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Gender, Age and the Perceived Causes, Nature and Extent of Domestic and Dating Violence in Australian Society

Never Stand Still

Gendered Violence Research Network

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Prepared for
White Ribbon Australia and Youth Action
20 March 2015

 **White Ribbon**
Australia



ISBN: 978-0-7334-3561-4

Suggested citation

Cale, J. and Breckenridge, J. (2015) *Gender, Age and the Perceived Causes, Nature and Extent of Domestic and Dating Violence in Australian Society*, Gendered Violence Research Network, UNSW Australia

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Acknowledgements

Youth Action NSW and White Ribbon Australia would like to thank Kaytlin Taylor for her contribution to this project.

White Ribbon Australia would also like to acknowledge the Gendered Violence Research Network at UNSW Australia for their ongoing support and contribution to the White Ribbon Campaign.

CONTENTS

SUMMARY	4
KEY FINDINGS	5
BACKGROUND	6
METHODOLOGY	7
• Sample	7
• Analyses.....	7
RESULTS	8
• Gender stereotypes and attitudes supportive of violence	8
• Defining domestic violence	11
• How common is domestic violence?.....	12
• Perceived causes of domestic violence.....	13
• Responses to discovering a domestic violence situation	14
• Where did respondents get information about domestic violence?.....	15
• Perceptions of dating violence and domestic violence.....	16
• How common is dating violence?	18
OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSION	19
APPENDICES	20
• Appendix A	20
• Appendix B1	21
• Appendix B2.....	22
• Appendix C1.....	23
• Appendix C2.....	24
• Appendix D.....	25
• Appendix E1	26
• Appendix E2.....	27

SUMMARY

This study examined the perceptions and attitudes of young Australian adults toward domestic violence and dating violence. This study was based on a convenience sample of 3193 individuals who completed an online survey hosted on the White Ribbon Australia website. Attitudes towards, and perceptions of, domestic and dating violence were examined according to the gender and age of respondents. The results indicated that, overall, respondents did not typically hold views supporting gender stereotypes and violence. In addition, the respondents considered domestic violence to constitute a wide array of negative behaviours that can occur in any type of relationship, and also believed that domestic violence and dating violence are relatively common phenomenon in Australia. The respondents attributed domestic violence to a wide array of causes. Importantly, the results indicate that overall, these broad patterns were slightly more evident among female respondents compared to male ones, and older respondents compared to younger ones. These findings highlight the fact that gender and age do play a role in attitudes towards, and perceptions of, domestic violence. They further suggest that, at least in the current study, individuals holding views supportive of gender stereotypes, violence, and domestic and dating violence represented a minority of the respondents.

KEY FINDINGS

- While the majority of respondents tended to disagree with gender stereotypes and attitudes supportive of violence, males were more likely to agree with gender stereotypes than females, and younger respondents were more likely to agree with attitudes supportive of violence compared to older respondents.
- Although the vast majority of respondents considered a wide array of behaviours to constitute domestic violence, there was a consistent overall pattern in which male respondents and younger respondents were slightly less likely to endorse certain behaviours as domestic violence.
- A vast majority of respondents indicated that they felt domestic violence could occur in most types of relationships, for example, regardless of the nature of the relationship (e.g., casual, dating, married, separated, between parents and their children), or peoples' ethnicity or sexuality, and that domestic violence was 'common' or 'very common' in Australian society.
- Respondents indicated they felt the most common causes of domestic violence were disrespectful attitudes toward women, followed by drug/alcohol use, growing up in a violent household, the belief that men should be in control in society/the family, and mental health issues.
- Respondents were more likely to suggest to friends in domestic violence situations to disclose the abuse to another individual or organization they felt may provide assistance as opposed to intervening themselves.
- The respondents indicated that they acquire much of their knowledge surrounding domestic violence from various media sources.
- The vast majority of respondents indicated that they thought dating violence and domestic violence include many of the same behaviors and did not hold attitudes supportive of dating violence.
- However, a small number of younger respondents were less likely to equate behaviours that constitute domestic violence with the dating context in young adulthood.
- Younger respondents that held attitudes supportive of dating violence represented a small minority of the overall sample.
- While respondents felt that domestic violence and dating violence constitute the same behaviours, they perceived dating violence to be less common than domestic violence.

BACKGROUND

In 2014, White Ribbon Australia and Youth Action NSW constructed and designed an online survey that was hosted on the White Ribbon Australia website and promoted by White Ribbon Australia and Youth Action NSW across a broad national audience and through community networks in order to examine attitudes towards, and perceptions of, domestic violence. Questions from the survey were based, in part, on research conducted in the late 1990s by the Crime Research Centre at the University of Western Australia and Donovan Research examining young people's attitudes toward and experiences of domestic violence. This project provided nationally representative data about youth attitudes toward domestic violence and their experiences and beliefs that helped shape those attitudes. Questions used in the current survey explored respondents' perceptions of gender stereotypes and violence in Australian society, perceptions of the nature, extent, and causes of domestic violence, how respondents would deal with discovering domestic violence situations, and respondents' perceptions of dating violence.

Researchers from the Gendered Violence Research Network at UNSW Australia were engaged to secure UNSW Human Research Ethics approval for the research and to analyse the results as summarised in this report.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Between the months of March and May 2014, a total of 5570 people voluntarily responded to the online survey. These data were screened to include only individuals between the ages of 16-25 years old who were currently residing in Australia. In addition, given the anonymous nature of online surveys, several steps were also taken to screen for suspicious response patterns (e.g., answering yes to all questions or not answering any questions after demographic characteristics). From the original 5570 respondents, 20% were excluded because they did not record responses to any of the questions in the survey pertaining to domestic violence, 18% were excluded because they did not fall within the age range of 16-25 years old, 4% of the cases were excluded based on potential suspicious/mischievous response patterns, and one percent of cases were excluded because respondents did not reside in Australia. After all of these screening procedures, the data used in the current research are based on a final convenience sample of 3193 respondents.

Over two-thirds of these respondents were female (67.9%) while just under one third were male (30.6%). Less than two percent identified their gender as something other than male or female and therefore these individuals were removed from the study because this low base rate did not allow for adequate statistical comparisons. The average age of respondents was 20.8 years old¹, and approximately two-thirds (35.2%) resided in the state of New South Wales. This was followed by respondents residing in the states of Victoria (22.1%) and Queensland (22.6%). Small proportions of the remaining respondents resided in South Australia (6.3%), West Australia (5.9%), the Australian Capital Territory (4.0%), the Northern Territory (2.0%) and Tasmania (1.9%).

