



**UNSW**  
AUSTRALIA

## **Gender, Education and the Perceived Causes, Nature and Extent of Domestic and Dating Violence in Australian Society**

Never Stand Still

Gendered Violence Research Network

**Dr Jesse Cale and Associate Professor Jan Breckenridge  
Gendered Violence Research Network  
School of Social Sciences, Arts & Social Sciences  
UNSW Australia**

Prepared for  
White Ribbon Australia and Youth Action  
20 March 2015

 **White Ribbon  
Australia**



ISBN: 978-0-7334-3562-1

### **Suggested citation**

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

### **Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this publication do not represent any official position on the part of the Gendered Violence Research Network or UNSW Australia (University of New South Wales), only the views of the authors. The Gendered Violence Research Network, UNSW Australia and the authors do not endorse any subsequent representations made by White Ribbon Australia, Youth Action or any other third party regarding or citing the contents of this report.

### **Authorised contact details**

Dr Jesse Cale  
Lecturer, School of Social Sciences  
UNSW Australia  
+61 (2) 9385 3225  
[j.cale@unsw.edu.au](mailto:j.cale@unsw.edu.au)

Jennifer Mullen  
Executive - Schools, Youth and Communities  
White Ribbon Australia  
+61 (2) 9045 8424  
[jennifer.mullen@whiteribbon.org.au](mailto:jennifer.mullen@whiteribbon.org.au)

Eamon Waterford  
Director - Policy & Advocacy  
Youth Action NSW  
+61 (2) 8218 9800  
[info@youthaction.org.au](mailto:info@youthaction.org.au)

### **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

<b>SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>KEY FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>8</b>
• Sample .....	8
• Analyses.....	9
<b>RESULTS</b> .....	<b>10</b>
• Gender stereotypes and attitudes supportive of violence .....	10
• Defining domestic violence .....	12
• How common is domestic violence?.....	14
• Perceived causes of domestic violence.....	15
• Responses to discovering a domestic violence situation .....	17
• Where did respondents get information about domestic violence?.....	18
• Perceptions of dating violence and domestic violence.....	19
• How common is dating violence? .....	20
<b>OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>21</b>

## 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 the study status of respondents at the time of the survey (i.e., high school students, post-secondary students, and non-students). The results indicated that, while overall, respondents did not typically hold views supporting gender stereotypes and violence, depending on the gender and current educational status of respondents, there were different patterns evident among the small proportion that did. Regardless of respondents' educational status at the time of the survey, there was virtual consensus about harmful physical behaviours that constitute domestic violence. On the other hand, there was slightly less consensus for what types of covert/more subtle behaviours constitute domestic violence and this varied by respondents' educational status. Males tended to perceive domestic violence and dating violence as less common than females, regardless of current educational status. Taken together, the results suggest that to some extent, gender and level of education are associated with attitudes toward gender stereotypes and violence, and perceptions of the causes, nature and extent of domestic violence and dating violence in Australian society.

## KEY FINDINGS

- While a majority of respondents tended to disagree with gender stereotypes and attitudes supportive of violence, male high school students were among the most likely to agree with gender stereotypes and attitudes supportive of violence.
- Similar proportions of high school students and non-students shared views supportive of gender stereotypes, but this pattern was not evident in terms of attitudes supportive of violence, where high school students were the most likely to be characterised by these views compared to both post-secondary students and non-students.
- Among male respondents, it appeared that their current educational status was not associated with their perceptions about how common domestic violence is in Australian society; and they perceived it to be less common than female respondents. In contrast, female post-secondary and non-student respondents were more likely to perceive domestic violence as common or very common compared to female high school students.
- There is a virtual consensus across the current educational status of respondents of what constitutes domestic violence when it comes to more overt/physical forms of domestic violence. However, high school students are slightly less likely to attribute subtle/covert/less physical harmful behaviours as domestic violence.
- Male and female high school students were more likely to perceive growing up in a poor household and infidelity as a common cause of domestic violence compared to their post-secondary and non-student counterparts.
- The findings suggested to some extent that female high school student respondents tended to attribute domestic violence more to the individual characteristics of perpetrators, whereas male high school student respondents were more likely to attribute domestic violence to situational contexts such as stressors in the home and family.
- Post-secondary respondents were the most likely to provide individual support to friends in domestic violence situations and also to refer them to counselling services.
- The survey results also indicated that respondents get much of their information about domestic violence from a vast array of sources.
- High school students were slightly more likely to indicate that dating violence and domestic violence do not necessarily constitute the same behaviours compared to post-secondary and non-students.
- The vast majority of respondents indicated that they thought dating violence and domestic violence include many of the same behaviors and did not hold views supportive of dating violence. However, respondents perceived dating violence to be less common than domestic violence.

- Approximately half of the male respondents felt that dating violence was common or very common and this proportion did not change across high school students, post-secondary students and non-students. On the other hand, approximately three-quarters of female respondents felt that dating violence was common or very common, but this proportion dropped to approximately half of female high school students.

