



# ONE IN THREE VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE IS MALE



## Fact Sheet No.1

### Overview of recent family violence research findings

Contrary to common beliefs, up to **One in Three** victims of sexual assault and at least **One in Three** victims of family violence is male (perhaps as many as one in two). *When reading the following quantitative statistics it should be remembered that family violence is extremely complex and doesn't just boil down to 'who does what to whom and how badly'. The context of the violence and abuse is extremely important. Abuse can occur without the use or threat of physical violence. Please refer to [oneinthree.com.au/faqs](http://oneinthree.com.au/faqs) for a more detailed and nuanced analysis of family violence and abuse.*

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

- 29.8% (almost one in three) victims of current partner violence since the age of 15 were male
- 24.4% (almost one in four) victims of previous partner violence since the age of 15 were male

**"She would kick me in the genital area, she'd bite me on the shoulders and scratch my face and neck. She'd threaten to kill herself if I didn't give her the gambling money. Then she'd threaten to kill our son. In the middle of her screaming fits she would tell me and my son that I wasn't his father, even though we both knew he was. She also threatened to have someone bash me up."**

Raymond<sup>9</sup>

- 29.4% (almost one in three) victims of sexual assault during the last 12 months were male
- 26.1% (more than one in four) victims of sexual abuse before the age of 15 were male

The SA Interpersonal Violence and Abuse Survey (1999)<sup>3</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
- 19.3% (almost one in five) victims of attempted or actual forced sexual activity since they turned 18 years of age were male (excluding activity from partners or ex-partners).

Both this survey and the Personal Safety Survey excluded the male prison population where over one quarter of young inmates experience sexual assault<sup>7</sup>.

The Crime Prevention Survey (2001)<sup>10</sup> surveyed young people aged 12 to 20 and found that:

- 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

**"I thought of my options. Lock her out of the house as she did to me? The cops would come and take me away. Complain of domestic violence? She was too pretty and dainty for that to work. Leave? I could not abandon my kids. I would rather have died, and thought of it. Fight back? Somehow I couldn't see myself doing it. I don't know if it was cowardice, chivalry or intellect saying 'lay a finger on her even once and all hell will break loose'."**

Alan<sup>9</sup>

- 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".

The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (2005)<sup>11</sup> found that 28.9% (almost one in three) victims of domestic assault were male.

The Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission (2005)<sup>2</sup> found that 32.6% (almost one in three) victims of family violence reported to police were male.

The Australian Institute of Criminology (2008)<sup>4</sup> found that 35.4% (over one in three) victims of intimate partner homicide in 2006-07 were male.

**"The next thing I knew there were two police officers at the door. They saw the lump on my head, the black eye, and the bleeding and I told them what had happened. They said my wife had made a complaint that I had assaulted her, so they handcuffed me and put me in a paddywagon. At the station the police said there was 'a high degree of probability' that I would assault my wife again!"**

Michael<sup>9</sup>

The Victorian Victims Support Agency (2008)<sup>16</sup> found that 31% (almost one in three) persons admitted to Victorian Public Hospitals for family violence injuries were male.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies (1999)<sup>17</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.



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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>14</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).

Fergusson & Mullen (1999)<sup>5</sup>, in *Childhood sexual abuse: an evidence based perspective*, found that one in three victims of childhood sexual abuse were male.

The Queensland Government Department of Communities (2009)<sup>12</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>15</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 Australian Institute of Family Studies' evaluation of the 2006 family law reforms (2009)<sup>8</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.

**“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 than 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)<sup>13</sup>

These 14 authoritative sources agree that up to one in three victims of sexual assault and at least one in three victims of family violence is male (perhaps as many as one in two). Yet the current government appears unable to acknowledge or offer any services for these victims. This conscious neglect is in itself a form of social violence – the Australian Government's human rights obligations require it to cater equitably for the needs of all, regardless of gender. One in three is enough to reject the politics of ideology. It is time to care for all those in need, whether male or female.

To send a message to the Australian Government that *all* victims of violence deserve services and support, go to [oneinthree.com.au/action](http://oneinthree.com.au/action).

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