Analyses

Bivariate statistical comparisons were conducted to analyse responses to the survey questions and to determine whether any statistically significant differences were evident in attitudes towards domestic violence according to the gender and age of respondents. Statistically significant differences refer to whether observed differences between values are large enough to rule out the possibility that they are merely due to random chance variation. In the current research a 95% level of confidence was applied to the statistical tests meaning that in 95 out of 100 cases, the differences reported are not a function of chance or sampling error. It is important to caution that given the large sample size in the current study, often differences of only a few percentage points will be statistically significant. For this reason, the analyses also include effect sizes² which represent a quantitative measure of the strength of a relationship. In interpreting effect sizes, larger absolute values represent a stronger effect. To some extent, this also allows for the substantive interpretation as opposed to strictly statistical interpretation of the research results. Therefore, it is crucial to interpret with caution whether specific differences reported in this study are meaningful in the context of the research and the broader issues that it addresses.

¹ $sd=2.9$; range=16-25 years old.

² In the current study the effect sizes were measured using ϕ (phi) for categorical comparisons between gender and Cohen's d for mean comparisons of age.

RESULTS

Gender stereotypes and attitudes supportive of violence

Table 1.1 shows the proportions of respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed with a series of thirteen statements measuring attitudes supportive of gender stereotypes in society and the use of violence. In the online survey, these questions were originally presented as 5-point Likert scale questions (i.e., strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, and can't decide; see Appendix A). For the purposes of analysis, these responses were recoded dichotomously into either 'strongly agree/agree', or 'strongly disagree/disagree', and those respondents who indicated 'can't decide' were omitted from analyses. As Table 1.1 indicates there was a fairly consistent pattern in responses such that an overall **minority of respondents agreed with statements supporting gender stereotypes and attitudes supportive of violence.**

Furthermore, two of the items were asked in a reverse fashion (i.e., "Hitting someone else isn't ok unless you are defending yourself", and "Guys and girls are equal to each other") and in these cases the response pattern was maintained given that a majority of the respondents agreed with the statements.

However, there was a consistent overall pattern in responses that differed by gender (Table 1.1). In effect, males were more likely than females to agree with several of the statements supporting gender stereotypes and attitudes supporting violence. Here, the strongest differences were evident for statements about gender stereotypes (e.g., "Girls like guys who are in charge of the relationship", 27.8% of males agreed compared to 11.2% of females; "Men are usually better at more things than women", 14.6% of males agreed compared to 2.6% of females who agreed; and, "Men are supposed to be the head of the household and take control of the relationship", 18.8% of males agreed compared to 3.8% of females).

Table 1.1: Gender and attitudes toward gender roles and violence ³	% Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing			$X^2(df), \phi$
	Total	Males	Females	
Hitting someone else isn't ok unless you are defending yourself (n=3054)	90.0%	89.6%	90.2%	n.s.
A person is not responsible for what they do when they are drunk or high (n=3108)	3.0%	5.4%	2.0%	26.8(1) ^{***} , .09
Girls like guys who are in charge of the relationship (n=2673)	15.6%	27.8%	11.2%	108.4(1)^{***}, .20
Men are not able to control their temper (n=3055)	6.0%	6.1%	5.9%	n.s.
Men are usually better at more things than women (n=3040)	6.1%	14.6%	2.6%	160.2(1)^{***}, .23
Raising your voice at people makes them take notice of you (n=2985)	35.6%	49.0%	29.6%	104.2(1) ^{***} , .19
Women should be responsible for raising children and doing the housework (n=3071)	5.9%	8.7%	4.6%	20.0(1) ^{***} , .08
It may not be right, but threatening to hit someone gets you what you want (n=3087)	10.8%	14.2%	9.2%	17.1 (1) ^{***} , .07
It's not always wrong to hit someone, sometimes they provoke it (n=3062)	10.6%	21.6%	5.7%	172.9 ^{***} , .24
Men are supposed to be the head of the household and take control of the relationship (n=3047)	8.3%	18.8%	3.8%	188.3 (1)^{***}, .25
Guys who fight when they need to get the most respect from others (n=2923)	8.8%	14.0%	6.5%	42.9 (1) ^{***} , .12
Guys should never hit girls but it's ok for girls to hit guys or girls (n=3099)	3.0%	5.9%	1.7%	40.0 (1) ^{***} , .11
Guys and girls are equal to each other (n=2856)	91.0%	91.8%	90.7%	n.s.

Note. + $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, n.s.=not significant. X^2 =Chi-Square test for statistical significance. Φ = phi, effect size.

³ The sample size may vary for different questions due to missing data/non-response.

Table 1.2: Age and attitudes toward gender roles and violence	SA/A, x(sd)	D/SD, x(sd)	t(df), Cohen's d
Hitting someone else isn't ok unless you are defending yourself	20.8 (2.9)	21.0 (2.9)	n.s.
A person is not responsible for what they do when they are drunk or high	19.6 (3.1)	20.8 (2.9)	4.2(3154)***, 0.40
Girls like guys who are in charge of the relationship	20.8 (2.9)	20.9(2.9)	n.s.
Men are not able to control their temper	19.9 (3.0)	20.9 (2.9)	4.6 (3101)***, 0.34
Men are usually better at more things than women	20.3 (3.1)	20.9 (2.9)	2.2 (208.7)*, 0.20
Raising your voice at people makes them take notice of you	20.6 (3.0)	21.0 (2.8)	4.1(2135.0)***, 0.14
Women should be responsible for raising children and doing the housework	20.5 (3.1)	20.8 (2.9)	n.s.
It may not be right, but threatening to hit someone gets you what you want	20.0 (3.1)	21.0 (2.9)	5.4 (414.9)***, 0.33
It's not always wrong to hit someone, sometimes they provoke it	19.8 (3.1)	20.1 (2.9)	6.8 (407.4)***, 0.09
Men are supposed to be the head of the household and take control of the relationship	20.6 (3.0)	21.0 (2.9)	n.s.
Guys who fight when they need to get the most respect from others	20.3 (3.0)	20.9 (2.9)	3.1 (315.3)**, 0.20
Guys should never hit girls but it's ok for girls to hit guys or girls	19.8 (2.9)	20.8 (2.9)	3.4 (3145)**, 0.34
Guys and girls are equal to each other	20.8 (2.9)	20.4 (2.9)	-1.9 (2899)+, 0.14

Note. + $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, n.s.=not significant. t(df)= T-test for significance of mean comparisons. Cohen's d=effect size. SA=strongly agree. A=agree. D=disagree. SD=Strongly disagree.