## 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 examining 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' attitudes towards 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. The current report examines the extent to which these themes vary according to the self-reported level of education of respondents.

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.

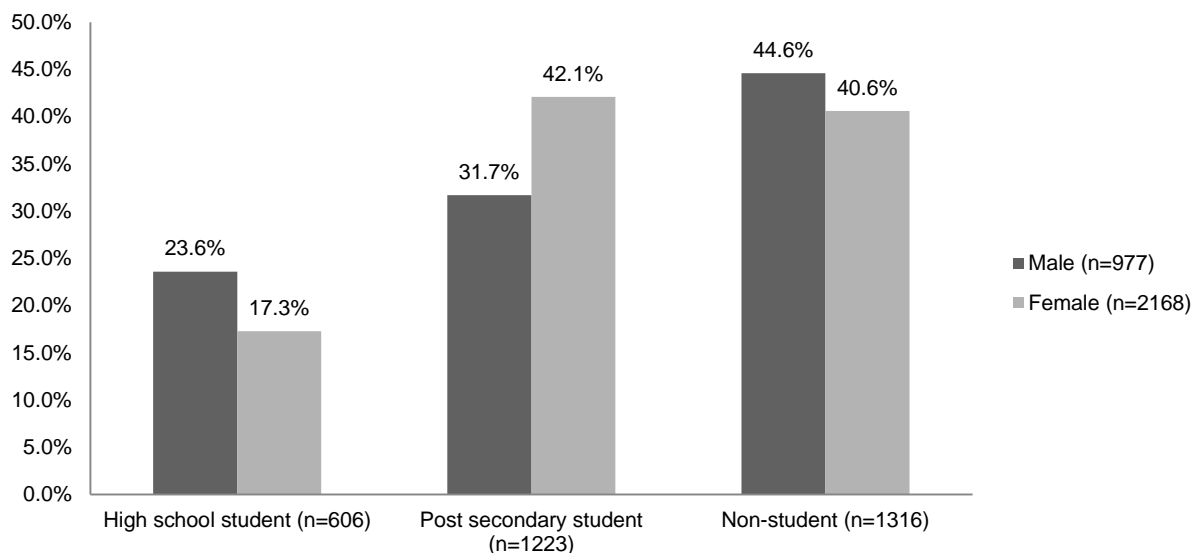
# METHODOLOGY

## 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.

Approximately one-fifth of the sample (19.2%) reported they were high school students at the time of the survey. Next, there were nearly equal proportions of respondents who reported they were in university (39.0%) or a non-student (41.8%)<sup>1</sup>. The majority of people classified as a 'non-student' reported being 'employed' (86.9%) whereas the rest indicated they were not working or studying (12.8%). In terms of the total sample, over two thirds of the respondents were female (67.9%) while just under one third were male (30.6%) however this varied by study-status (see figure 1). The key difference was that female respondents were slightly more likely than male respondents to be post-secondary students.

**Figure 1: Study status by Gender (n=3145)**



<sup>1</sup> There is a possibility that respondents who reported being 'non-students' may have had post-secondary training. The classification of current educational status (i.e., high-school students, post-secondary students, non-students) reflects the respondents' educational status at the time they completed the survey.



The average age of respondents was 20.8 years old (sd=2.9; range=16-25 years old) and as would be expected this varied by their current educational status. The average age of high school students was 16.6 years old (sd=0.9), post-secondary students were on average 21.0 years old (sd=2.1), and those identified as non-students were on average 22.5 years old (sd=2.1). Finally, 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 current educational status and gender of the 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 sizes<sup>2</sup>, 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.

---

<sup>2</sup> In the current study the effect sizes were measured using Cramer's V for categorical comparisons between study status groups.

# RESULTS

## Gender stereotypes and attitudes supportive of violence

Table 1 displays 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. 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 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 the current educational status of respondents. Generally, high-school students were slightly more likely to agree with several of the statements supporting gender stereotypes and attitudes supporting violence compared to post-secondary students. Next, in some cases, non-students' responses reflected those of post-secondary students, but not in others. On the one hand, **high-school students responded in a similar manner to non-students agreeing with several of the statements supportive of gender stereotypes.** On the other, **a larger proportion of high school students were likely to agree with attitudes supportive of violence compared to both other groups (i.e., post-secondary and non-students).**

There are some possible explanations for this pattern. First, there was a larger proportion of female respondents among post-secondary students compared to male respondents, and this may, to some extent, explain why post-secondary students were the least supportive of attitudes promoting gender stereotypes. At the same time, when it came to attitudes supportive of violence, post-secondary and non-students responded in similar proportions, at lower levels than high school students. **This suggests that to some extent attitudes supportive of violence were less common in post-secondary and non-students compared to high school students, but in terms of gender stereotypes, non-students shared similar views to those of high school students.**

Importantly, within each of the current educational status categories (i.e., high school students, post-secondary students, and non-students) male respondents were generally more likely to report attitudes supportive of gender stereotypes and violence. Again, it is important to note that these proportions were low, but nonetheless the overall response pattern was fairly consistent.

