



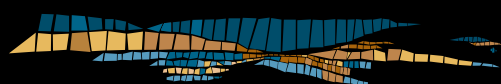
Conversations for Change

Local Community Attitudes and Exposure to Violence Survey (LCAEVS): Report on Baseline (2019) Survey

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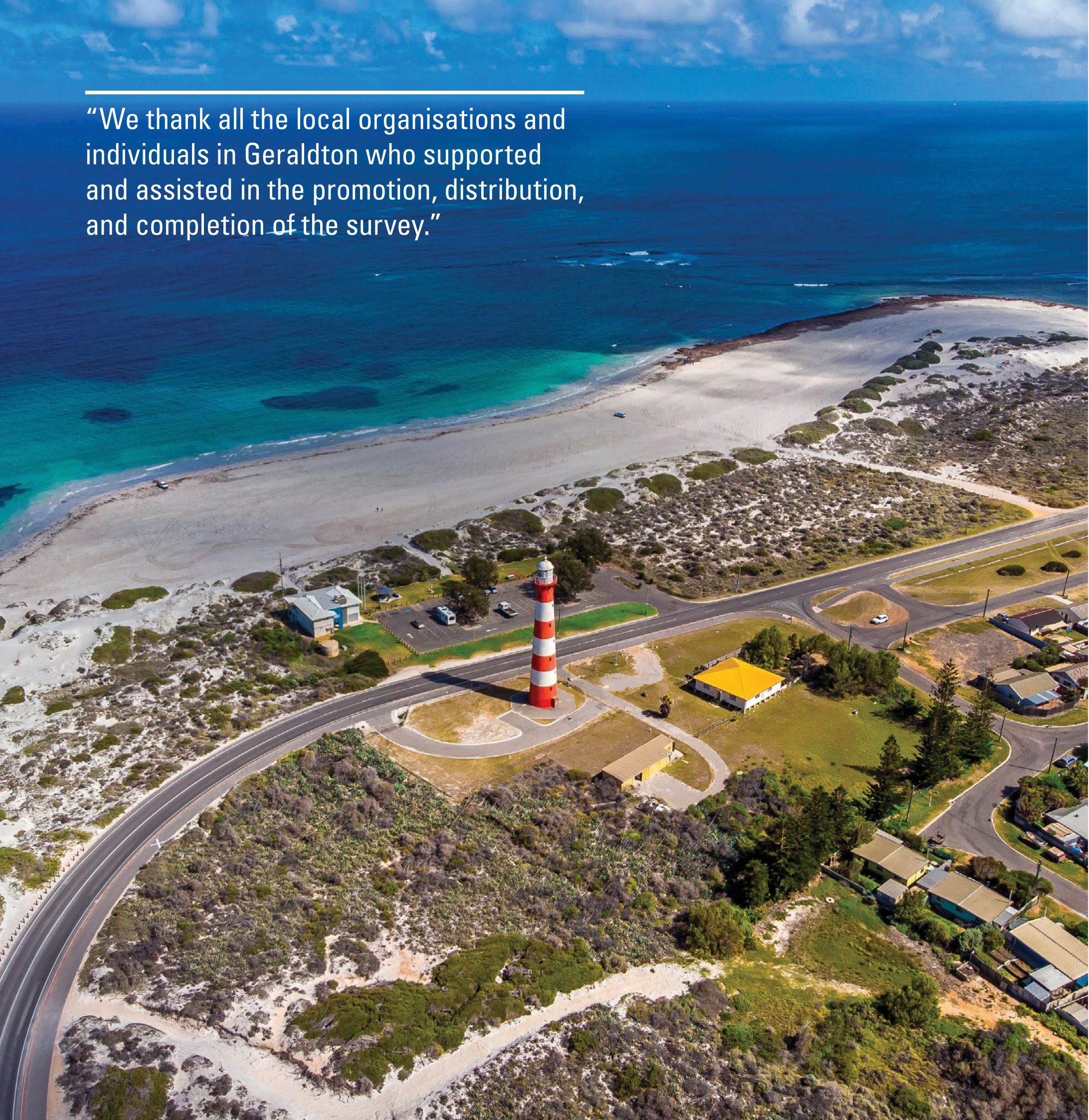
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An aerial photograph of a coastal area. In the foreground, there is a road that curves around a lighthouse. The lighthouse is red and white striped. To the left of the lighthouse is a small building with a blue roof. To the right is a yellow building. The background shows a sandy beach and the ocean with waves breaking. The sky is blue with some clouds.

“We thank all the local organisations and individuals in Geraldton who supported and assisted in the promotion, distribution, and completion of the survey.”

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Executive summary

BACKGROUND

Family and domestic violence (FDV) is a major health and social issue affecting 1 in 6 Australian women and 1 in 16 men (AIHW 2018). Greater Geraldton, Western Australia, is a regional area approximately 400km north of metropolitan Perth, with a population of ~39,000 (ABS 2016). Local rates of assault by a family member are more than twice the state rate and more than three times the metropolitan rate (WA Police 2021).