A similarly consistent pattern was evident in terms of age; younger respondents were more likely to agree with statements supporting gender stereotypes and attitudes supportive of violence compared to older respondents (Table 1.2). However, in this case, it appeared that the strongest differences in age were generally evident in statements concerning attitudes supportive of violence (e.g., A person is not responsible for what they do when they are drunk or high; Men are not able to control their temper; It may not be right, but threatening to hit someone gets you what you want). In other words, **these results suggest that to some extent, while a minority of respondents tended to agree with gender stereotypes and attitudes supportive of violence, males were more likely to agree with gender stereotypes than females, and younger respondents were more likely to agree with attitudes supportive of violence compared to older respondents.**

Defining domestic violence

Respondents were given a series of 16 examples of relationship conflict and asked to endorse whether or not they thought that these constituted domestic violence (Table 2). The vast majority of respondents (i.e., over 90%) endorsed all of the 16 items as constituting domestic violence, with the exceptions of: “not letting a partner go to the church they want to go to” (84.4% endorsed this as domestic violence); “checking a partner's emails or phone without their consent” (65.8% endorsed this as domestic violence); “not showing a partner any love or affection” (41.4% endorsed this as domestic violence); and, “giving a partner the silent treatment” (10.0% endorsed this as domestic violence).

Table 2: Definitions of domestic violence (n=3193)	Normal conflict	Domestic violence	Don't Know/missing
Giving a partner the "silent treatment"	84.3%	10.0%	5.6%
Not showing a partner any form of love or affection	43.9%	41.4%	14.7%
Constant yelling at a partner	5.9%	91.4%	2.7%
Constantly putting a partner down or humiliating them	3.8%	93.9%	2.4%
Not letting a partner see their friends and family	3.7%	93.2%	3.1%
Not allowing a partner any money for their own use	5.1%	89.9%	5.1%
Throwing things at each other	4.9%	93.5%	1.7%
Threatening to hit a partner	1.5%	97.4%	1.0%
Physically hitting/slapping/shoving a partner during a big fight	2.3%	96.6%	1.0%
Physically hitting/slapping/shoving a partner regularly	0.7%	98.6%	0.8%
Threatening to "out" partner as being gay, lesbian or trans if they do something you don't like	4.4%	90.7%	4.9%
Not letting a partner go to the church they want to go to	9.0%	84.4%	6.7%
Checking a partner's emails or phone without their consent	25.1%	65.8%	9.1%
Threatening to hurt yourself to stop someone breaking up with you	3.9%	90.4%	5.7%
Threatening to hurt your partner's family or pet	0.8%	97.8%	1.4%
Forcing a partner to have sex	1.0%	97.8%	1.2%

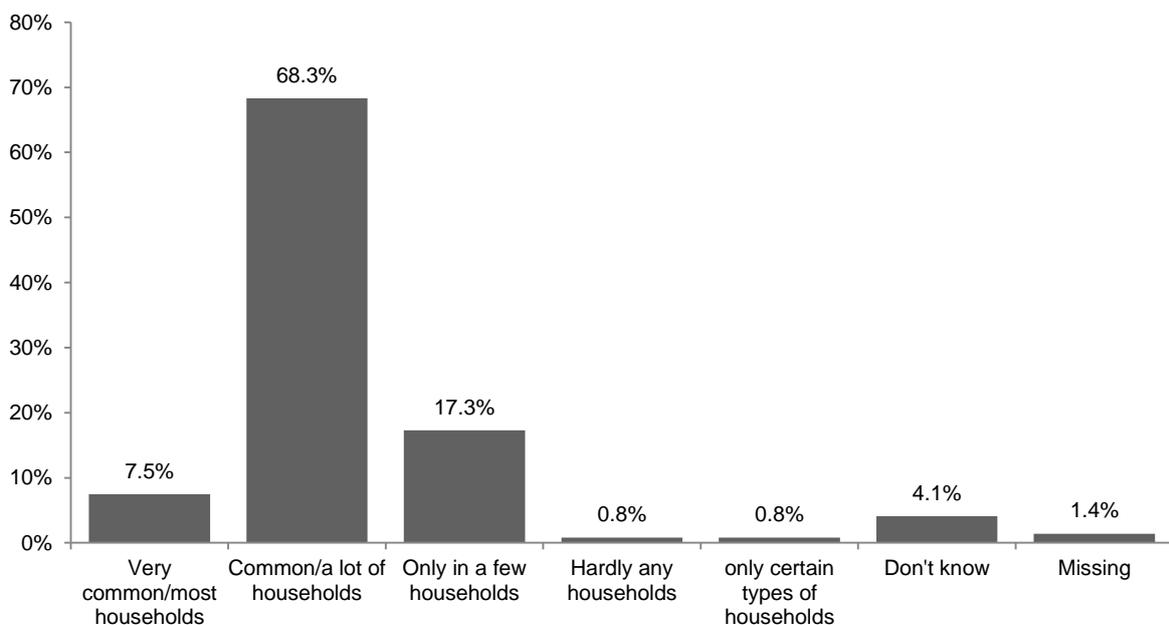
In terms of gender, in most cases, females were more likely than males to endorse all of the examples as domestic violence, with the exception of “Threatening to out a partner...” where 96.9% of males compared to 92.0% of females⁴ endorsed this as domestic violence. There was no statistical difference between male and female respondents for only one of the examples (i.e., “Threatening to hurt your partner’s family or pet”; see Appendix B1).

A similarly consistent pattern emerged in terms of age, where respondents who endorsed items as constituting domestic violence were on average slightly older than those who did not for virtually all of the examples (see Appendix B2). Here the exceptions were for three of the examples: “Threatening to hit a partner”; “Physically hitting/slapping/shoving a partner during a big fight”; and, “Physically hitting/slapping/shoving a partner regularly” where there were no significant differences in the age of respondents who considered these items to constitute domestic violence. **Taken together, although the vast majority of respondents considered most of the examples to constitute domestic violence, there was a consistent overall pattern in which male respondents and younger respondents were slightly less likely to endorse the examples as constituting domestic violence.**

How common is domestic violence?