**Table 1: Current educational status and attitudes toward gender roles and violence<sup>3</sup>**

	% Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing			$X^2(df), CrV$
	HS	PS	Non-St	
Hitting someone else isn't ok unless you are defending yourself (n=3099)	90.3%	90.9%	89.2%	n.s.
<b>A person is not responsible for what they do when they are drunk or high (n=3156)</b>	6.0%	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	20.7(2) <sup>***</sup> , .08
Girls like guys who are in charge of the relationship (n=2716)	<b>16.9%</b>	12.5%	<b>17.8%</b>	13.1(2) <sup>**</sup> , .07
Men are not able to control their temper (n=3103)	10.0%	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	21.4(2) <sup>***</sup> , .08
Men are usually better at more things than women (n=3084)	<b>9.6%</b>	2.8%	<b>7.6%</b>	41.3(2) <sup>***</sup> , .12
Raising your voice at people makes them take notice of you (n=3029)	42.9%	<b>33.4%</b>	<b>34.8%</b>	16.0(2) <sup>***</sup> , .07
Women should be responsible for raising children and doing the housework (n=3115)	<b>7.6%</b>	4.2%	<b>6.5%</b>	9.9(2) <sup>**</sup> , .06
It may not be right, but threatening to hit someone gets you what you want (n=3134)	17.1%	<b>10.0%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	30.8(2) <sup>***</sup> , .10
It's not always wrong to hit someone, sometimes they provoke it (n=3107)	19.6%	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>9.2%</b>	59.4(2) <sup>***</sup> , .14
Men are supposed to be the head of the household and take control of the relationship (n=3092)	<b>10.0%</b>	5.5%	<b>10.1%</b>	20.0(2) <sup>***</sup> , .08
Guys who fight when they need to get the most respect from others (n=2970)	12.9%	<b>7.2%</b>	<b>8.9%</b>	15.4(2) <sup>***</sup> , .07
Guys should never hit girls but it's ok for girls to hit guys or girls (n=3147)	5.2%	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	13.0(2) <sup>***</sup> , .06
Guys and girls are equal to each other (n=2901)	91.0%	91.8%	90.1%	n.s.

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ , n.s.=not significant.  $X^2$ =Chi-Square test for statistical significance.  $\Phi$  = phi, effect size. HS=High school student. PS=Post-secondary student. Non-St=non-student. See shaded cells for similar proportions between specific groups.

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

## 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 most of the 16 items as constituting domestic violence. For overt serious acts of domestic violence such as threatening and hitting one's partner, there were no differences across the current educational status of respondents. In addition, while it appeared that there were significant differences between the groups according to the item 'forcing a partner to have sex', it should be noted that a minimum of 98% of all respondents endorsed this as domestic violence. Importantly, the extremely small effect size indicates while there appear to be statistically significant differences, in reality virtually all respondents regardless of student status also consider this as a serious form of domestic violence.

Variation between the groups was more evident for what might be considered more covert forms of domestic violence, such as giving a partner the silent treatment, not showing a partner any love/affection, not letting your partner go to the church they want, and checking a partner's email without their consent. Here, **a consistent pattern emerged where high school students were less likely to consider some of these more subtle behaviours as domestic violence.** In addition, there were minimal differences evident between post-secondary students and non-students. **These findings may suggest that high school students have likely had less experiences in relationships than older respondents, and therefore may be less clear on whether more covert/subtle actions constitute domestic violence or not.**

Overall, females were consistently more likely to consider items as domestic violence within groups of high-school students, post-secondary students, and non-students. However, it is important to remember given the overwhelming majority of respondents considered most items to constitute domestic violence, while this pattern was evident, it was a subtle one. In effect, the only items for which there was **consistent agreement regardless of student status or gender were for the most serious forms of domestic violence involving some sort of physical harm.**