The survey results presented in this report are part of a larger research project called ‘Conversations for Change’, which is being led by the Western Australian Centre for Rural Health (WACRH) in Greater Geraldton, Western Australia. This is a multi-pronged action research project for the prevention of family and domestic violence. It includes a collaborative communication strategy, local workplace messaging, and bystander training focusing on disrespect and gender inequality, with ongoing evaluation to measure the effectiveness of these prevention efforts. The project was developed to support a community-led strategic action plan for the prevention of family violence in the region, called the Community, Respect and Equality (CRE) Action Plan, which was launched in 2017.

As part of the ‘Conversations for Change’ research project, the *Local Community Attitudes and Exposure to Violence Survey (LCAEVS)* was designed as a tool to inform and to measure the effectiveness of local FDV primary prevention strategies, as well as to assist with closing some gaps in FDV data collection. This locally developed instrument was adapted from the ANROWS National Community Attitudes to Violence Against Women

Survey (NCAS) 2017 (ANROWS 2017). It includes items on respondents’ experiences, knowledge of and attitudes towards violence, as well as of behaviours that are thought to underly and drive FDV. It is intended for the survey to be repeated in the community over time, initially after two years, as part of the ongoing evaluation of local initiatives to prevent FDV.

The purposes of this whole-of-community survey are:

- To inform primary prevention messaging with the local community through education, media and community discussions to help address the ongoing drivers of FDV. This must include interventions specific to relevant subgroups within the population; and
- To allow monitoring of changes in FDV-related experiences, knowledge and attitudes over time, and thereby to assess the effectiveness of local FDV primary prevention strategies within the community, both overall and within specific demographic subgroups.

In this report, we present the results from the baseline LCAEVS survey undertaken in October 2019.

METHODOLOGY

The design of the LCAEVS drew from the work of Australian initiatives including ANROWS (ANROWS 2017), Our Watch (Our Watch 2015), the Australian Bureau of Statistic Personal Safety Survey (ABS PSS 2017), and a community level survey conducted in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales (Schineanu & Darley-Bentley 2017). The team met regularly from late 2018 to mid-2019 to develop the survey instrument in a collaborative manner. The principal intention of the instrument development was to capture FDV-related constructs from existing instruments (particularly the NCAS) that were considered relevant to the CRE and Conversations for Change projects. To further rationalise the number of items for inclusion, the team focused on constructs that would be sensitive to change over time.

All community members living in Geraldton and over the age of 15 years were encouraged to complete the survey. Incomplete surveys were excluded from the analysis, as were those of respondents who reported that they did not live in the Greater Geraldton region and those below 15 years of age.

FINDINGS

In total, 914 participants aged fifteen years and over completed the survey. Of these respondents, 73% were female (compared to 50% of the Greater Geraldton population). A higher proportion of the respondents were also university educated (39%) compared to the general population (13%), and a lower proportion of respondents were educated to the level of high school or below, compared to the general population. Based upon statistical advice, the survey data were therefore weighted to account for the differences in demographic composition (sex, education, age and Aboriginal identification) between the survey participants and the Geraldton population. All results presented in this report are from the weighted data.

Overall Findings

Overall, the most common type of relationship violence reportedly ever experienced by local respondents was emotional abuse in the form of being repeatedly criticised to make them feel bad or useless (44%). This was followed by high levels of physical violence in the form of ever being slapped, punched or hit (37%). Other emotional and social abuse was also common, with almost one third having experienced intimidation by throwing or smashing an object close enough to cause fear (30%), one quarter (24%) reporting being prevented from having contact with friends and family, and 15% having received threats of harm to their family members. Stalking behaviours were also common, with one fifth of respondents having received unwanted phone calls, emails and text messages (21%) or having experienced being tracked or monitored without consent (18%).

Compared to the national NCAS survey, local survey respondents were comparable and sometimes favourable in terms of their knowledge in being

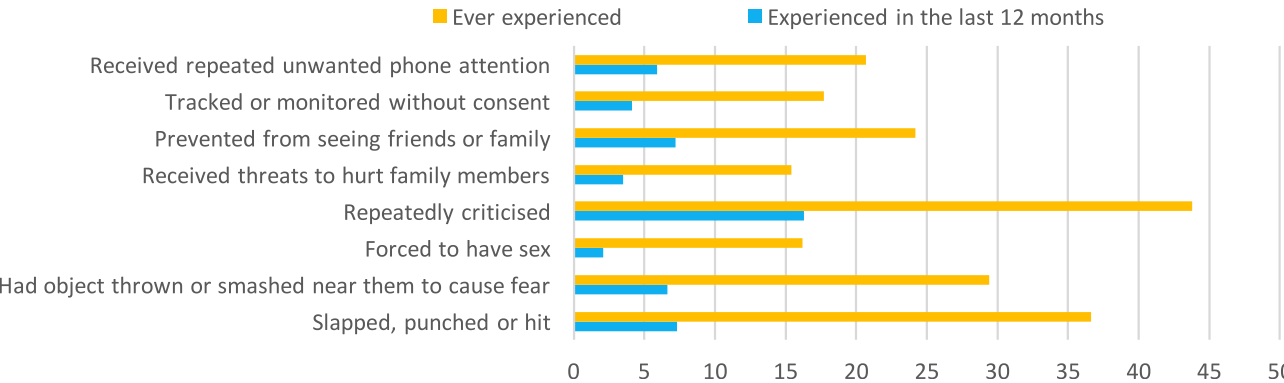
able to recognise behaviours considered to be manifestations of FDV. There was markedly greater recognition of financial control, tracking or monitoring of a partner and repeated unwanted communications as being manifestations of FDV.