A vast majority of respondents (87.8%) indicated that they felt domestic violence could occur in most types of relationships, for example, regardless of the nature of the relationship (e.g., casual, dating, married, separated, parents and their children), or peoples’ ethnicity or sexuality. In addition to this, they were also asked how common they thought domestic violence is in Australian society. Figure 1 shows that approximately three-quarters (75.7%) of the survey respondents felt that domestic violence is either common or very common in Australian society.

Figure 1. How common do you think domestic violence is? (n=3193)



⁴ $\chi^2(1)=35.6, p<.001, \phi=0.11.$

Females were significantly more likely than males to report they perceived that domestic violence was either common or very common in Australian society (82.7% of females compared to 60.1% of males)⁵. In addition, those who reported that they felt domestic violence was either common or very common were slightly older on average (20.9 years old) compared to those indicating they felt it was uncommon or rare (20.4 years old)⁶.

Perceived causes of domestic violence

Table 3 indicates what respondents perceived to be some of the underlying causes of domestic violence. Overall, respondents indicated they felt the most common causes of domestic violence were disrespectful attitudes toward women (72.4%), followed by using drugs/alcohol (70.2%), growing up in a violent household (61.0%), the belief that men should be in control in society/the family (60.1%), and having mental health issues (48.8%).

Next, responses to the items in Table 3 were recoded dichotomously (i.e., not a cause/rarely a cause or sometimes a cause/commonly a cause). In terms of gender differences regarding the perceived causes of domestic violence, no differences were evident for only two of the items (i.e., having money problems and having problems at work; Appendix C1). In other words, virtually the same proportion of males and females indicated they thought these two items were either sometimes or commonly a cause of domestic violence.

Table 3. Perceived causes of domestic violence (n=3193)	Not a cause	Rarely a cause	Sometimes a cause	Common cause
Growing up in a violent household	1.4%	2.5%	35.1%	61.0%
Growing up in a poor household	12.0%	21.2%	54.7%	12.2%
Using drugs/alcohol	1.8%	1.9%	26.1%	70.2%
One partner flirts with other people	12.2%	21.1%	52.8%	13.9%
One partner sleeping with another person	7.8%	9.9%	43.6%	38.7%
Having money problems (e.g., low income, gambling etc.)	5.4%	11.9%	51.6%	31.1%
Having housing problems	6.5%	16.3%	54.8%	22.5%
Problems at work	8.0%	21.5%	54.3%	16.3%
Being unemployed	8.4%	18.4%	52.1%	21.1%
Disrespectful attitudes towards women	1.2%	3.1%	23.3%	72.4%
Having mental health issues	2.0%	8.5%	40.6%	48.8%
Criminal record or previously been in jail	6.0%	11.5%	47.0%	35.6%
A belief that men should be in control in society/the family	2.6%	7.5%	29.8%	60.1%
Stresses at home like too much housework, kids crying etc.	7.5%	18.5%	51.5%	22.5%
One parent wanting to be in control/in charge of the family	2.2%	8.9%	40.8%	48.1%
It's part of their culture	11.1%	20.7%	40.3%	27.9%

For the remainder of the items, females were typically more likely than males to indicate specific items were sometimes or commonly a cause of domestic violence with two important exceptions.

⁵ $\chi^2(1)=187.2, p<.001, \phi=0.24.$

⁶ $t(1239.0)=-4.7, p<.001, \text{Cohen's } d=0.17.$

Male respondents were more likely than female respondents to indicate that one partner flirting with other people (73.1% of males compared to 64.2% of females), or, one partner sleeping with other people (89.7% of males compared to 79.2% of females) were either sometimes or commonly causes of domestic violence.

In terms of age (Appendix C2), the strongest effect sizes were evident for these two items as well; those who perceived infidelity and flirting as sometimes or commonly causes of domestic violence were on average younger than those who did not. In addition, respondents who felt drug and alcohol use were sometimes or commonly causes of domestic violence were also typically younger than those who did not. **In other words, respondents who felt that domestic violence was sometimes or commonly caused by infidelity, flirting and alcohol and drug use tended to be younger and male.**

Nonetheless, **it is evident that the respondents of the survey attribute domestic violence to a vast array of causes.** On the whole, females were slightly more likely than males to perceive most of the examples as potential causes of domestic violence, with the noted exceptions above. It seems that for age however, there was generally more agreement over perceptions of what causes domestic violence. For example, there were no differences in the age of respondents who thought that: growing up in a violent household; having money problems (e.g., low income, gambling etc.); having housing problems; problems at work; being unemployed; having mental health issues; a belief that men should be in control in society and the family; and, one parent wanting to be in control/in charge of the family, were or were not a cause of domestic violence.

Responses to discovering a domestic violence situation

Given the perceived nature, extent, and causes of domestic violence highlighted by the respondents, a series of survey questions explored what respondents felt they would do when confronted with becoming aware of a domestic violence situation. More specifically, respondents were asked "If your friend told you that one of their parents was being physically hurt or verbally abused by the other parent/partner, what would you do?". Table 4 displays the distribution of responses to a variety of scenarios.

Table 4. Response to discovering a domestic violence situation (n=3145)	Total sample %	Male %	Female %	X² (df), Φ
Suggest that they talk to their parents	31.4%	35.9%	29.6%	12.6(1)***, 0.06
Suggest that your friend tells another adult (e.g., a teacher)	70.6%	59.0%	75.6%	90.1(1)***, 0.17
Advise your friend that they should tell the police	58.3%	58.2%	58.2%	n.s.
Talk to your own parents and get them to deal with it	14.0%	13.8%	14.1%	n.s.
Tell another adult (e.g., a teacher/counsellor etc.)	35.9%	26.9%	39.7%	48.0(1)***, 0.12
Ask them what they needed	52.4%	45.9%	54.9%	22.3(1)***, 0.08
Call the police yourself	13.9%	15.5%	13.1%	3.0(1)+, 0.03
Get them to contact a counselling service	67.7%	56.5%	72.8%	81.7(1)***, 0.16
Call a counselling service like 1800 Respect or Kids Help line	44.4%	35.2%	48.5%	48.0(1)***, 0.12
You'd stay out of it because you don't want to get involved	3.4%	5.5%	2.4%	21.0(1)***, 0.08
Don't know	4.6%	6.8%	3.7%	14.3(1)***, 0.07
Other	3.9%	4.1%	3.6%	n.s.

