A critique of the claim by Dr Michael Flood that women make up 90 to 95% of victims of severe domestic violence

OVERVIEW

Over the period 22nd June to December 6th 2012, Dr Michael Flood presented variations upon a seminar paper titled, "He Hits, She Hits: Assessing debates regarding men's and women's experiences of domestic violence¹," at the following institutions:

22nd June 2012 - <u>Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence</u> Research at CQ University, Mackay² (also published in <u>CDFVRe@der, June 2012</u>³)

9th October 2012 - <u>Australian Institute of Family Studies</u>, <u>Melbourne</u>⁴ (also interviewed in <u>DVRCV Quarterly</u>, <u>Spring/Summer 2012</u>⁵)

6th December 2012 - <u>Australian Domestic and Family Violence</u> <u>Clearinghouse at UNSW, Sydney</u>⁶

This seminar paper has never been peer-reviewed. It also lacks a bibliography, so the list of references cited are unable to be easily verified.

The paper makes the claim that women are 90 to 95% of victims of severe intimate partner violence (IPV). This argument is based on an incorrect assertion that the only severe and chronic form of IPV is what US family violence researcher Michael P. Johnson has termed *intimate terrorism*.

The 90 to 95% figure is calculated by referencing a single peer-reviewed journal article by Johnson titled, "Gender and types of intimate partner violence: A response to an anti-feminist literature review" and applying its findings on the typology of IPV to data from the 2005 Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey (ABS PSS)⁸.

¹ Flood, M. (2012). He Hits, She Hits: Assessing debates regarding men's and women's experiences of domestic violence. Seminar, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, Sydney, December 6.

 $^{^2\} https://web.archive.org/web/20140226095554/http://www.noviolence.com.au/public/seminarpapers/michaelflood/michaelfloodnotes.pdf$

³ http://www.xyonline.net/sites/default/files/Flood,%20He%20hits%20she%20hits%20Seminar %20Summary%202012.pdf

⁴ http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/seminars/2012/flood/index.php

⁵ http://www.xyonline.net/sites/default/files/Price-Robertson,%20Anti-feminist%20men's%20groups %20in%20Australia%20-%20Flood%20interview.pdf

⁶ http://www.xyonline.net/content/he-hits-she-hits-assessing-debates-regarding-men's-and-women's-experiences-domestic-violence

⁷ Johnson, M. (2011). *Gender and Types of Intimate Partner Violence: A Response to an Anti-Feminist Literature Review*. Aggression and Violent Behavior, Volume 16, Issue 4, July/August 2011. pp 289 - 296

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006, Personal Safety Survey Australia: 2005 Reissue 4906.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

Dr Flood appears to have both misread Johnson's findings and miscalculated the numbers involved when applying them to the ABS survey data.

Dr Flood's claims	Johnson's actual findings
We can estimate the incidence of the various types of violence found in the ABS Personal Safety Survey to show that "there are around 19 to 20,000 individuals (19,510 to 20,570) living with intimate terrorism this year, and males are between five and 10 percent of all victims."	"It is almost impossible to develop precise estimates of the incidence of the various types of violence"
Situational couple violence is "relatively minor"	Situational couple violence "can be extremely consequential"
"Injuries are rare" in situational couple violence	"Many cases [of situational couple violence] do involve chronic and/or serious, even life-threatening, violence"
75 per cent of survey data on IPV in current relationships is intimate terrorism ("Johnson would suggest that three-quarters are experiencing situational couple violence, and one-quarter – 18,450 women – are experiencing intimate terrorism")	"Survey data on current partners include no intimate terrorism"

Dr Flood claims that, "In relation to domestic violence between adults, we should continue to focus largely on men's violence against women. And to devote most service responses and resources to this." This is because "There are around 19 to 20,000 individuals (19,510 to 20,570) living with intimate terrorism this year, and males are between five and 10 percent of all victims."

However, intimate terrorism (which is rare - making up less than one per cent of cases of current partner violence) isn't the only type of IPV involving chronic and/or serious, even life-threatening, violence. Up to 60% of situational couple violence is chronic and serious in nature, and makes up the vast majority of IPV. A sole focus on intimate terrorism would deny services to the vast majority of women who currently access domestic violence support services such as shelters, legal aid, counselling, etc.

If we are to analyse the data from the ABS PSS in order to determine the prevalence of chronic and severe violence that needs to be the primary focus of government service responses and resources, we agree with Dr Flood that we need to look at intimate terrorism, but we *also* need to look at severe and chronic cases of situational couple violence.