In addition, compared to the NCAS, local respondents were less likely to hold attitudes supportive of ongoing violence, such as blaming the victim or excusing the perpetrator, and were more likely to hold favourable attitudes towards gender equality within society. In both the NCAS and LCAEVS, 13% of respondents thought that if a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders it is shameful for her family. Similarly, five percent of both LCAEVS and NCAS respondents agreed that violence by a man against his female partner can be excused if the offender is heavily intoxicated by alcohol. Overall, the highest agreement both locally (24%) and nationally (32%) was for the statement ‘A woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing’. This shows that further community education around the complexities and risks of relationships involving FDV are needed to reduce the stigma and blame that currently impacts those who are experiencing violence in a relationship. The statements regarding gender inequality showing the highest rates of agreement were that ‘women seek to gain power by gaining control over men’ (19%), ‘It’s ok for men to whistle at women while they are walking down the street’ (18%) and ‘I think there’s no harm in men making sexist jokes about women when they are among their male friends’ (17%).

Overall, 55% of local respondents knew where to go to get support about a domestic violence issue. This was lower than found in the national survey results (60%), although for Aboriginal people the number was slightly higher (66%). This shows it is important to continue to increase awareness of appropriate local services for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the region.

“The survey results presented in this report are part of a larger research project called ‘Conversations for Change’, which is being led by the Western Australian Centre for Rural Health (WACRH) in Greater Geraldton, Western Australia.”

Graph 1: Experiences of Violence within a Relationship (% Respondents who have Experienced)



By Gender

A higher percentage of women than men in Geraldton reported experiencing violence both over their lifetime and within the 12 months prior to the survey, across most categories of abuse. For example, women were four times more likely to have reported lifetime experiences of forced sex (females 26%; males 6%) and three times more likely to have ever experienced stalking behaviours such as tracking or monitoring (27% female; 8% male), and unwanted phone calls, emails and text messages (32% female, 9% male). Women also more frequently reported experiencing emotional abuse more recently (in the 12 months prior to the survey), with emotional abuse over the longer term occurring more equally between males and females.

In terms of knowledge of FDV behaviours, women were generally 3-4 times more likely to recognise behaviours as being manifestations of FDV, although recognition by both men and women was high (>90%). The lowest recognition of FDV behaviours for males was for stalking behaviours (92%) compared to 98% recognition in women.

Compared to women in the Geraldton region, men were more likely to agree with statements that minimised the responsibility of the perpetrator (for example, to think that violence by a man against his female partner can be excused if the offender is heavily intoxicated by alcohol) and which increased

the responsibility of the victim (for example, to agree that women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes' and to agree that if a woman wears revealing clothing, she is at least partly responsible for rape) (Graph 2).

Men were also more likely to agree with statements of traditional gender inequality, such as that men make better political leaders than women, or that men should take control in relationships and be head of the household (Graph 3).

By Aboriginal Identification

Although the reported lifetime rates of experience of violence were similar for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents, there were differences in reported violence over the 12 months prior to the survey. More than three times as many Aboriginal respondents reported experiencing threats against family members. In terms of knowledge of FDV behaviours, recognition of FDV behaviours by Aboriginal respondents was generally high (>80%), but the areas which were most under-recognised as FDV were repeated criticism of a partner to make them feel bad or useless, controlling a partner's social life by preventing them from seeing family and friends, and stalking behaviours (all 83% recognition). Aboriginal respondents were also more likely to feel that FDV is a private matter to be handled within the family, and that if a woman reports abuse to outsiders it is shameful for her family.

By Age

The youngest age group 15-24 and the 65-74 year age group were the least likely to identify FDV behaviours. In particular, the finding of lower rates of FDV recognition in younger age groups was concerning and it will be important to determine whether there is an unmet need for more educational messaging around FDV for younger people in the community, for example through local schools, sporting groups and other educational facilities such as university and TAFE students.

In addition, the 15-24 age group was generally more likely to agree with attitudes of victim blaming, which places the responsibility of violence on the victim rather than the perpetrator. Of note, 25% of respondents in this youngest age group felt that women tend to exaggerate the problem of violence, and 30% believed that if a woman doesn't leave a violent relationship they are at least partly responsible for the abuse continuing. The 55-64 year age group were also more likely to agree with victim-blaming attitudes and were slightly more likely than the youngest group to believe that women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes' (10%) and that if a woman wears revealing clothing, they are at least partly responsible for rape (10%).