Note. +*p*<.10, **p*<.05, ***p*<.01, ****p*<.001, n.s.=not significant. X²=Chi-Square test for statistical significance. Φ = phi, effect size.

Overall, **the most common responses involved individuals suggesting that their friend disclose the abuse to another individual or organization they felt might provide assistance.** For example, almost three quarters (70.6%) of the respondents suggested that their friend tell another adult about the situation their parents were in. Over two-thirds (67.7%) of the respondents would suggest contacting a counselling service, and slightly fewer (58.3%) suggested they would advise their friend to contact police. In other words, a majority of respondents indicated they would direct their friend to services or others who they perceived would be in a position to help.

Respondents were less likely to suggest they would take action or intervene on their own. While approximately half (52.4%) of the respondents indicated they would ask their friend what they needed (e.g., provide them with personal support), fewer were likely to call a counselling service themselves (44.4%), tell another adult or teacher themselves (35.9%), or even suggest to their friend that they should bring up the situation with their parents (31.4%). In addition, while a minority of respondents suggested they would either tell their own parents (14.0%) or call the call police themselves (13.9%), it is important to note that only an extremely small proportion (3.4%) of individuals indicated they would do nothing at all because they did not want to get involved.

Overall, female respondents were typically more likely than male respondents to indicate they would intervene whether it involved advising their friend to seek assistance or intervene in the situation themselves. One exception to this pattern was that male respondents were slightly more likely to suggest that their friend talk directly with their parents about the domestic violence situation that was occurring between them (35.9% of males compared to 29.6% of females); although it must be noted that the effect size of this difference is very small. In addition, male respondents were also more likely to indicate they would not get involved, but again, these proportions are extremely low.

Finally, there were minimal differences in terms of the age of respondents and what their potential response would be to discovering about a domestic violence situation between their friend's parents (Appendix D). In effect, older respondents were more likely to provide individual support to their friend by 'asking them what they needed', whereas younger respondents were more likely to suggest their friend tell another adult, like a teacher, for example. This is not necessarily surprising considering the age range of respondents (i.e., 16-25 years old); as younger respondents would be more likely to be in school than older ones.

Where did respondents get information about domestic violence?

The survey results also indicated that respondents get much of their information about domestic violence from a vast array of sources, but most commonly, media related sources such as the news (71.4%), television more generally (59.3%), newspapers (53.9%), magazines (40.9%), and the internet (30.6%) as well. Importantly, over half of the respondents reported getting information about domestic violence from friends. Over one third (39.7%) indicated that they received information about domestic violence at their school. Among those who responded in the 'other' category (11.1%), some common themes were that respondents received information about domestic violence through their universities, work, and several of these respondents indicated they had also been victims of domestic violence as well.

Perceptions of dating violence and domestic violence

Given that the survey was targeted toward youth and young adults, a series of questions in the survey explored the extent to which respondents felt that dynamics of domestic violence are equivalent to the notion of dating violence. Indeed, **the vast majority of respondents indicated that they thought dating violence and domestic violence include many of the same behaviors**. Although statistical differences were evident between male and female respondents, in effect there was virtual consensus given that it was 97% of females compared to 94% of males who indicated that dating violence and domestic violence include many of the same behaviors⁷. Those who agreed with this statement were also slightly older than those who did not (20.9 years old compared to 19.3 years old)⁸, and the strength of this relationship was relatively strong indicating that **a small number of younger respondents are less likely to equate behaviours that constitute domestic violence with the dating context in young adulthood**.

Next, the respondents were asked a series of questions related to their perceptions of dating violence. As Table 5 shows, in the vast majority of examples, over 95% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements supportive of dating violence. While female respondents were slightly more likely to do so than males for some of the statements (see Appendix E1), the **overwhelming majority of respondents did not maintain attitudes supportive of dating violence**. Similarly, while younger respondents were less likely than older ones to disagree with these statements (Appendix E2), given the overwhelming response pattern described above, these **younger respondents that hold attitudes supportive of dating violence represented a small minority of the overall sample**.

⁷ $\chi^2(1)=14.9, p<.001, \phi=0.07$.

⁸ $t(3062)=5.7, p<.001, \text{Cohen's } d=0.54$.

Table 5. Perceptions of dating violence (n=3193)	SA	A	D	SD	Missing/can't decide
It's OK for a guy to force a girl to have sex with him if she flirted with him or led him on	0.5%	0.7%	7.4%	86.5%	4.9%
Hitting your boyfriend/girlfriend during a fight is OK	0.4%	0.4%	11.3%	83.0%	4.9%
If you are dating then you are expected to have sex with your partner	0.9%	6.8%	23.1%	63.0%	6.2%
It's ok to have sex with your partner when they are too drunk or high to consent	0.4%	2.2%	15.8%	75.7%	5.8%
It's wrong for a guy to hit a girl but it's not that bad if a girl hits a guy	0.8%	3.5%	20.8%	69.2%	5.7%
Violence in same-sex relationships isn't the same as violence in heterosexual relationships	1.2%	2.3%	13.0%	75.8%	7.7%
It's not your fault if you hurt your partner when you are drunk or high	0.9%	0.7%	10.4%	82.9%	5.1%
Sometimes it's ok to hit your partner because they provoked it	0.4%	1.0%	11.9%	81.3%	5.3%
If you send "sexting" images to someone, and they forward them on it's OK	0.6%	0.6%	7.7%	86.1%	5.0%
Stalking your Ex on Facebook is perfectly ok and isn't harassment	1.9%	9.8%	32.6%	45.7%	10.0%