Table 2: Definitions of domestic violence	% indicating item = domestic violence			
	HS	PS	Non-St	$X^2(df)$ , CrV
Giving a partner the "silent treatment" (n=3013)	6.5%	13.0%	10.4%	17.5(2) <sup>***</sup> , .08
<b>Not showing a partner any form of love or affection (n=2724)</b>	<b>33.5%</b>	<b>57.4%</b>	<b>47.2%</b>	<b>81.1(2)<sup>***</sup>, .17</b>
Constant yelling at a partner (n=3107)	91.1%	94.3%	94.9%	10.8(2) <sup>**</sup> , .06
Constantly putting a partner down or humiliating them (n=3117)	92.5%	97.5%	96.5%	27.6(2) <sup>***</sup> , .09
Not letting a partner see their friends and family (n=3095)	91.8%	98.1%	96.3%	42.5(2) <sup>***</sup> , .12
Not allowing a partner any money for their own use (n=3032)	90.1%	96.1%	95.2%	28.3(2) <sup>***</sup> , .10
Throwing things at each other (n=3140)	92.8%	95.8%	95.4%	7.9(2) <sup>*</sup> , .05
<b>Threatening to hit a partner (n=3160)</b>	<b>98.0%</b>	<b>98.6%</b>	<b>98.5%</b>	<b>n.s.</b>
<b>Physically hitting/slapping/shoving a partner during a big fight (n=3160)</b>	<b>97.7%</b>	<b>97.0%</b>	<b>98.3%</b>	<b>n.s.</b>
<b>Physically hitting/slapping/shoving a partner regularly (n=3169)</b>	<b>99.2%</b>	<b>99.8%</b>	<b>99.0%</b>	<b>n.s.</b>
Threaten to "out" partner as gay/lesbian/trans if they do something you don't like (n=3037)	93.0%	96.7%	95.3%	11.7(2) <sup>**</sup> , .06
<b>Not letting a partner go to the church they want to go to (n=2980)</b>	<b>83.0%</b>	<b>94.2%</b>	<b>90.1%</b>	<b>54.0(2)<sup>***</sup>, .14</b>
<b>Checking a partner's emails or phone without their consent (n=2904)</b>	<b>66.4%</b>	<b>77.3%</b>	<b>70.5%</b>	<b>25.7(2)<sup>***</sup>, .09</b>
Threatening to hurt yourself to stop someone breaking up with you (n=3012)	92.9%	96.5%	96.4%	14.4(2) <sup>**</sup> , .07
Threatening to hurt your partner's family or pet (n=3147)	98.3%	99.7%	99.2%	9.3(2) <sup>**</sup> , .05
Forcing a partner to have sex (n=3156)	98.0%	99.7%	98.7%	12.3(2) <sup>***</sup> , .06

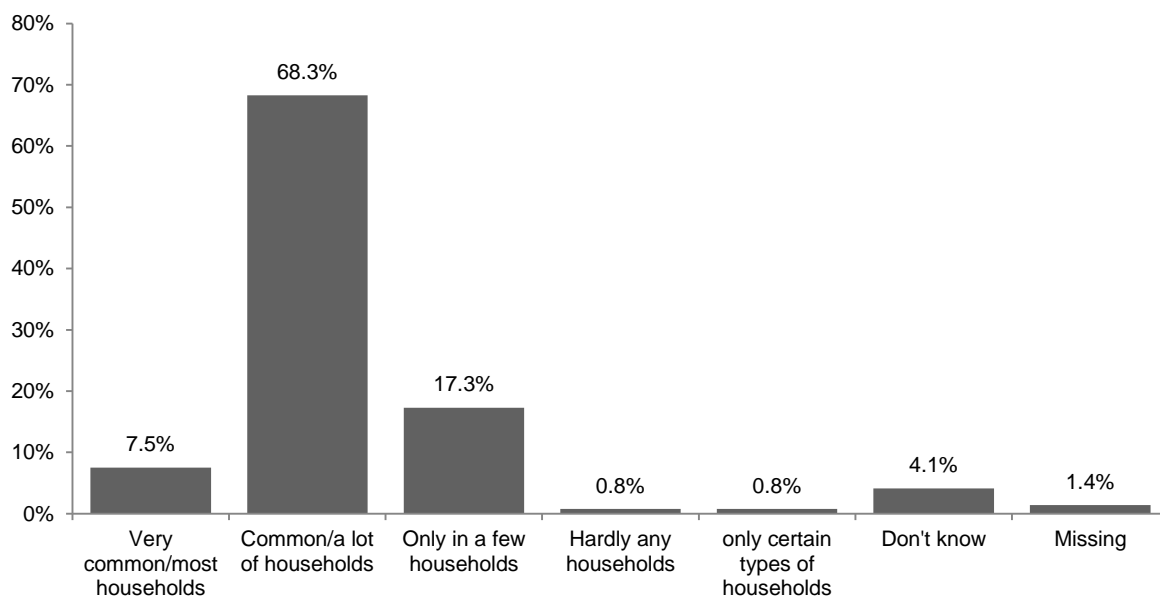
Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ , n.s.=not significant.  $X^2$ =Chi-Square test for statistical significance.  $\Phi$  = phi, effect size. HS=High school student. PS=Post-secondary student. Non-St=non-student.

## 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. However this varied somewhat by the current study status of respondents. In effect, high school students were slightly less likely to indicate that domestic violence could happen in any type of relationship (e.g., 80.9% of high school students compared to 90% and 98.1% of post-secondary students and non-students respectively;  $X^2(2)=34.6$ ,  $P<.001$ ; Cramer's  $V=.10$ ). Again, this also may reflect, to some extent, limited relationship experience given their age.

In addition to this, respondents were also asked how common they thought domestic violence is in Australian society. Figure 2 shows that approximately three-quarters (75.7%) of the survey respondents felt that domestic violence is either common or very common in Australian society.