In terms of gender equality measures, younger respondents (15-24 and 25-34 year age groups) were the most likely to agree that men should take control and be head of the household. The 25-34 age group were also most likely to agree that there is no harm in men in making sexist jokes about women, that men make better political leaders than women, and that men make more capable bosses.

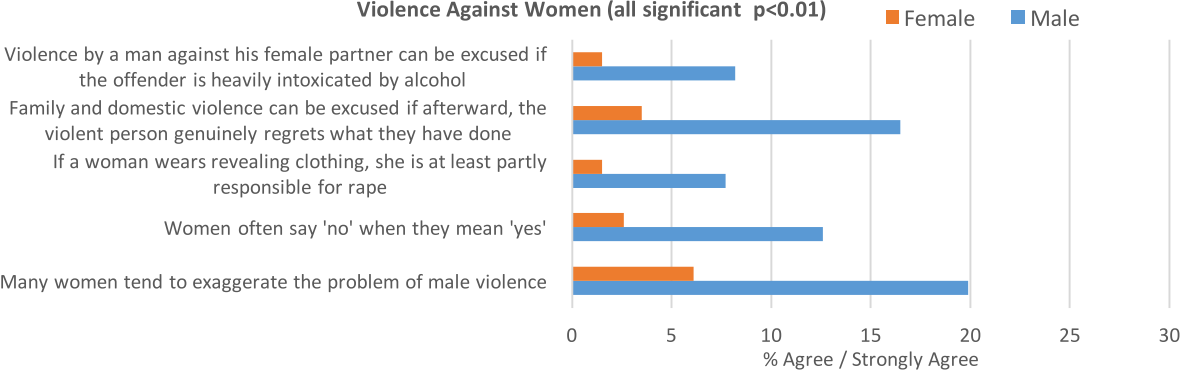
By Education

Those who had completed university education were slightly more likely to recognise FDV behaviours, except for recognition of stalking behaviours, whereas those who had finished formal education in Year 11 or 12 were most likely to recognise these as being a form of FDV. For those who had completed education in Year 10 or below, the lowest rates of recognition of FDV were for items including stalking behaviours, repeated criticism and social control.

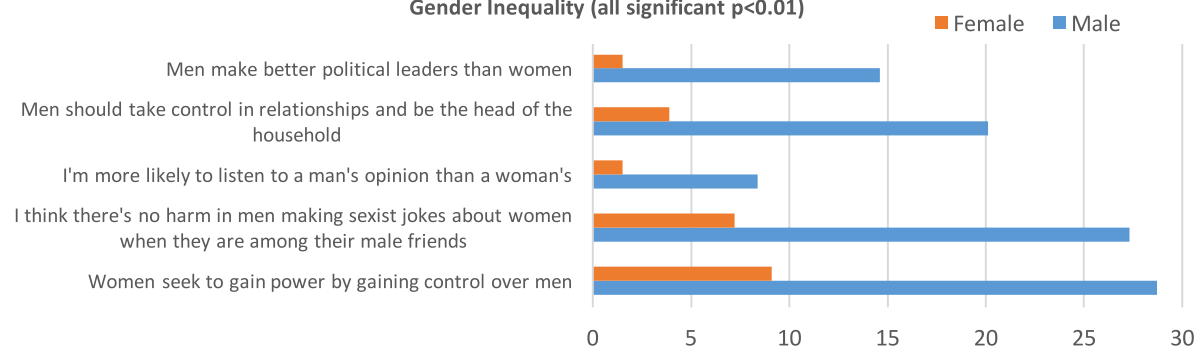
There was also a clear trend that those who had spent more years in formal education (trade training, apprenticeship, TAFE or university) were less likely to agree with victim-blaming statements. The largest difference was seen in the category of 'A woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing', where agreement occurred for one third (34%) of those who completed Year 10 or below, 29% of those who completed Year 11 or 12, 16% of those who completed further trade training and 10% of those who had completed a university course.



Graph 2: Percentage of Male and Female Respondents Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Attitudes of Violence Against Women (all significant p<0.01)



Graph 3: Percentage of Male and Female Respondents Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed With Attitudes of Gender Inequality (all significant p<0.01)



Those with university education, followed by those with education in a trade, consistently had the lowest agreement with statements of gender inequality, except for one category 'Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household', where those with education in a trade had the lowest levels of agreement.

“The youngest age group 15-24 and the 65-74 year age group were the least likely to identify FDV behaviours.”

By Employment

Recognition of FDV behaviours was consistently lowest among students across most categories, with the lowest rates of recognition of FDV being for stalking behaviours, repeated criticism, control of social life and for forcing their partner to have sex (all 84%). This was closely followed by those who were unemployed at the time of the survey.

Those who were employed at the time of the survey showed the lowest agreement with attitudes that perpetuate violence, across most categories. This was closely followed by those who were currently carers or parents. Throughout all employment groups, there was high agreement with the statement 'A woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing', with 47% retirees, 32% students, and 32% of those not employed agreeing with this statement. There was also higher agreement with this statement for those groups who generally had more favourable attitudes towards violence in other categories, for example 22% of carer/parents and 16% of those employed also agreed.