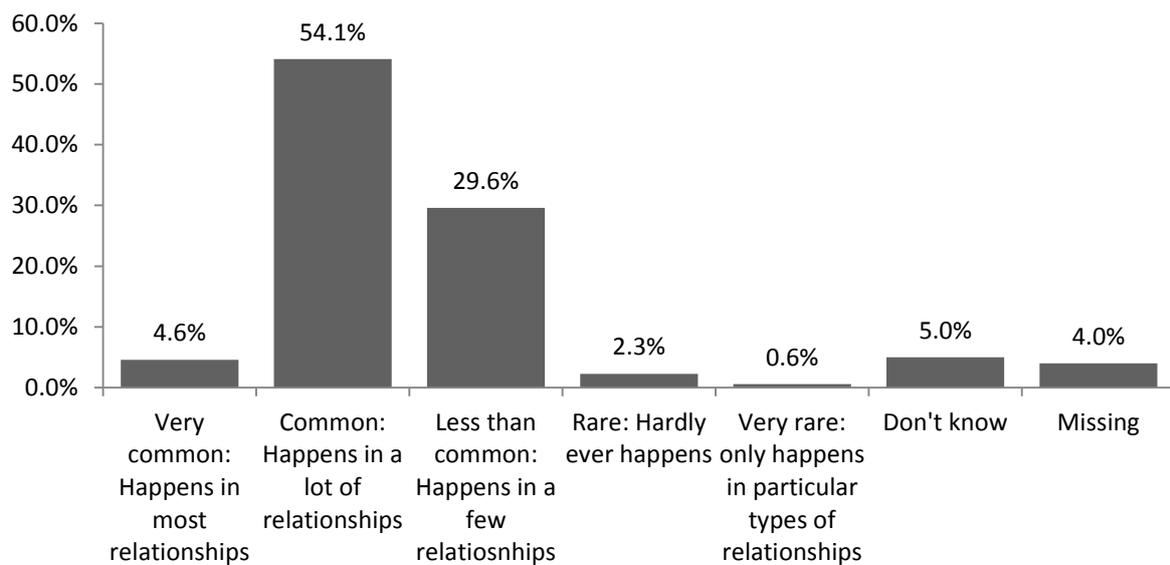
Note. SA=strongly agree. A=agree. D=disagree. SD=Strongly disagree.

How common is dating violence?

Finally, respondents were asked about how common they felt dating violence was in Australian society (Figure 2). Interestingly, just under two-thirds of the respondents indicated that they felt dating violence was common or very common. This can be contrasted with figure 1 where just over three quarters of respondents indicated they felt domestic violence was either common or very common. **In effect, these results suggest that while the respondents felt that domestic violence and dating violence constitute the same behaviours, they perceive dating violence to be less common than domestic violence.**

Furthermore, a significant pattern emerged in terms of the gender of respondents as well (Appendix E1). Here, nearly three quarters (70.3%) of female respondents felt that dating violence was either common or very common compared to only half (50.1%) of the male respondents⁹. Furthermore, respondents who thought that dating violence was either common or very common were on average slightly older than those who did not (21.1 years old compared to 20.5 years old¹⁰). These findings suggest that older and female respondents perceive dating violence to be much more common than younger and male respondents.

Figure 2. How common do you think dating violence is? (n=3193)



⁹ $\chi^2(1)=105.9, p<.001, \phi=0.19$.

¹⁰ $t(2022.5)=5.3, p<.001, \text{Cohen's } d=0.21$.

OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSION

Optimistically, the respondents who completed the White Ribbon Australia and Youth Action NSW survey generally did not hold views supportive of gender stereotypes and violence, domestic violence, or dating violence. However, they attributed domestic violence to a wide array of causes and perceived the problem to be fairly widespread in Australian society. While this pattern constituted the overwhelming majority of respondents, there were relatively consistent differences between the gender and age of respondents; male respondents were slightly less likely to be characterised by the pattern above compared to female respondents. Similarly, younger respondents, overall, were typically less likely to be characterised by this pattern than older respondents. This is not to suggest that there are stark differences in perceptions of domestic violence between males and females, or between younger and older individuals based on the data from the current study. Rather, this does suggest that one's gender and age play a role, at least to some extent, in perceptions of domestic violence. This is a particularly pertinent finding considering the nature of the survey. Given the survey was hosted on the White Ribbon website one would expect some degree of self-selection of the respondents (e.g., those who may be seeking information about domestic violence; those who have had experiences as victims of domestic violence). In spite of this, there was a subtle, yet consistent pattern in responses along the lines of gender and age. At the same time it was also clear that a small minority of the respondents did not fit the generally positive pattern described above, and held what may be considered concerning views around the issues of domestic violence in Australian society.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Attitudes toward gender stereotypes and violence	SA	A	D	SD	% missing responses/can't decide
Hitting someone else isn't ok unless you are defending yourself (n=3099)	48.0%	42.1%	6.4%	3.5%	2.9%
A person is not responsible for what they do when they are drunk or high (n=3156)	1.4%	1.7%	22.0%	74.9%	1.2%
Girls like guys who are in charge of the relationship (n=2716)	2.0%	13.5%	47.2%	37.3%	14.9%
Men are not able to control their temper (n=3103)	1.5%	4.5%	29.8%	64.2%	2.8%
Men are usually better at more things than women (n=3084)	1.7%	4.4%	23.2%	70.7%	3.4%
Raising your voice at people makes them take notice of you (n=3029)	3.7%	32.1%	37.4%	26.8%	5.1%
Women should be responsible for raising children and doing the housework (n=3115)	1.3%	4.5%	30.2%	64.0%	2.4%
It may not be right, but threatening to hit someone gets you what you want (n=3134)	1.1%	9.6%	26.0%	63.1%	1.8%
It's not always wrong to hit someone, sometimes they provoke it (n=3107)	1.2%	9.6%	27.3%	61.9%	2.7%
Men are supposed to be the head of the household and take control of the relationship (n=3092)	1.3%	7.0%	26.6%	65.2%	3.2%
Guys who fight when they need to get the most respect from others (n=2790)	1.4%	7.5%	27.5%	63.5%	7.0%
Guys should never hit girls but it's ok for girls to hit guys or girls (n=3147)	0.8%	2.2%	22.9%	74.1%	1.4%
Guys and girls are equal to each other (n=2901)	68.2%	22.7%	5.8%	3.3%	9.1%

Note. + $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, *n.s.*=not significant. X^2 =Chi-Square test for statistical significance. Φ = phi, effect size. SA=strongly agree. A=agree. D=disagree. SD=Strongly disagree.