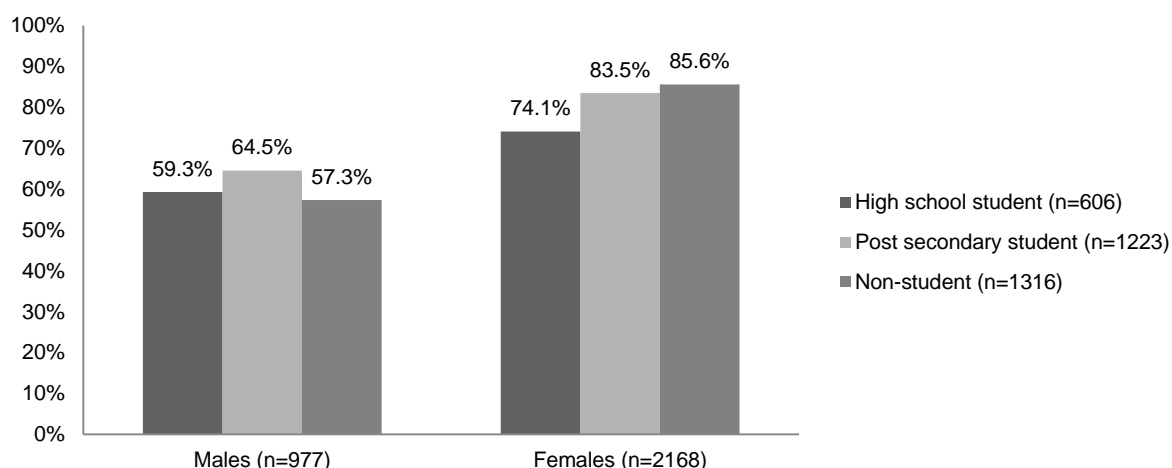
**Figure 2. How common do you think domestic violence is? (n=3193)**



Importantly, these perceptions also varied by gender and the current educational status of respondents (Figure 3). In effect, female respondents were more likely to indicate that they believed domestic violence was common or very common; and among females, post-secondary and non-students were more likely to perceive this compared to female high school students. This suggests that to some extent, while female respondents with more education perceived domestic violence to be common or very common, age likely also plays a role in this relationship, at least among females. A different pattern emerged among male respondents.

Overall, male respondents were significantly less likely overall to consider domestic violence to be common or very common compared to female respondents. In addition, these perceptions did not vary by the current educational status of these respondents (i.e., approximately two-thirds or less of males compared to approximately three-quarters or more of females overall). This suggests that **among male respondents, it appeared that their current level of education was not associated with their perceptions about how common domestic violence is in Australian society; and they perceived it to be less common than females.**

**Figure 3. Domestic violence is common/very common**



### **Perceived causes of domestic violence**

Overall, respondents indicated they felt the most common causes of domestic violence were growing up in a violent household (96.1%), using drugs and alcohol (96.3%), disrespectful attitudes toward women (95.7%), and the belief that men should be in control of society (89.9%). Generally, these did not vary by the current educational status of respondents (Table 3). The proportions in table three represent whether or not respondents felt that the item was either sometimes or commonly a cause of domestic violence.

There were some slight differences in the perceived causes of domestic violence across current educational status. The most prominent ones were reflecting infidelity as a cause of domestic violence, where **high school students were more likely than post-secondary and non-students to feel that these were common causes of domestic violence**. This may reflect, to some extent, preconceived notions of relationship expectations and the causes of domestic violence among younger respondents. In addition, although other differences were evident between the current educational status groups, it should be noted that these effect sizes are quite small. **Taken together, it appears that respondents of this survey tended to attribute domestic violence to a wide array of causes, and these perceptions varied, albeit slightly with the current educational status of the respondents.**

Importantly, within the categories of current educational status, there were some differences evident in terms of the gender of respondents and what they perceived to be common causes of domestic violence. First, **both male and female high school students were more likely to perceive growing up in a poor household as a cause of domestic violence compared to their post-secondary and non-student counterparts**. A similar pattern emerged in terms of infidelity as a cause of domestic violence. **Male and female high school students were more likely than their post-secondary and non-student counterparts to attribute domestic violence to infidelity**. Interestingly, among males, current educational status was not related to whether or not they felt that disrespectful attitudes toward women was a cause of domestic violence, although it must be noted that among males, approximately 93% attributed this as a cause of domestic violence. In addition, although female/high school respondents were slightly less likely to attribute this as a cause of domestic violence than their post-secondary and non-

student counterparts, it must be noted these differences were slight (i.e., 93.3% of female high school students compared to 97.4% of female post-secondary students and 97.7% of female non-students;  $\chi^2(2)=18.0$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.09$ ).