If we undertake Dr Flood's attempted calculation using the correct findings from Johnson's paper along with the more up-to-date 2012 ABS PSS data, we find that 44,864 males (26%) and 127,604 females (74%) are potentially experiencing serious/chronic IPV. These are very different figures to the 90 to 95 per cent female claim made by Dr Flood.

For readers with a head for statistics, here are the workings used to calculate the above figures.

CALCULATIONS

There are two relevant quotes from Dr Flood's paper:

1. "Different patterns of violent behaviour in couples and relationships

There are diverse patterns of violent behaviour in couples and relationships. I draw here on the most prominent articulation of this, by Michael Johnson, although later I will note some criticisms of his work.

Intimate terrorism: a violent and controlling individual with a partner who is neither.

Let's start with the patterns of violence and control which comprise the classic situation of domestic violence – domestic violence in the strong sense. Johnson first described this as "intimate terrorism", and now terms it "coercive controlling violence". 'Intimate terrorism' (or 'coercive controlling violence') describes a situation involving a violent perpetrator who uses violence in combination with a variety of other coercive control tactics in order to attempt to take general control over his partner (Johnson 2010: 213). In situations of "coercive controlling violence" one partner (usually the man) uses violence and other controlling tactics to assert or restore power and authority (Johnson 1995, 284-285). The violence is severe, it is asymmetrical, it is instrumental in meaning, it tends to escalate, and injuries are more likely. In heterosexual relationships, intimate terrorism is perpetrated primarily by men.

Situational couple violence: neither are violent and controlling

Johnson contrasts this pattern of violence with what he terms "common couple violence", or more recently, 'situational couple violence'. Some heterosexual relationships suffer from occasional outbursts of violence by either husbands or wives during conflicts. Situational couple violence involves arguments which escalate to verbal aggression and ultimately to physical aggression (Johnson 2010: 213). Here, the violence is relatively minor, both partners practise it, it is expressive (emotional) in meaning, it tends not to escalate over time, and injuries are rare. Situational couple violence does not involve a general pattern of coercive control.

<u>Violent resistance – typically by a woman to a male partner's violent and controlling behaviour.</u>

Johnson identifies a third pattern of violence, termed 'violent resistance'. This describes the situation where a woman (or, rarely, a man) uses violence as resistance while entrapped in a relationship with an intimate terrorist (Johnson 2010: 213)."

2. "Patterns of violence and the Personal Safety Survey

So what about the largescale survey of victimisation in Australia, the Personal Safety Survey? Johnson (2011: 293) argues that most violence in these kinds of surveys is situational couple violence. Four studies have tried to break down the violence reported in largescale surveys, with findings that 75% and up to 89% of the violence is situational couple violence (Johnson 2011: 293).

Going back to the 73,800 females who experienced at least one incident of physical assault by a current or previous other-sex partner in the last 12 months, Johnson would suggest that three-quarters are experiencing situational couple violence, and one-quarter – 18,450 women – are experiencing intimate terrorism. However, of the 21,200 male victims, the proportion experiencing intimate terrorism is likely to be far lower, perhaps five or 10%, or 1060 to 2120 men.

So, if this is accurate, than female victims of intimate terrorism by a male partner are somewhere from eight to 17 times as common as male victims of intimate terrorism by a female partner. There are around 19 to 20,000 individuals (19,510 to 20,570) living with intimate terrorism this year, and males are between five and 10 percent of all victims."

It is important to note firstly that Johnson's paper says, "it is almost impossible to develop precise estimates of the incidence of the various types of violence" and that general surveys such as the ABS PSS are "dominated by situational couple violence." Therefore Dr Flood's attempt to quantify the different types of violence found in the ABS PSS was always going to be an extremely imprecise calculation.

Dr Flood appears to have also significantly misquoted Johnson's definition of situational couple violence. Johnson does not agree with Dr Flood that it is "relatively minor, tends not to escalate over time, and injuries are rare" – far from it. Johnson's paper states quite clearly on more than one occasion that situational couple violence,

"is by far the most common form of intimate partner violence"

"results from situations or arguments between partners that escalate on occasion into physical violence"

"many cases do involve chronic and/or serious, even life-threatening, violence"

"it is roughly gender-symmetric in terms of perpetration"

"I and others have always noted that situational couple violence

- (a) is far and away the most common form of intimate partner violence,
- (b) is perpetrated about equally by men and women, and
- (c) can be extremely consequential."