Appendix B1

Definitions of domestic violence by gender	% indicating domestic violence			X ² (df), Φ
	Total sample (n=3145)	Males (n=977)	Females (n=2168)	
Giving a partner the "silent treatment"	10.5%	8.0%	11.6%	8.9(1)**, 0.06
Not showing a partner any form of love or affection	48.6%	34.2%	54.8%	95.7(1)***, 0.19
Constant yelling at a partner	93.9%	89.5%	95.9%	46.5(1)***, 0.12
Constantly putting a partner down or humiliating them	96.2%	92.8%	97.6%	41.1(1)***, 0.12
Not letting a partner see their friends and family	96.2%	97.1%	94.1%	15.7(1)***, 0.07
Not allowing a partner any money for their own use	94.6%	91.4%	96.0%	26.7(1)***, 0.10
Throwing things at each other	95.0%	92.2%	96.3%	22.6(1)***, 0.10
Threatening to hit a partner	98.5%	97.8%	98.8%	4.4(1)*, 0.04
Physically hitting/slapping/shoving a partner during a big fight	97.7%	96.9%	98.1%	4.2(1)*, 0.04
Physically hitting/slapping/shoving a partner regularly	99.4%	98.7%	99.6%	8.1(1)9, 0.05
Threatening to "out" partner as being gay, lesbian or trans if they do something you don't like	95.5%	96.9%	92.0%	35.6(1)***, 0.11
Not letting a partner go to the church they want to go to	90.4%	86.1%	92.2%	27.0(1)***, 0.10
Checking a partner's emails or phone without their consent	72.2%	67.4%	74.3%	14.2(1)***, 0.07
Threatening to hurt yourself to stop someone breaking up with you	95.8%	92.9%	97.0%	25.9(1)***, 0.09
Threatening to hurt your partner's family or pet	99.3%	98.9%	99.4%	n.s.
Forcing a partner to have sex	99.0%	98.0%	99.4%	12.4(1)***, 0.06

Note. +*p*<.10, **p*<.05, ***p*<.01, ****p*<.001, n.s.=not significant. X²=Chi-Square test for statistical significance. Φ = phi, effect size.

Appendix B2

Average age of respondents and definitions of domestic violence	Normal conflict x(sd)	Domestic violence x(sd)	t(df), Cohen's d
Giving a partner the "silent treatment"	20.7 (2.9)	21.6 (2.6)	-5.3 (417.8) ^{***} , 0.32
Not showing a partner any form of love or affection	20.4 (3.0)	21.3 (2.7)	-8.4 (2719.4) ^{***} , 0.31
Constant yelling at a partner	20.2 (3.1)	20.9 (2.9)	-2.9 (208.6) ^{***} , 0.23
Constantly putting a partner down or humiliating them	19.4 (3.1)	20.9 (2.9)	-5.3 (127.2) ^{**} , 0.49
Not letting a partner see their friends and family	19.3 (3.1)	20.9 (2.9)	-6.0 (125.1) ^{***} , 0.53
Not allowing a partner any money for their own use	19.6 (3.1)	20.9 (2.9)	-5.8 (178.5) ^{***} , 0.43
Throwing things at each other	20.4 (3.1)	20.8 (2.9)	-1.8 (169.6) ⁺ , 0.13
Threatening to hit a partner	20.3 (3.2)	20.8 (2.9)	n.s.
Physically hitting/slapping/shoving a partner during a big fight	20.4 (3.0)	20.8 (2.9)	n.s.
Physically hitting/slapping/shoving a partner regularly	20.2 (3.0)	20.8 (2.9)	n.s.
Threatening to "out" partner as being gay, lesbian or trans if they do something you don't like	20.2 (3.1)	20.8 (2.9)	-2.6 (150.6) [*] , 0.20
Not letting a partner go to the church they want to go to	20.0 (3.1)	21.0 (2.8)	-5.0 (337.2) ^{***} , 0.34
Checking a partner's emails or phone without their consent	20.5 (3.0)	21.0 (2.8)	-3.7 (1386.8) ^{**} , 0.17
Threatening to hurt yourself to stop someone breaking up with you	19.7 (3.0)	20.9 (2.9)	-4.7 (3010) ^{***} , 0.41
Threatening to hurt your partner's family or pet	19.6 (3.4)	20.8 (2.9)	-2.0 (3145) [*] , 0.38
Forcing a partner to have sex	19.8 (3.0)	20.8 (2.9)	-2.1 (3154) [*] , 0.34

Note. ⁺ $p < .10$, ^{*} $p < .05$, ^{**} $p < .01$, ^{***} $p < .001$, n.s.=not significant. t(df)= T-test for significance of mean comparisons. Cohen's d=effect size.

Appendix C1

% agreeing item is sometimes or commonly a cause of domestic violence

Perceived causes of domestic violence by gender	Total sample (n=3145)	Males (n=977)	Females (n=2168)	X² (df), Φ
Growing up in a violent household	96.1%	94.7%	96.8%	7.9(1)**, 0.05
Growing up in a poor household	66.9%	63.5%	68.5%	7.7(1)**, 0.05
Using drugs/alcohol	96.4%	95.2%	97.0%	6.4(1)*, 0.05
One partner flirts with other people	66.9%	73.1%	64.2%	24.2(1)***, 0.09
One partner sleeping with another person	82.4%	89.7%	79.2%	51.3(1)***, 0.13
Having money problems (e.g., low income, gambling etc.)	82.7%	81.3%	83.4%	n.s.
Having housing problems	77.3%	74.9%	78.4%	4.6(1)*, 0.04
Problems at work	70.6%	71.4%	68.9%	n.s.
Being unemployed	73.3%	70.3%	74.7%	6.5(1)*, 0.05
Disrespectful attitudes towards women	95.8%	93.4%	96.8%	18.9(1)***, 0.08
Having mental health issues	89.7%	87.7%	90.5%	5.8(1)*, 0.04
Criminal record or previously been in jail	82.8%	79.6%	84.2%	10.0(1)**, 0.06
A belief that men should be in control in society and the family	89.9%	82.7%	93.1%	79.6(1)***, 0.16
Stresses at home like too much housework, kids crying etc.	74.0%	71.5%	75.0%	4.3(1)*, 0.04
One parent wanting to be in control / in charge of the family	88.9%	84.6%	90.8%	26.0(1)***, 0.09
It's part of their culture	68.4%	65.5%	69.7%	5.5(1)*, 0.04

Note. +*p*<.10, **p*<.05, ***p*<.01, ****p*<.001, n.s.=not significant. X²=Chi-Square test for statistical significance. Φ = phi, effect size.

