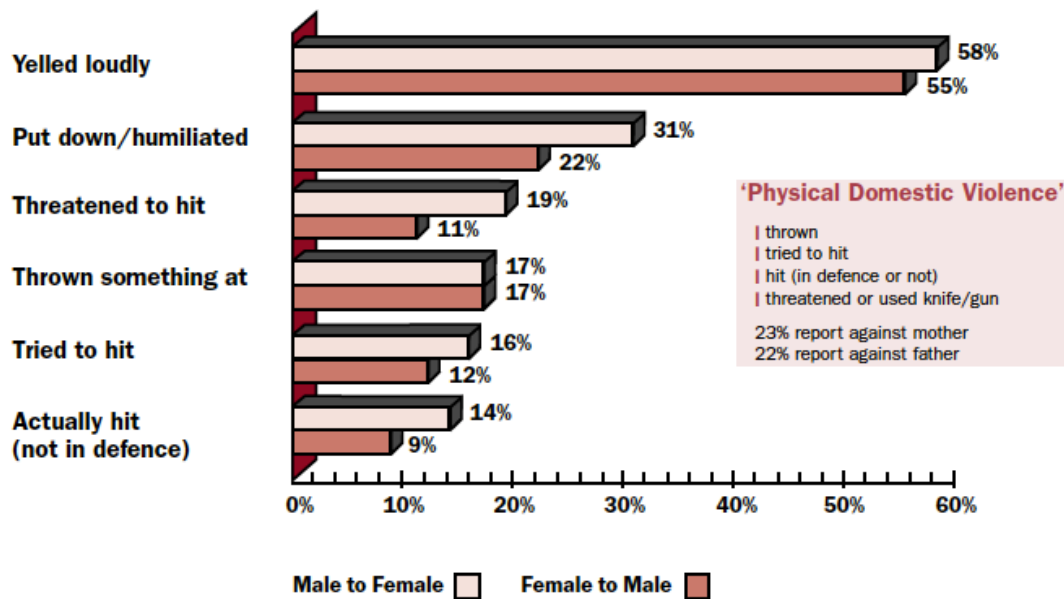
Table 4.22: Young people's awareness of parental violence — male to female parent

Perpetrated against mother/stepmother by male partner				
	NO	NOT SURE	ONCE/TWICE	MORE OFTEN
	%	%	%	%
Yelled loudly at her	24	14	30	28
Put her down/humiliated her	46	19	14	16
Not let her see her family or friends	74	11	5	6
Not let her have any money for her own use	75	10	5	6
Thrown something at her	69	11	8	9
Threatened to hit her	66	11	9	10
Tried to hit her	70	10	7	9
Hit her because she was hitting him	77	10	4	4
Actually hit her (even though she didn't hit him)	74	8	5	9
Threatened her with a knife or gun	84	5	2	4
Used a knife or fired a gun	87	5	1	2

Table 4.23: Young people's awareness of parental violence — female to male parent

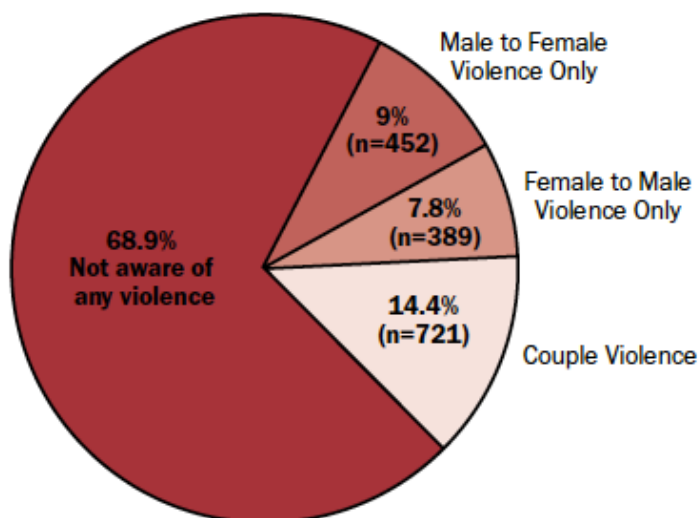
Perpetrated against father/stepfather by female partner				
	NO	NOT SURE	ONCE/TWICE	MORE OFTEN
	%	%	%	%
Yelled loudly at him	28	12	30	25
Put him down/humiliated him	54	19	12	10
Not let him see his family or friends	81	8	3	3
Not let him have any money for his own use	83	7	2	2
Thrown something at him	69	9	11	6
Threatened to hit him	76	9	6	5
Tried to hit him	74	9	7	5
Hit him because he was hitting her	79	8	4	4
Actually hit him (even though he didn't hit her)	79	7	5	4
Threatened him with a knife or gun	86	5	2	2
Used a knife or fired a gun	88	4	1	2

