



## ONE IN THREE VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE IS MALE

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### White Ribbon schools kit gives boys a bad rap

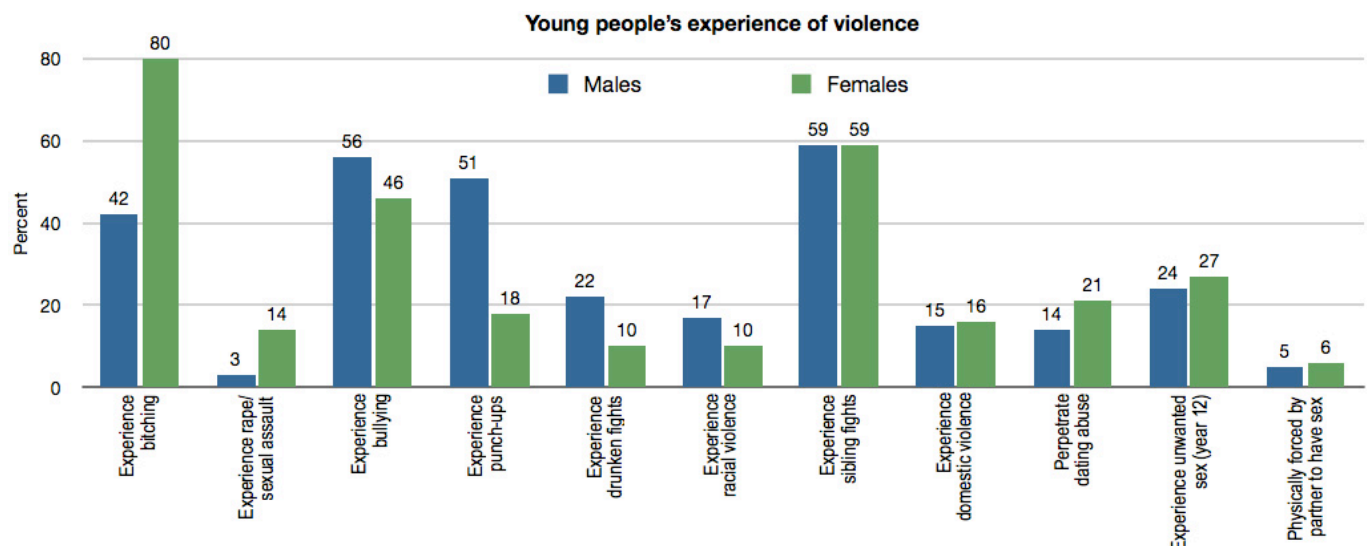
The anti-violence *One in Three Campaign* today called on the White Ribbon Campaign to broaden its message when educating young people about violence and abuse. Spokesperson Greg Andresen said “While the anti-violence message of the White Ribbon Campaign is extremely important, we are disappointed that by focusing only on male violence towards women and girls, it appears to be misleading children and young people about the true picture of violence in Australia.”

The White Ribbon Campaign has a schools’ kit available for download from its website, and encourages teachers, students and parents to get involved in White Ribbon Day activities. Mr Andresen said “we are extremely concerned that children in our schools are being fed the messages that ‘violence is something that men do to women’ and ‘only violence against women and girls is wrong’. Violence is extremely complex, and as far as young people are concerned, everyone is affected. The one thing we do know for certain is that while there is an almost universal social taboo against boys hitting girls, there are no messages telling girls that slapping, shoving, kicking or hitting boys is wrong. Young boys should not grow up feeling universal male guilt because of some men’s violence to women. Young girls shouldn’t grow up thinking it’s OK to hit boys.”

One major recent international study on gender violence has shown that when it comes to dating abuse in young adults, Australian women are more aggressive than men. In the [study](#), which canvassed more than 14,000 university students in 32 countries, 14 per cent of physical violence between dating partners during the previous 12 months in Australia was perpetrated by males only, 21 per cent by females only and 64.9 per cent was mutual violence (where both partners used violence against each other). The survey team was lead by one of the world’s leading researchers on domestic violence, Professor Murray Strauss, Professor of Family Studies at the University of New Hampshire. Professor Strauss has written over 200 books on the topic of family violence. The study’s findings were presented to a major international domestic violence conference in California in June ([www.cafcusa.org](http://www.cafcusa.org)).

According to *One in Three*, the schools’ kit paints the erroneous picture that only women and girls are affected by violence, and that only males are perpetrators. International research such as the Straus study, along with accurate Australian surveys, paint quite a different picture. The *One in Three Campaign* has cautioned schools not to use the White Ribbon Day materials until they have been amended to portray an accurate picture of violence in Australian society.

The most recent comprehensive Australian study of young people’s experience of violence - the [National Crime Prevention Survey](#) - found that both boys and girls aged 12 to 20 experienced high levels of violence in the home, at school, and in dating relationships. Young males and females were equally likely to have experienced domestic violence and physical fights between brothers and sisters. Young males were more likely than young females to have experienced bullying, punch-ups between people at school/college, drunken fights in pubs/clubs and racial violence; while young females were more likely than young males to have experienced rape/sexual assault and ‘bitching.’



Similar percentages (up to one in four) young people had witnessed an act of physical violence between their parents or step-parents. Six per cent of girls and young women and five per cent of boys and young men said their partner had physically forced them to have sex. 25 per cent of young people agreed with the statement “When girl hits a guy it’s really not a big deal”, and while males hitting females was seen by virtually all young people surveyed to be unacceptable, it appeared to be quite acceptable for a girl to hit a boy.

Melbourne psychologist, Dr Elizabeth Celi, said, “Do we want to our young girls thinking that slapping a male friend, throwing objects at him, kicking or scratching him with her nails is OK? To quote the White Ribbon Day schools’ kit, ‘by staying silent about this issue, we are allowing it to continue’. Research clearly shows that females as well as males, at school and university age, are violent toward their partners and schoolmates. Why are we staying silent about this issue? Young women saying ‘Stop!’ to their girlfriends slapping or verbally abusing their male friends or boyfriends is just as important a message to teach our kids.”

The *One in Three Campaign* aims to raise public awareness of the existence and needs of male victims of family violence and abuse; to work with government and non-government services alike to provide assistance to male victims; and to reduce the incidence and impacts of family violence on Australian men, women and children. It’s website can be found at [oneinthree.com.au](http://oneinthree.com.au).

## **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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*NB. The statistics in the above graph were all taken from the [National Crime Prevention Survey](#), except for ‘perpetrate dating abuse’ ([Straus 2008](#)) and ‘experience unwanted sex (year 12)’ ([Smith et al 2002](#)).*