"repeat, severe violence against a non-violent intimate is symmetrical by gender."

Let us undertake Dr Flood's attempted calculation with this in mind, using the findings from Johnson's paper along with the more up-to-date 2012 ABS PSS data (which wasn't available when Dr Flood conducted his analysis).

VIOLENCE IN CURRENT RELATIONSHIPS

Percentages from Johnson's paper

Johnson argues that general samples of *current* relationships/marriages are made up almost entirely of situational couple violence:

"a survey sample of current relationships, a sample that essentially includes no intimate terrorism."

"for current marriages only 6/10 of one percent of respondents report intimate terrorism"

"survey data on current partners include no intimate terrorism"

"we found only 34 male intimate terrorists among current partners of almost 5000 married respondents"

Johnson also cites five separate data points showing that 87%⁹, 97%¹⁰, 78%¹¹, 29%¹² and 83%¹³ of intimate terrorism is male-perpetrated. We can average these out to a figure of 74.8% male (and 25.2% female).

In one study, Johnson found that for current marriages, only 0.6% of respondents reported intimate terrorism. We know that on average 74.8% of these intimate terrorists are male and 25.2% are female. This means that overall 0.4% of respondents were male intimate terrorists and 0.2% were female intimate terrorists.

In a second study Johnson found 34 male intimate terrorists among current partners of almost 5000 married respondents, i.e. 0.7% of respondents were

^{9 &}quot;87% of the intimate terrorism in Graham-Kevan and Archer's data is male-perpetrated"

¹⁰ "In the shelter sample (n=68), there were 36 male and one female intimate terrorists"

¹¹ "Among students (n=56), there were seven male and two female intimate terrorists"

¹² "Among prisoners (n=105), there were two male and five female intimate terrorists"

^{13 &}quot;83% of the intimate terrorism in previous relationships is male-perpetrated"

male intimate terrorists. Using the same gender breakdown calculated above, we can calculate that 0.2% were female intimate terrorists.

Averaging the above two studies we come up with a breakdown of violence in current relationships/marriages as follows¹⁴:

Type of violence	%
Situational couple violence	99.2%
Male-Perpetrated intimate terrorism	0.6%
Female-perpetrated intimate terrorism	0.2%

Johnson is very clear that situational couple violence is perpetrated equally by males and females:

"it is roughly gender-symmetric in terms of perpetration"

"is perpetrated about equally by men and women"

"women both initiate violence and participate in mutual violence and that, particularly in teenage and young adult samples, women perpetrate violence against their partners more frequently than do the men. Based on knowledge available, this gender symmetry is associated primarily with Situational Couple Violence."

Acknowledging this, our breakdown of violence in current relationships/marriages looks like this:

Type of violence	%
Male-Perpetrated situational couple violence	49.6%
Female-perpetrated situational couple violence	49.6%
Male-Perpetrated intimate terrorism	0.6%
Female-perpetrated intimate terrorism	0.2%

Johnson says of the situational couple violence, "somewhere around 40% of the cases identified involve only one relatively minor incident, but many cases do involve chronic and/or serious, even life-threatening, violence."

We can therefore breakdown our figures further to come up with the following analysis of IPV in current relationships/marriages:

Type of violence	%
Minor male-perpetrated situational couple violence	> 19.8%
Chronic/serious male-perpetrated situational couple violence	< 29.8%
Minor female-perpetrated situational couple violence	> 19.8%
Chronic/serious female-perpetrated situational couple violence	< 29.8%
Male-Perpetrated intimate terrorism	0.6%
Female-perpetrated intimate terrorism	0.2%

¹⁴ Johnson's typology of intimate partner violence contains a 3rd category: violent resistance, however his article gives no estimates of how frequently this type of violence occurs besides, saying, "violent resistance accounts for only a small part of women's intimate partner violence in my typology." Dr Flood also omits this category from his analysis. Therefore it is excluded for the purposes of this critique as well.

Applying Johnson's percentages to the Personal Safety Survey numbers

The 2012 ABS PSS¹⁵ found that 33,100 males experienced violence from a current partner, and 26,600 from a boyfriend/girlfriend or date in the previous 12 months.¹⁶ These figures include violence perpetrated by both males and females.