**Table 3. Perceived causes of domestic violence**

	HS (n=613)	PS (n=1244)	Non-St (n=1336)	$\chi^2(df)$ , CrV
Growing up in a violent household	96.1%	96.9%	95.4%	n.s.
Growing up in a poor household	74.4%	65.4%	64.8%	19.5(2) <sup>***</sup> , .08
Using drugs/alcohol	97.7%	96.0%	96.0%	n.s.
One partner flirts with other people	73.2%	60.7%	69.4%	36.4(2) <sup>***</sup> , .11
One partner sleeping with another person	89.9%	78.0%	82.9%	40.5(2) <sup>***</sup> , .11
Having money problems (e.g., low income, gambling etc.)	82.1%	82.9%	82.8%	n.s.
Having housing problems	77.8%	75.6%	78.7%	n.s.
Problems at work	72.4%	69.3%	70.8%	n.s.
Being unemployed	74.6%	73.2%	72.7%	n.s.
Disrespectful attitudes towards women	93.3%	96.5%	96.0%	11.0(2) <sup>**</sup> , .06
Having mental health issues	89.7%	88.6%	90.1%	n.s.
Criminal record or previously been in jail	88.1%	81.8%	80.8%	16.5(2) <sup>***</sup> , .07
A belief that men should be in control in society/the family	88.9%	91.7%	88.6%	7.6(2) <sup>*</sup> , .05
Stresses at home like too much housework, kids crying etc.	77.3%	72.3%	74.0%	n.s.
One parent wanting to be in control/in charge of the family	87.4%	90.0%	88.6%	n.s.
It's part of their culture	62.6%	68.9%	70.1%	11.3(2) <sup>**</sup> , .06

Note. \* $p<.05$ , \*\* $p<.01$ , \*\*\* $p<.001$ , n.s.=not significant.  $\chi^2$ =Chi-Square test for statistical significance.  $\Phi$  = phi, effect size. HS=High school student. PS=Post-secondary student. Non-St=non-student.

A similar pattern emerged in terms of criminal record or having previously been in jail as a perceived cause of domestic violence. Again, there were no differences evident in the responses to this item according to current educational status among males, yet here, **female high school students were more likely to attribute domestic violence to a criminal history/jail compared to their post-secondary and non-student counterparts** (i.e., 90.7% of female high school students compared to 83.4% of female post-secondary students and 82.4% of female non-students;  $\chi^2(2)=14.5$ ,  $p<.01$ , Cramer's  $V=.08$ ). Finally, **male high school students were more likely to perceive stresses at home as a cause of domestic violence compared to their post-secondary and non-student counterparts** (i.e., 77.5% of male high school students compared to 67.4% of male post-secondary students and 71.3% of non-students;  $\chi^2(2)=6.6$ ,  $p<.05$ , Cramer's  $V=.04$ ). **These findings may suggest that young females tend to attribute domestic violence more to the individual characteristics of perpetrators, whereas young males are more likely to attribute domestic violence to situational contexts such as stressors in the home and family.** Again it is important to note the effect sizes reported are quite low so the meaning of these differences should be interpreted with caution.



## Responses to discovering a domestic violence situation

Given the perceived nature, extent, and causes of domestic violence highlighted above, 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?”. 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.

Table 4 displays the distribution of responses to a variety of scenarios according to the current educational status of respondents. For the most part, there was no overall discernible pattern according to current educational status in terms of what respondents felt they would do when confronted with becoming aware of a domestic violence situation, however some differences were evident.

<b>Table 4. Response to discovering a domestic violence situation (n=3145)</b>	<b>HS (n=613)</b>	<b>PS (n=1244)</b>	<b>Non-St (n=1336)</b>	<b>X<sup>2</sup>(df), CrV</b>
Suggest that they talk to their parents	30.3%	30.6%	32.7%	n.s.
Suggest that your friend tells another adult (e.g., a teacher)	74.7%	74.9%	64.7%	38.3(2) <sup>***</sup> , 0.11
Advise your friend that they should tell the police	58.6%	60.1%	56.6%	n.s.
Talk to your own parents and get them to deal with it	16.2%	15.4%	11.8%	10.1(2) <sup>**</sup> , 0.06
Tell another adult (e.g., a teacher/counsellor etc.)	37.4%	36.6%	34.5%	n.s.
<b>Ask them what they needed</b>	<b>42.1%</b>	<b>61.5%</b>	<b>48.7%</b>	<b>74.9(2)<sup>***</sup>, 0.15</b>
Call the police yourself	11.4%	14.1%	15.0%	n.s.
<b>Get them to contact a counselling service</b>	<b>63.1%</b>	<b>74.4%</b>	<b>63.5%</b>	<b>41.6(2)<sup>***</sup>, 0.11</b>
Call a counselling service like 1800 Respect or Kids Help line	41.8%	46.1%	44.0%	n.s.
You'd stay out of it because you don't want to get involved	5.1%	2.6%	3.3%	7.9(2) <sup>*</sup> , 0.05
Don't know	4.7%	4.1%	5.1%	n.s.
Other	4.4%	4.5%	3.1%	n.s.