Attitudes towards gender equality by employment status showed no particular pattern or consistency across sub-groups.

Qualitative Analysis

In addition to the quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis on survey free-text comments revealed some important insights into the survey design and into implications for community education going forward. There were two main types of comment – those referring to the survey itself and how it could be improved and those that focused on the content of the survey in relation to FDV experience, knowledge and attitudes. These ranged from respondents suggesting inclusion of information about the impacts of FDV on children, to suggestions for changing survey wording and questions that would encompass broader FDV experiences.

CONCLUSION

Overall, modification of the NCAS survey has allowed for the collection of locally relevant data on the knowledge, attitudes and experiences of the community related to FDV, across multiple sociodemographic groups. This whole-of-community baseline survey will inform ongoing primary prevention efforts within the local community through education, media and community discussions to help address the underpinning drivers of FDV. Future primary prevention efforts can be made more specific and relevant to the needs of specific subgroups identified in the baseline survey.

The survey will be further refined to reduce its length while retaining questions aligned to the NCAS. The aim is to deliver it to the community regularly, initially repeating it in early 2022, to help monitor changes in knowledge, attitudes towards and exposures to violence over time and to inform the ongoing local primary prevention program impact evaluation.

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Full Report

Background

Family and domestic violence (FDV) is a major health and social issue affecting 1 in 6 Australian women and 1 in 16 men (AIHW 2018), although these numbers are likely to be an underestimate due to the known issue of underreporting and low rates of help seeking. FDV is the leading cause of illness, disability and premature death for women aged 25-44 years. The health impacts of violence include both physical injury and psychological harm. On average, one woman is killed each week in Australia by a current or former partner (AIHW 2018). FDV is characterised by one person exerting power and control over another, with one of the key underlying drivers thought to be gender inequality within society (Our Watch 2015). However, the drivers are complex and intertwined with other social and psychological factors, and when interpreting results for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal data it is also important to keep in mind contributing societal and historic factors, as outlined in the Figure 1 (Change the Picture):

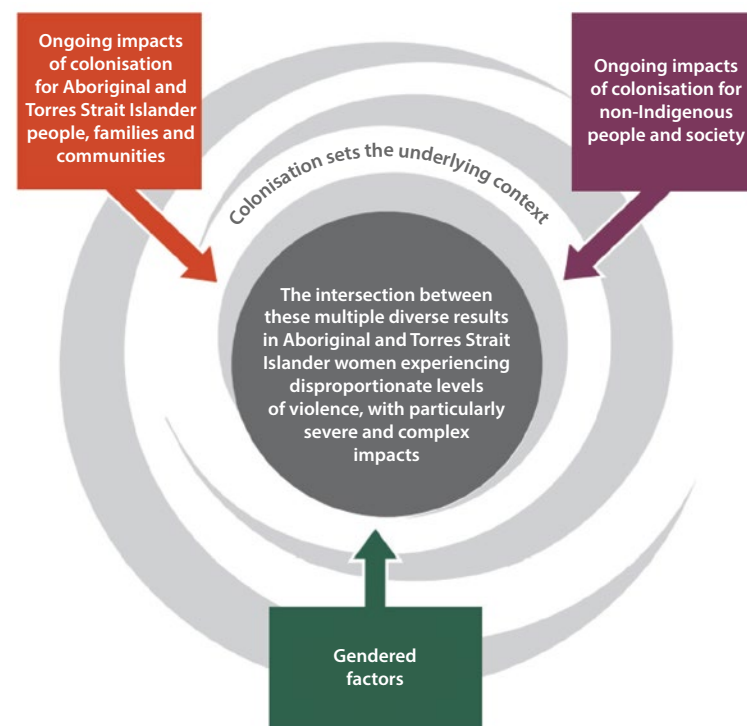


Figure 1: Change the Picture framework for FDV in the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

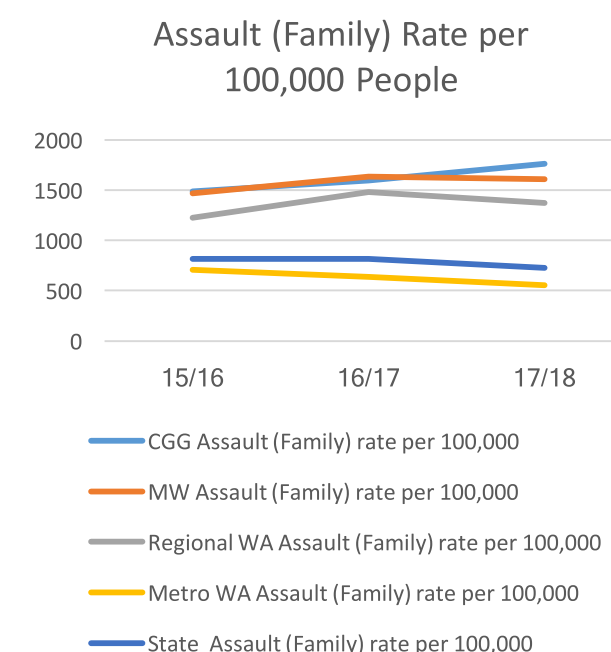
“On average, one woman is killed each week in Australia by a current or former partner (AIHW 2018).”