To break down the above figures into violence perpetrated by females only, we need to look at Table 6 of the ABS PSS which found that 94.0% of lifetime dating violence against males and 94.2 of lifetime previous partner violence against males was perpetrated by females.¹⁷ Because the ABS for some reason chose not to publish the available lifetime data on males who had experienced current partner violence, we can use the above figures as a proxy for current partner violence, as there is no reason to assume that the gender breakdown would be significantly different from previous partner violence or dating violence.

Using the above percentages, 31,114 males experienced violence from a current female partner, and 25,004 from a girlfriend or female date in the previous 12 months: a total of 56,118 males experiencing female-perpetrated current relationship violence¹⁸.

The 2012 ABS PSS found that 66,200 females experienced violence from a current partner, and 68,700 from a boyfriend/girlfriend or date in the previous 12 months.¹⁹ These figures include violence perpetrated by both males and females.

To break down the above figures into violence perpetrated by males only, we need to look at Table 6 from the ABS PSS which found that 100.0% of lifetime current partner violence against females and 98.5% of lifetime dating violence against females was perpetrated by males.²⁰

Using the above percentages, 66,200 females experienced violence from a current male partner, and 67,670 from a boyfriend or male date in the

¹⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013, Personal Safety Survey Australia: 2012 4906.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

¹⁶ See Table 3 EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS, Relationship to perpetrator. These figures significantly overestimate the prevalence of intimate partner violence because they include both *actual* violence and *attempted* violence. Unlike the 2005 ABS PSS (which provided figures for actual physical assaults), the 2012 ABS PSS strangely doesn't provide a breakdown of these figures.

¹⁷ See Table 6 EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE SINCE THE AGE OF 15, Relationship to perpetrator by sex of perpetrator

¹⁸ It should be noted that this figure is most likely much higher, because the 2012 ABS PSS's definition of "Previous Partner" is a person the respondent lived with at some point in a married or de facto relationship from whom the respondent is now separated. This includes a partner the respondent was living with at the time of experiencing violence (a previous current partner), or a partner the respondent was no longer living with at the time of experiencing violence (an ex-partner).

¹⁹ See Table 3 EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS, Relationship to perpetrator

²⁰ See Table 6 EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE SINCE THE AGE OF 15, Relationship to perpetrator by sex of perpetrator

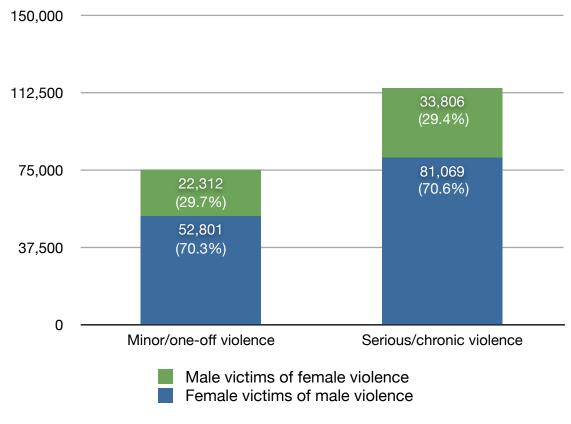
previous 12 months: a total of 133,870 females experiencing male-perpetrated current relationship violence²¹.

Combining Johnson's typology of IPV with the 2012 ABS PSS data gives us the following numbers of victims of each type of violence, during the past 12 months, by gender:

Type of violence	Female victims of male violence (n)	Male victims of female violence (n)
Minor situational couple violence	52,801	22,312
Chronic/serious situational couple violence	79,469	33,581
Intimate terrorism	1,600	225

If we group these numbers into minor (minor situational couple violence) and serious violence (serious/chronic situational couple violence and intimate terrorism combined), we get the following figures:





²¹ It should be noted that this figure is most likely much higher, because the 2012 ABS PSS's definition of "Previous Partner" is a person the respondent lived with at some point in a married or de facto relationship from whom the respondent is now separated. This includes a partner the respondent was living with at the time of experiencing violence (a "previous current partner"), or a partner the respondent was no longer living with at the time of experiencing violence (an "ex-partner").

VIOLENCE FROM PREVIOUS PARTNERS

Percentages from Johnson's paper

Turning our attention now to violence from a previous partner, Johnson says that, in contrast to current partner violence, in "previous marriages... there is a reasonable number of cases of intimate terrorism." He goes on to argue that "83% of the intimate terrorism in previous relationships is male-perpetrated," but he doesn't give any estimates of what percentage of previous partner violence from general surveys is intimate terrorism, and what percentage is situational couple violence (or violent resistance for that matter).²²

There are two data points in the Johnson article that include previous partner violence.