Figure 4.11: Young people's awareness of parental violence - percentage of total sample aware of past occurrences



58% of young people aged 12 to 20 years have witnessed a male parent “yelling loudly at” a female parent and 55% have witnessed a female parent “yelling loudly at” a male parent. 23% of young people aged 12 to 20 years have witnessed physical domestic violence by a male parent against a female parent and 22% have witnessed physical domestic violence by a female parent against a male parent.

Figure 4.12: Young people's experiences of physical domestic violence



While the rates of female-to-male violence witnessed by young people are slightly less than the rates of male-to-female violence, they are quite significant indeed. At the serious end of the spectrum there is some gender difference (9% vs 4% for unilateral hitting more often than once/twice; 4% vs 2% for threatening with a knife or gun more than once/twice), but there is no overwhelming prevalence of male to female violence.

However, *much more common and damaging* than either male-to-female or female-to-male unilateral violence is mutual (or reciprocal) couple violence. When looking at the effects of young people witnessing domestic violence, the survey was unequivocal: “the most severe disruption on all available indicators occurred in households where couple violence was reported” (page 131).

- Considering physical violence only, nearly a third (31.2%) of young people had witnessed one of the following: a male carer being violent towards his female partner; a female carer being violent to her male partner; or both carers being violent.
- 14.4% of young people reported that this violence was perpetrated *both* by the male against the female *and* the female against the male. 9.0% reported that violence was perpetrated against their mother by her male partner but that she was not violent towards him. 7.8% reported that violence was perpetrated against their father by his female partner but that he was not violent towards her.
- Most reported parental violence seemed to be minor, in that no effects were reported by the majority of child witnesses. Where outcomes were reported, the most likely outcome was the separation of the parents. *The most severe disruptions on all indicators* occurred in those households where *both* male to female *and* female to male violence was reported (i.e. two-way couple violence).
- Where young people had, or were experiencing parental domestic violence, a third of them had not told anyone about it. This rate was higher amongst boys than girls and higher amongst the 12 and 13 year olds than the mid or older teens.
- Witnessing parental domestic violence had a significant effect on young people’s attitudes and experiences. Witnessing was also the strongest predictor of subsequent perpetration by young people. The best predictor of *perpetration* was witnessing certain types of *female to male* violence, whilst the best predictor of *victimisation* in personal relationships was having witnessed *male to female* violence.

The last dot point above is crucial: even if male to female violence causes more injuries on average than does female to male violence, if we want to break the cycle of violence we must work to prevent female to male family and domestic violence in order that young people don’t grow up to perpetrate violence themselves in their adult relationships.

Experience of domestic violence themselves

When it comes to the young people themselves and their direct experience of domestic violence from their boyfriends or girlfriends, the National Crime Prevention study found the following:

Table 4.33: Young people’s experience of violence

	TOTAL SAMPLE	MALES	FEMALES
	%	%	%
Domestic violence			
I’ve experienced this	15	15	16
Someone I know has experienced this	32	29	36*
No, not experienced	51	53*	49

An almost identical proportion of young females (16%) and young males (15%) answered “yes” to the statement “I’ve experienced domestic violence”.

Incidence of conflict/violence in young people's relationships

	As stated by female (Victimisation)				As stated by male (Victimisation)			
	NO	YES	ONCE/ TWICE	MORE OFTEN	NO	YES	ONCE/ TWICE	MORE OFTEN
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yelled loudly at you	50	49	29	12	53	42	29	12
Put you down/ humiliated you	60	39	26	13	65	29	20	9
Threatened to hit you or throw something at you	80	19	10	8	78	16	10	5
Threw/smashed/hit/ kicked something	75	23	13	10	80	14	9	5
Threw something at you	86	12	7	5	81	13	8	4
Pushed, grabbed or shoved you	72	26	17	9	75	19	14	5
Slapped you	86	12	6	5	73	21	16	5
Kicked, bit or hit you	87	11	6	5	81	13	7	5
Hit or tried to hit you with something	89	10	6	4	83	10	6	4
Beat you up	93	5	2	3	90	4	2	2
Threatened you with a knife or gun	95	3	2	1	90	4	1	3
Used a knife or fired a gun	96	2	1	1	91	3	1	2
Tried to control you physically eg by holding etc	73	25	17	8	83	11	8	3
Tried to force you to have sex	85	14	10	4	86	7	4	4
Physically forced you to have sex	92	6	3	3	89	5	2	3