Context and Study Setting

The survey results presented in this report are part of a larger research project called ‘Conversations for Change’, which is being led by the Western Australian Centre for Rural Health (WACRH) in Greater Geraldton, Western Australia. This is a multi-pronged action research project for the prevention of FDV. It includes a collaborative communication strategy, local workplace messaging, and bystander training focusing on disrespect and gender inequality in the workplace, along with ongoing evaluation to measure the effectiveness of prevention efforts. The project was developed to support a community-led strategic action plan for the prevention of family violence in the region, called the Community, Respect and Equality (CRE) Action Plan which was launched in 2017.

Greater Geraldton is located approximately 400km north of metropolitan Perth, with a population of ~39,000 (ABS 2016). It should be noted that Greater Geraldton (and therefore this survey) also encompasses the town of Mullewa, which is a town 100km inland from the coastal city of Geraldton. In the year 2016-2017, the Greater Geraldton region recorded an average of eight reported FDV incidents per day, which totals almost 3000 incidents for the year. Local rates of reported assault by a family member are more than twice the state rates and more than three times the Perth metropolitan rates (WA Police 2021). Graph 1 below shows that local rates of reported family violence incidents increased between 2015-2018.



Graph 1: Rates of family assault in Geraldton (CGG) and Mullewa (MW) compared to Western Australian regional, metropolitan and state rates.

Attempts to obtain more in-depth analysis of the publicly available WA Police data for FDV rates in Geraldton demonstrated a gap in evidence and the need to begin collecting and making available more comprehensive, anonymised community-level data. Access to more comprehensive local data enables local community members and organisations to develop a better understanding of the drivers affecting levels of family violence in the community and provides a means for monitoring the effectiveness of local prevention efforts. This is particularly important because research into effective interventions for addressing the underlying drivers of FDV in communities, particularly in rural and regional settings, is currently limited.

Survey

As part of the ‘Conversations for Change’ research project, the **Local Community Attitudes and Exposure to Violence Survey (LCAEVS)** was designed as a tool to inform and measure the effectiveness of local FDV primary prevention strategies, as well as to assist with closing some gaps in FDV data collection. This locally developed instrument was adapted from the ANROWS National Community Attitudes to Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS) 2017 (ANROWS 2017). It includes items on respondents’ experiences, knowledge of and attitudes towards violence. Key considerations in the adaption of the survey included brevity to minimise respondent burden, measurements that would be able to show change over time and inclusion of the most locally appropriate measures. It is intended for the survey to be repeated in the community over time, initially after two years, as part of the ongoing evaluation of local initiatives to prevent FDV.

The purposes of this whole-of-community survey are:

- To inform primary prevention messaging with the local community through education, media and community discussions to help address the ongoing drivers of FDV. This must include interventions specific to relevant subgroups within the population; and
- To allow monitoring of changes in FDV-related experiences, knowledge and attitudes over time, and thereby to assess the effectiveness of local FDV primary prevention strategies within the community, both overall and within specific demographic subgroups.

In this report, we present the results from the baseline LCAEVS survey undertaken in October 2019.

Methodology

Survey Development

A core team examined existing surveys that have been used to measure experiences of family and domestic violence as well as attitudes related to violence against women and gender equality. The design of the LCAEVS drew from the work of Australian initiatives including ANROWS (ANROWS 2017), Our Watch (Our Watch 2015), the Australian Bureau of Statistic Personal Safety Survey (ABS PSS 2017), and a community level survey conducted in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales (Schineanu & Darley-Bentley 2017), as well as documents of the World Health Organization (WHO 2016). Particular attention was given to the National Community Attitudes to Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS) developed by ANROWS, the instrument to which the LCAEVS is intended to be most comparable. The exception to this is for the items listed in the 'Experiences of Violence' section, which were adapted from the ABS Personal Safety Survey (PSS) (ABS PSS 2017), a national Australian survey conducted across all states and territories, and across urban, rural and remote (excluding very remote) areas. The PSS collects information from those over the age of 18 years on the nature and extent of violence that they have experienced since the age of 15 years, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse as well as stalking behaviours.

“Particular attention was given to the National Community Attitudes to Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS), the instrument to which the LCAEVS is intended to be most comparable.”

The team met regularly from late 2018 to mid-2019 to develop the survey instrument in a collaborative manner. The principal intention of the instrument development was to capture FDV-related constructs from existing instruments (particularly the NCAS) that were considered relevant to the aims of the CRE and Conversations for Change projects. To further rationalise the number of items for inclusion, the team focused on constructs that would be sensitive

to change over time. The final version of the baseline instruments comprised questions intended to capture the following constructs:

- Demographics
- Experience – Victimisation
- Experience – Perpetration
- Knowledge of family violence and violence against women
- Community Attitudes towards violence against women
 - » Excusing the perpetrator and holding women responsible for abuse and managing its consequences
 - » Minimising violence against women
 - » Mistrusting women’s reports of violence
 - » Disregarding the need to gain consent
- Gender equality attitudes scale
 - » Undermining women’s independence and decision making
 - » Condoning of male peer relations involving aggression and disrespect of women
- General Violence Construct
 - » Support for the use of violence in general

Two different versions of the survey were piloted prior to finalisation. The final version included preliminary questions on respondents’ demographic characteristics and ended with a question on respondents’ awareness of the CRE.