"in the general sample of the Pittsburgh study, the male violence was 89% situational couple violence"

"For Graham-Kevan and Archer's British general sample, the male violence was 75% situational couple violence."

Both of these samples presumably included both current partner and previous partner violence (i.e. they are not samples of previous partner violence *only*, which is what would be ideal for our purposes). However, for argument's sake, and acknowledging that the figures produced will *significantly overestimate* the prevalence of intimate terrorism (and therefore male-perpetrated violence) and significantly underestimate the prevalence of situational couple violence (and therefore female-perpetrated violence), let us proceed as if they are samples of previous partner violence only.

Let us first average the two data points above (89% and 75% situational couple violence) to give a figure of 82% situational couple violence, of which half is male-perpetrated and half female-perpetrated. At least 40% of this situational couple violence is minor/one-off and up to 60% is chronic/severe violence.

Let us assume that the remaining 18% of the violence is intimate terrorism.²³ According to Johnson, 83% of this is male-perpetrated, and 17% is female-perpetrated.

²² Johnson does say "there is probably 3 times as much situational couple violence as intimate terrorism, which would mean that 75% of women experiencing violence from their male partners are experiencing situational couple violence" but this figure is Johnson's estimate of the entire population, not an estimate of general survey data such as the ABS PSS, about which he says "almost all of the partner violence in general surveys is situational couple violence." Johnson's estimate is vague and is based on old data from the USA.

In other words, the ABS PSS data is limited and can only tell us so much. All we can say is that we know it doesn't adequately capture intimate terrorism. It would be extremely speculative to guess the actual prevalence of intimate terrorism in the general community based upon the ABS PSS data.

²³ Johnson's typology of intimate partner violence contains a 3rd category: violent resistance, however his article gives no estimates of how frequently this type of violence occurs besides, saying, "violent resistance accounts for only a small part of women's intimate partner violence in my typology." Dr Flood also omits this category from his analysis. Therefore it is excluded for the purposes of this critique as well.

We end up with the following breakdown of different types of violence from previous partners:

Type of violence	%
Minor male-perpetrated situational couple violence	> 16.4%
Chronic/serious male-perpetrated situational couple violence	< 24.6%
Minor female-perpetrated situational couple violence	> 16.4%
Chronic/serious female-perpetrated situational couple violence	< 24.6%
Male-Perpetrated intimate terrorism	14.9%
Female-perpetrated intimate terrorism	3.1%

Applying Johnson's percentages to the Personal Safety Survey numbers

The 2012 ABS PSS found that 18,700 males experienced violence from a previous partner in the previous 12 months.²⁴ These figures include violence perpetrated by both males and females.

To break down the above figure into violence perpetrated by females only, we need to look at Table 6 of the ABS PSS which found that 94.2 of lifetime previous partner violence against males was perpetrated by females.²⁵

Using the above percentage, 17,615 males experienced violence from a previous female partner in the previous 12 months²⁶.

The 2012 ABS PSS found that 66,300 females experienced violence from a previous partner in the previous 12 months.²⁷ These figures include violence perpetrated by both males and females.

To break down the above figure into violence perpetrated by males only, we need to look at Table 6 from the ABS PSS which found that 99.3% of lifetime previous partner violence against females was perpetrated by males.²⁸

²⁴ See Table 3 EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS, Relationship to perpetrator. These figures significantly overestimate the prevalence of intimate partner violence because they include both *actual* violence and *attempted* violence. Unlike the 2005 ABS PSS (which provided figures for actual physical assaults), the 2012 ABS PSS strangely doesn't provide a breakdown of these figures.

 $^{^{25}}$ See Table 6 EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE SINCE THE AGE OF 15, Relationship to perpetrator by sex of perpetrator

²⁶ It should be noted that this figure is most likely much lower, because the 2012 ABS PSS's definition of "Previous Partner" is a person the respondent lived with at some point in a married or de facto relationship from whom the respondent is now separated. This includes a partner the respondent was living with at the time of experiencing violence (a previous current partner), or a partner the respondent was no longer living with at the time of experiencing violence (an ex-partner).