You will note that, while young males and females say they have experienced domestic violence at about equal rates overall, the types of violence experienced by young people differ, with some being experienced more by young males, and others being experienced more by young females, as noted by the study:

	MALE TO FEMALE	FEMALE TO MALE
Slapped you	12%	21%
Kicked, bit or hit you	11%	13%
Put you down/humiliated you	39%	29%
Tried to control you physically, eg by holding	25%	11%
Threw/smashed/hit/kicked something	23%	14%

Many forms of conflict/violence - including many at the severe end of the spectrum - were experienced at similar rates by males and females (e.g. 'threw something at you', 'kicked, bit or hit you', 'hit, or tried to hit you with something', 'beat you up', 'threatened you with a knife or gun', 'used a knife or fired a gun', and 'physically forced you to have sex').

Looking at the attitudes of young people to domestic violence, the National Crime Prevention study found that while some young people held unacceptable attitudes to violence against women, many more held unacceptable attitudes to violence against men:

- young people are more likely to say a woman is right to, or has good reason to, respond to a situation by hitting (68%), than a man in the same situation (49%) (page 79).
- while males hitting females was seen, by virtually all young people surveyed, to be unacceptable, it appeared to be quite acceptable for a girl to hit a boy (page 29). 25 per cent of young people agreed with the statement "When girl hits a guy, it's really not a big deal".
- Female to male violence was not only viewed light-heartedly, it was also seen as (virtually) acceptable. On reflection, both genders agreed that this constituted a double standard, and that it was not acceptable — really. But there was no censure, and a good deal of hilarity generated by discussion of the topic in the female groups. In the male groups, acceptability was implied through their beliefs that there was no need to retaliate to female violence in any way (page 36).
- "there was no spontaneous recognition that verbal abuse or a female hitting her boyfriend could also constitute dating violence... However... these were among the prevalent forms of 'violence' occurring". "Acts by females of slapping, pushing or kicking their boyfriends were widespread. However, this was not described or seen as 'violence' by the majority of male or female participants."
- With dating violence, 'punching' or 'slapping' your boyfriend to 'get him in order' was not seen as constituting violence. The key factor behind the use of 'violence' by females towards males was, primarily, one of an expression of frustration or anger: hence, reacting to being 'out of control' and needing to 'get his attention', 'to make him listen' or 'to stop him behaving badly'. Neither males nor females indicated that males were likely to retaliate, suggesting that both groups viewed this kind of 'violence' as a bit of a joke. It was not something to be taken seriously.
- Guys deserve it'. Both sexes supported this point of view, which was based on the idea that 'guys stuff up', 'guys can be majorly stupid', 'guys don't listen so you have to get their attention'. Males appeared to agree with the perceived wisdom of society (and certainly of females) that they are 'not as good at relationships' as the females.

Table 4.5: Young people's attitudes regarding use of dating violence

	TOTAL SAMPLE
	5014
	%
If a guy hits a girl he loves because he is jealous, it shows how much he feels for her	
Definitely agree	3
Generally agree	8
Generally disagree	23
Definitely disagree	53
Don't know	7
It's okay for a boy to make a girl have sex, if she's flirted with him, or led him on	
Definitely agree	3
Generally agree	5
Generally disagree	16
Definitely disagree	65
Don't know	5
When girl hits a guy it's really not a big deal	
Definitely agree	4
Generally agree	21
Generally disagree	31
Definitely disagree	33
Don't know	5

Table 4.5: Young people's attitudes regarding use of dating violence

	TOTAL SAMPLE
	5014
	%
Most physical violence occurs in dating because a partner provoked it	
Definitely agree	4
Generally agree	25
Generally disagree	26
Definitely disagree	24
Don't know	15
It's alright for a guy to hit his girlfriend if she makes him look stupid in front of his mates	
Definitely agree	2
Generally agree	3
Generally disagree	16
Definitely disagree	69
Don't know	4
It's okay for a guy to put pressure on a girl to have sex but not to physically force her	
Definitely agree	3
Generally agree	7
Generally disagree	19
Definitely disagree	60
Don't know	5

To summarise, the Australian data shows that both the experiences and attitudes of young men and women with regard to relationship violence are quite similar. Some data leans towards higher female victimisation / male perpetration while other data leans toward male victimisation / female perpetration. Attitudes by young people to both violence against women and violence against men need to be improved.