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ , n.s.=not significant. X<sup>2</sup>=Chi-Square test for statistical significance.  $\Phi$  = phi, effect size. HS=High school student. PS=Post-secondary student. Non-St=non-student.

First, non-students were the least likely to indicate they would suggest telling another adult like a teacher and this is obviously explained by the fact they are non-students (i.e., many likely do not have regular contact with teachers). Interestingly, the starkest contrast according to current educational status had to do with whether respondents would ask their friend what they needed. Here, **post-secondary students were the most likely to indicate they would ask their friend what they needed (61.5%) compared to less than half of both high school students and non-students.** A similar pattern emerged in terms of respondents indicating they would get them to contact a counselling service where approximately three-quarters of post-secondary students suggested they would take this course of action compared to approximately two-thirds of high

school students and non-students. **One possibility is that post-secondary students may be more aware of counselling and domestic violence services through their post-secondary experiences compared to high-school students and non-students and therefore feel more comfortable suggesting them to their friends.**

There were some slight differences between males and females according to their current educational status and what respondents felt they would do when confronted with becoming aware of a domestic violence situation. First, male post-secondary students and non-students were more likely than their high school counterparts to suggest to their friend that they should talk to their parents about the situations (40.6% and 36.5% compared to 28.6% respectively;  $\chi^2(2)=8.5$ ,  $p<.05$ , Cramer's  $V=.09$ ). In contrast, there were no differences along these lines according to the current educational status of female respondents. Similarly, **male post-secondary students were the most likely to advise their friend to tell the police; here over two-thirds of male post-secondary students suggested they would take this course of action compared to approximately half of high school students (55.4%) and non-students (53.2%)** [ $\chi^2(2)=16.0$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.13$ ]. Again, there were no differences along these lines among females according to their current educational status. Finally, both female and male post-secondary students were the most likely to ask their friend what they needed and/or get them to contact counselling services compared to their high school and non-student counterparts.

#### **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.

Approximately half of high school students (54.0%) indicated they received information about domestic violence at school in their classes along with a similar proportion of post-secondary students (42.9%). In contrast, post-secondary students and non-students were slightly more likely than high school students to indicate they received their information about domestic violence from friends or family (57.0% and 55.1% compared to 48.9% respectively) [ $\chi^2(2)=10.9$ ,  $p<.01$ , Cramer's  $V=.06$ ]. Similarly, post-secondary students were the most likely to also indicate they got their information about domestic violence from the internet and social media (73.8%) compared to high school students (63.6%) and non-students (67.9%) [ $\chi^2(2)=22.4$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.18$ ].

## 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**. Some slight differences were evident between the current educational status of respondents. In effect, despite the overwhelming pattern described above, **high school students were slightly more likely to indicate that dating violence and domestic violence were not the same**, although this pattern was subtle. More specifically, this was 8.3% of high school students compared to only 2.5% of post-secondary students and 3.1% of non-students [ $\chi^2(2)=38.3$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.11$ ]. Again it is important to reiterate although differences are evident the proportions are extremely small.

Table 5. Perceptions of dating violence	% agreeing with the statement			$\chi^2(df)$ , CrV
	HS	PS	Non-St	
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=3036)	2.6%	0.9%	1.0%	10.(2)** , 0.06
Hitting your boyfriend/girlfriend during a fight is OK (n=3036)	1.6%	0.8%	0.5%	n.s.
If you are dating then you are expected to have sex with your partner (n=2995)	7.6%	6.9%	9.7%	6.2(2)* , 0.05
It's ok to have sex with your partner when they are too drunk or high to consent (n=3008)	3.6%	2.3%	3.0%	n.s.
It's wrong for a guy to hit a girl but it's not that bad if a girl hits a guy (n=3011)	7.8%	3.5%	4.2%	17.4(2)*** , 0.08
Violence in same-sex relationships isn't the same as violence in heterosexual relationships (n=2947)	6.5%	3.4%	3.1%	13.0(2)** , 0.07
It's not your fault if you hurt your partner when you are drunk or high (n=3031)	4.0%	1.4%	0.9%	24.8(2)*** , 0.09
Sometimes it's ok to hit your partner because they provoked it (n=3025)	3.0%	1.4%	1.0%	10.3(2)** , 0.06
If you send "sexting" images to someone, and they forward them on it's OK (n=3032)	2.5%	1.1%	0.9%	8.5(2)* , 0.05
Stalking your Ex on Facebook is perfectly ok and isn't harassment (n=2875)	17.2%	13.6%	10.7%	14.1(2)** , 0.07

Note. \* $p<.05$ , \*\* $p<.01$ , \*\*\* $p<.001$ , n.s.=not significant.  $\chi^2$ =Chi-Square test for statistical significance.  $\Phi$  = phi, effect size. HS=High school student. PS=Post-secondary student. Non-St=non-student.