 $^{^{\}rm 27}$ See Table 3 EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS, Relationship to perpetrator

²⁸ See Table 6 EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE SINCE THE AGE OF 15, Relationship to perpetrator by sex of perpetrator

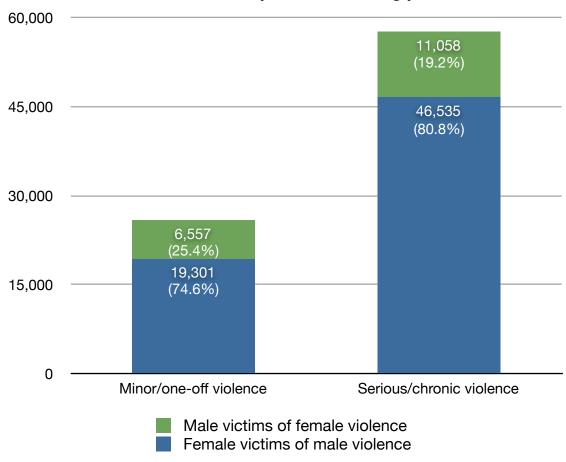
Using the above percentage, 65,836 females experienced violence from a previous male partner in the previous 12 months²⁹.

Combining Johnson's typology of IPV with the 2012 ABS PSS data gives us the following numbers of victims of each type of violence, during the past 12 months, by gender:

Type of violence	Female victims of male violence (n)	Male victims of female violence (n)
Minor situational couple violence	19,301	6,557
Chronic/serious situational couple violence	28,952	9,835
Intimate terrorism	17,583	1,223

If we group these numbers into minor (minor situational couple violence) and serious violence (serious/chronic situational couple violence and intimate terrorism combined), we get the following figures:

Previous relationship violence during past 12 months



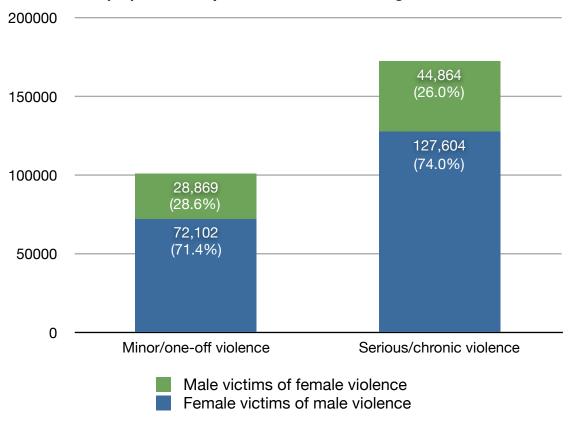
²⁹ It should be noted that this figure is most likely much lower, because the 2012 ABS PSS's definition of "Previous Partner" is a person the respondent lived with at some point in a married or de facto relationship from whom the respondent is now separated. This includes a partner the respondent was living with at the time of experiencing violence (a "previous current partner"), or a partner the respondent was no longer living with at the time of experiencing violence (an "ex-partner").

OVERALL INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

For an overall look at *all* IPV in Australia, we need to combine our figures for current relationship violence (from a current partner or boyfriend/girlfriend or date) and previous relationship violence (from a previous partner):

Type of violence	Female victims of male violence (n)	Male victims of female violence (n)
Minor situational couple violence	72,102	28,869
Chronic/serious situational couple violence	108,421	43,416
Intimate terrorism	19,183	1,448

(All) intimate partner violence during last 12 months



CONCLUSION

The above figures challenge Dr Flood's claim that "it's simply a lie to claim that large numbers of men in Australia are suffering abuse at the hands of their wives and female partners." Up to 45,000 men every year experiencing serious/chronic violence from their wives, female partners, female expartners, girlfriends and female dates is a significant number, and makes up more than one quarter of the total cases of serious/chronic IPV³⁰.

To conclude, Dr Flood is correct that we need to pay attention to the detail of both women's and men's experiences of victimisation and perpetration: to the character of violence and abuse, to their dynamics and meaning, to their impact, and to their contexts. Otherwise, we will commit errors of fact, of theory, and of intervention.

However, a focus largely on men's violence against women would deny service responses and resources to over one quarter of victims of serious/chronic intimate partner violence based solely upon the fact that they were born male.

Greg Andresen Senior Researcher One in Three Campaign info@oneinthree.com.au December 2014

³⁰ It should be noted once again that the actual proportion of male victims is likely much higher than this because our calculation assumed that all cases of intimate partner violence in the Pittsburgh study and British general sample were of previous partner violence (when they weren't); and that all cases of "previous partner" violence in the ABS PSS were of violence from ex-partners (when they weren't).