The Local Community Attitudes and Exposure to Violence Survey (LCAEVS) was provided online to the Greater Geraldton community using the Qualtrics survey platform and was hosted on the WACRH website. A small number of surveys were made available in hard copy for those with difficulty accessing the internet, for example in the prison. The survey was promoted throughout the community in late 2019 via e-mail lists, Facebook (organisational accounts and paid targeted promotion), at local events, in papers, on local radio (Local ABC, community radio, and as paid advertising), through flyers and posters, through letter box drops and delivered to certain suburbs through Australia Post. To encourage participants to complete the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to win one of four cash prizes if they indicated that they would like to be considered for the prize draw. Information (such as name and contact details) of those entering the prize draw was stored in a separate database to those completing the survey, ensuring that participant confidentiality was maintained.

Eligibility

All community members living in Geraldton and over the age of 15 years were encouraged to complete the survey. Incomplete surveys were excluded from the analysis, as were those of respondents who reported that they did not live in the Greater Geraldton region and those below 15 years of age.

Ethics Approval

The survey and the research of which this is a component were approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Western Australia (RA/4/20/4860).

Post-stratification weighting

The initial analysis of the survey responses identified that the demographic profile of respondents did not match that of the residents of the City of Greater Geraldton. Based upon statistical advice, the survey data were therefore weighted to account for certain demographic elements (sex, education, age and Aboriginal identification) (see Appendix 1 for weights used and further detail on weighting methodology).

Data analysis

Basic descriptive analyses were carried out for each question and where applicable compared to national results from the NCAS. Demographic subgroup analyses were performed according to gender, and Aboriginal identification, as well as by age, educational attainment and employment status at the time of survey completion. Differences between demographic subgroups were estimated as odds ratios, with statistical significance determined by Chi Square testing.

Results

Of the 1159 participants who gave consent and began the questionnaire, 914 (79%) were included in the analyses. Participants were excluded if they lived outside of Greater Geraldton (n=33, none went on to complete the survey), were below 15 years of age (n=2, none went on to complete the survey) or did not complete the questionnaire (n=245: median age 48, 104 female; 36 male; 105 no information).

Demographics of included respondents prior to weighting:

- Of the 914 participants who completed the survey, 73% were female (compared to 50.4% of the Greater Geraldton population).
- Of the respondents, 8.4% identified as being Aboriginal (compared to 9.7% of the population).
- The median age of the respondents was 45 years.
- A higher proportion of the respondents were university educated (39.3%) compared to the general population (12.5%), and a lower proportion of respondents were educated to the level of high school or below compared to the general population.

As noted above in the Methods section, these differences in demographics between respondents and the general population have been accounted for through a weighting process (Table 1). *All results presented in this section are from the weighted data.*

Table 1: Demographics of participants (unweighted and weighted) compared to the Geraldton population

		LCAEVS participants, n (%) unweighted	LCAEVS participants, n (%) weighted	Geraldton population ¹ , %
Total		914 (100)	914 (100)	
Sex	Male	247 (27.0)	453 (49.6)	49.6
	Female	667 (73.0)	461 (50.4)	50.4
	Other	0	0	-
Age, median (IQR)*		45 (34-56)	46	
Age categories	15-24 years	83 (9.1)	148 (16.2)	16.2
	25-34 years	158 (17.3)	142 (15.5)	15.5
	35-44 years	201 (22.0)	148 (16.2)	16.2
	45-54 years	223 (24.4)	167 (18.3)	18.3
	55-64 years	179 (19.6)	140 (15.3)	15.3
	65-74 years	58 (6.3)	97 (10.6)	10.6
	75+ years	12 (1.3)	73 (8.0)	8.0
Educational attainment	Year 10 or below	126 (13.8)	269 (29.4)	29.4
	Year 11 or 12	126 (13.8)	229 (25.1)	25.1
	Trade / Apprenticeship / TAFE	303 (33.2)	302 (33.0)	33.0
	University	359 (39.3)	114 (12.5)	12.5
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identification	Yes	77 (8.4)	89 (9.7)	9.7
	No	837 (91.6)	825 (90.3)	90.3
Aware of the CRE [^] initiative	Yes	377 (41.2)	357 (39.0)	-
	No	537 (58.8)	557 (61.0)	-

¹ Source of data: ABS Geraldton 2016
*IQR = interquartile range, ^CRE = Community, Respect and Equality

Participants became aware of the survey through many different sources and sites. Facebook was the most successful method of dissemination with 38% of participants reporting accessing the survey there, second was email (21%), and a smaller proportion through events or the CRE website. The remaining participants found out about the survey through ‘other’ methods.