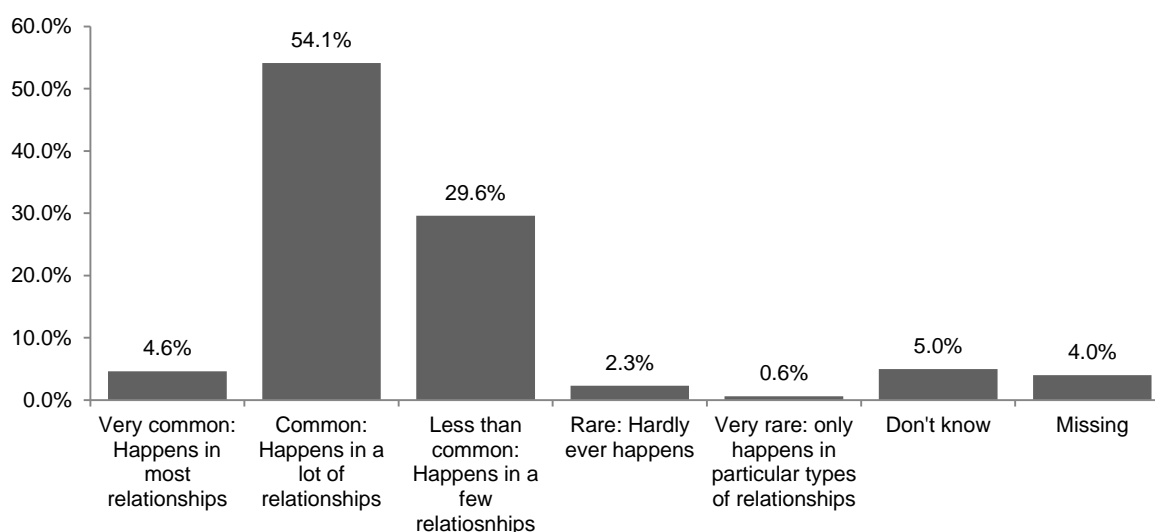
Next, the respondents were asked a series of questions related to their perceptions of dating violence. As Table 5 shows, in the vast majority of examples, a very small proportion of respondents agreed with attitudes supportive of dating violence. **These results suggest that a small yet concerning proportion of respondents held attitudes that can be considered supportive of dating violence; and these individuals were slightly more likely to be high school students in most cases**. There was a little more ambiguity surrounding stalking activities, such as stalking an ex

on Facebook where nearly one-fifth of high school students felt this behaviour was acceptable, whereas slightly fewer post-secondary students and non-students felt this was acceptable behaviour.

### How common is dating violence?

Finally, respondents were asked about how common they felt dating violence was in Australian society (Figure 4). 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.**

**Figure 4. How common do you think dating violence is? (n=3193)**



In terms of current educational status, while over two-thirds of post-secondary students and non-students felt that dating violence was either common or very common (66.8% and 66.9% respectively), this figure was only approximately half of high school students (53.0%) [ $X^2(2)=36.6$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.11$ ]. Interestingly, **when it came to male respondents, there were no differences across the categories of current educational status in terms of their perceptions about how common dating violence was** (approximately half of the male respondents indicated they thought it was common or very common across each of the categories). In contrast, just over half of female high school respondents (56.7%) indicated they thought dating violence was common or very common whereas this figure consisted of approximately three-quarters of female post-secondary students and non-students (71.4% and 74.6% respectively) [ $X^2(2)=37.7$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.14$ ]. In terms of gender and current educational status, this reflects a similar pattern to respondents' perceptions of how common domestic violence is in Australian society, but as mentioned above, it should be noted that overall, respondents seem to perceive dating violence as less common than domestic violence. These findings suggest that to some extent that **older female respondents with more education perceived domestic violence and dating violence to be more prevalent in society compared to female high school student respondents, whereas this same pattern was not evident with males.**

## 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.** The findings provide some support for the notion that attitudes toward gender stereotypes, violence, and the causes, nature and extent of domestic violence and dating violence vary according to gender and educational status of respondents who completed the survey. **Overall, male respondents perceived domestic violence and dating violence to be less common than female respondents did.** In addition, this did not vary according to whether the male respondents were high school students, post-secondary, or non-students. However, **female post-secondary and non-students were more likely to perceive domestic violence and dating violence as common compared to female high school students.** This suggests that female respondents may become more aware of the nature and extent of domestic violence and dating violence with age and level of education. Importantly, regardless of gender and education, there seemed to be virtual consensus about physically harmful behaviours that constitute domestic violence. On the other hand, there was slightly less consensus surrounding causes of domestic violence, and what constituted domestic violence when it came to more subtle harmful behaviours, particularly among younger (i.e., high school) student respondents. Respondents gained much of their information about domestic violence from a wide array of sources. This suggests that information about domestic violence, regardless of the medium, reaches a wide range of individuals regardless of gender/age/education. At the same time, it is prudent to note that approximately only half of the high school students indicated receiving information about domestic violence and dating violence at their schools. Taken together, these results provide support for increasing education and awareness of domestic violence and dating violence early on, and that a fruitful avenue to pursue these goals is in schools.