Appendix C2

Age of respondents and perceived causes of domestic violence	Not a cause/rarely a cause x(sd)	Sometimes/ commonly a cause x(sd)	t(df), Cohen's d
Growing up in a violent household	21.1(2.9)	20.8(2.9)	n.s.
Growing up in a poor household	21.1(2.8)	20.6(2.9)	4.6(2170.7)***, 0.18
Using drugs/alcohol	21.6(2.6)	20.7(2.9)	3.3(127.8)**, 0.33
One partner flirts with other people	21.2(2.8)	20.6(2.9)	5.0(2184.9)**, 0.21
One partner sleeping with another person	21.6(2.7)	20.6(2.9)	7.3(884.2)***, 0.36
Having money problems (e.g., low income, gambling etc.)	20.8(2.9)	20.8(2.9)	n.s.
Having housing problems	20.8(2.9)	20.8(2.9)	n.s.
Problems at work	20.9(2.9)	20.8(2.9)	n.s.
Being unemployed	20.8(2.8)	20.8(2.9)	n.s.
Disrespectful attitudes towards women	20.2(3.2)	20.8(2.9)	-2.3(146.1)*, 0.20
Having mental health issues	20.8(2.8)	20.8(2.9)	n.s.
Criminal record or previously been in jail	21.2(2.8)	20.7(2.9)	3.6(834.5)***, 0.18
A belief that men should be in control in society and the family	20.7(3.0)	20.8(2.9)	n.s.
Stresses at home like too much housework, kids crying etc.	21.0(2.9)	20.7(2.9)	2.5(3191)*, 0.10
One parent wanting to be in control / in charge of the family	20.7(3.0)	20.8(2.9)	n.s.
It's part of their culture	20.6(3.0)	20.9(2.9)	-3.1(1912.0)**, 0.10

Note. +*p*<.10, **p*<.05, ***p*<.01, ****p*<.001, n.s.=not significant. t(df)= T-test for significance of mean comparisons. Cohen's d=effect size.

Appendix D

Age of respondents and their response to discovering a domestic violence situation	Yes x(sd)	Did not indicate x(sd)	t(df), Cohen's d
Suggest that they talk to their parents	20.8(2.9)	20.8(2.9)	n.s.
Suggest that your friend tells another adult like a teacher/ Advise your friend that they should tell the police	20.6(2.9)	21.2(2.9)	4.9(3191)***, 0.21
Talk to your own parents and get them to deal with it	20.7(2.9)	20.9(2.9)	2.1(3191)*, 0.07
Tell another adult like a teacher/counsellor etc.	20.7(3.0)	20.8(3.0)	n.s.
Ask them what they needed	20.8(2.9)	20.9(2.9)	n.s.
Call the police yourself	21.0(2.8)	20.5(3.0)	-5.0(3102.5)***, 0.17
Get them to contact a counselling service like Headspace	21.0(2.8)	20.8(2.9)	n.s.
Call a counselling service like 1800 Respect or Kids Help Line	20.8(2.9)	20.7(3.0)	n.s.
You'd stay out of it because you don't want to get involved	20.9(2.9)	20.7(2.9)	-2.3(3191)*, 0.07
Don't know	20.4(3.1)	20.8(2.9)	n.s.
Other	20.7(2.9)	20.8(2.9)	n.s.
Other	20.8(3.0)	20.8(2.9)	n.s.

Note. + $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, n.s.=not significant. t(df)= T-test for significance of mean comparisons. Cohen's d=effect size.

Appendix E1

	% Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing			X ² (df), Φ
	Total sample (3193)	Males (n=977)	Females (n=2168)	
Perceptions of Dating Violence				
It's OK for a guy to force a girl to have sex with him if she flirted with him or led him on (n=2992)	1.3%	1.9%	1.1%	n.s.
Hitting your boyfriend/girlfriend during a fight is OK (n=2991)	0.8%	1.0%	0.8%	n.s.
If you are dating then you are expected to have sex with your partner (n=2953)	8.3%	13.0%	6.3%	35.9(1)***, 0.11
It's ok to have sex with your partner when they are too drunk or high to consent (n=2964)	2.9%	4.2%	2.3%	7.7(1)**, 0.05
It's wrong for a guy to hit a girl but it's not that bad if a girl hits a guy (n=2966)	4.6%	8.0%	3.0%	35.8(1)***, 0.11
Violence in same-sex relationships isn't the same as violence in heterosexual relationships (n=2903)	3.9%	6.7%	2.7%	25.6(1)***, 0.09
It's not your fault if you hurt your partner when you are drunk or high (2988)	1.7%	2.2%	1.5%	n.s.
Sometimes it's ok to hit your partner because they provoked it (n=2981)	1.5%	2.3%	1.2%	5.3(1)*, 0.04
If you send "sexting" images to someone, and they forward them on it's OK (n=2987)	1.3%	2.4%	0.8%	14.1(1)***, 0.07
Stalking your Ex on Facebook is perfectly ok and isn't harassment (n=2832)	13.1%	12.9%	13.1%	n.s.

Note. +*p*<.10, **p*<.05, ***p*<.01, ****p*<.001, n.s.=not significant. X²=Chi-Square test for statistical significance. Φ = phi, effect size.

Appendix E2

Age of respondents and perceptions of dating violence	A/SA x(sd)	D/SD x(sd)	t(df), Cohen's d
It's OK for a guy to force a girl to have sex with him if she flirted with him or led him on	19.3 (3.0)	20.9 (2.9)	3.3(3034)**, d=0.54
Hitting your boyfriend/girlfriend during a fight is OK	19.4 (2.8)	20.8 (2.9)	2.4(3034)*, d=0.49
If you are dating then you are expected to have sex with your partner	20.6 (2.9)	20.8 (2.9)	n.s.
It's ok to have sex with your partner when they are too drunk or high to consent	19.7 (2.7)	20.9 (2.9)	3.6(3006)***, d=0.43
It's wrong for a guy to hit a girl but it's not that bad if a girl hits a guy	19.6 (2.9)	20.9 (2.9)	5.1 (3009)***, d=0.45
Violence in same-sex relationships isn't the same as violence in heterosexual relationships	19.7 (3.0)	20.9 (2.9)	4.3 (2945)***, d=0.41
It's not your fault if you hurt your partner when you are drunk or high	19.1 (2.9)	20.1 (2.9)	4.4(3029)***, d=0.34
Sometimes it's ok to hit your partner because they provoked it	19.3 (2.8)	20.1 (2.9)	3.4 (3023)***, d=0.28
If you send "sexting" images to someone, and they forward them.. it's OK	19.4 (2.8)	20.8 (2.9)	3.1 (3030)**, d=0.49
Stalking your Ex on Facebook is perfectly ok and isn't harassment	20.1 (2.9)	21.0 (2.9)	5.5 (2873), d=0.31

Note. + $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, n.s.=not significant. $t(df)$ = T-test for significance of mean comparisons. Cohen's d =effect size. SA=strongly agree. A=agree. D=disagree. SD=Strongly disagree.