Just over 40% of respondents were aware of the local Community, Respect and Equality (CRE) initiative for the primary prevention of domestic violence.



EXPERIENCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Overall, the 2016 PSS survey found that 17% of women and 6% of men have experienced partner violence since the age of 15 (ABS PSS 2017). In this section, comparisons of the local survey data are made to the results of the 2016 PSS where possible, although most questions in the LCAEVS were worded slightly differently to the PSS and definitions and inclusions varied between the surveys. For example, the PSS often asked specifically about experiences since the age of 15 years, whereas the LCAEVS did not specify such a limit. Therefore, any comparisons should be interpreted with this in mind. It is also noted that there are ongoing issues with under-reporting of violence within the Australian community, hence there are also many differences in statistics depending the data source, for example between police data and self-report in surveys. The PSS found that of women experiencing current violence by a partner, 82% did not contact the police and for men experiencing current violence by a partner, 97% did not contact police (ABS PSS 2017).

Although we did have an additional question related to perpetration of violence, the responses to this question were very small in number and this section was deemed not to be accurate enough to be able to report upon with any meaningful interpretation.

“Overall, the most common form of relationship violence reportedly ever experienced by local respondents was emotional abuse in the forms of being repeatedly criticised to make them feel bad or useless (44%) and intimidation by throwing or smashing an object close enough to cause fear (30%).”

Experiences of Violence Overall

The questions asked in this section were <For a variety of experiences>:

When, if ever, was your most recent experience of any of these from someone you were in a relationship with (dating, in a de-facto relationship or married to)?

Options: “Never”, “In the last 6 months”, “6-12 months ago”, “1-4 years ago”, “more than 5 years ago”.

For the purposes of reporting, the answers have been combined into two groups: those who had experienced the behaviour within the last 12 months (combined categories “In the last 6 months” and “6-12 months ago”) and those who had ever experienced (combined categories “1-4 years ago” and “more than 5 years ago”). Capturing respondents’ experience in the last 12 months is important because this is the most likely to change over time and can be used to monitor the impact of prevention efforts.

Overall, the most common form of relationship violence reportedly ever experienced by local respondents was emotional abuse in the forms of being repeatedly criticised to make them feel bad or useless (44%) and intimidation by throwing or smashing an object close enough to cause fear (30%). This was followed by very high levels of physical violence in the form of ever being slapped, punched or hit (37%). Although not directly comparable due to different relationship terminology

and violence definitions used, in the ABS PSS (2017), 23% of women and 8% of men had ever experienced physical violence by an intimate partner. In addition, local lifetime experiences of sexual abuse were high at 16%. This compares to 18% of women and 5% of men who have ever experienced sexual violence, and 9% of women and 1% of men (aged 18 years or over) who have ever experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner in the PSS. Other emotional and social abuse was commonly reported in the local survey, with almost one quarter (24%) of the respondents reporting experiences of ever being prevented from having contact with friends and family and 15% having received threats of harm to their family members. Stalking behaviours were also common, with one fifth (21%) of respondents having ever received unwanted phone calls, emails and text messages, and 18% having experienced being tracked or monitored without consent. Again, although not directly comparable, this appears to be higher than the national rates in the PSS where one in 10 people (12%) had experienced stalking since the age of 15.

The incidence of the various forms of abuse experienced in the last 12 months closely mirrored the incidence of the types of violence ever experienced, with repeated criticism and physical violence featuring as the most common forms of violence, and sexual abuse and threats to hurt family members being least common. This is similar to the PSS, with both men and women experiencing physical violence more commonly than sexual violence within the last 12 months.

Experiences of Violence by Gender

Incidents of violence experienced ever and in the 12 months prior to the survey were both highly correlated with gender. A higher percentage of women reported experiencing violence over both time frames, and across all categories, except for the category of having been slapped, pushed or hit within the last 12 months.

For FDV behaviours ever experienced, women were four times as likely to have experienced forced sex (females 26%; males 6%). This difference in male and female sexual violence rates is reflective of the national PSS, where women were more likely to have experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner (9% of women and 1% of men) (ABS PSS 2017). Local women were also around three times as likely to have ever experienced stalking behaviours such as tracking or monitoring (27% female; 8% male), and unwanted phone calls, emails and text messages (32% female, 9% male). This gender difference is similar to the PSS data, where 17% of women and 7% of men have experienced stalking behaviours since the age of 15 years. Women also more frequently reported experiencing lifetime emotional abuse in the forms of receiving threats to hurt family members (female 23%; male 8%), being prevented from seeing friends or family (female 34%; male 14%), being repeatedly criticised to make them feel bad or useless (female 55%; male 32%) and having an object thrown near them to cause fear (female 39%; male 20%). This difference is similar to the PSS where one in four women (23%) and one in six men (16%) reported emotional abuse by a partner since the age of 15, with women being more likely to experience controlling forms of emotional abuse, including verbal intimidation and repeated insults (ABS PSS 2017).

“Local women were also around three times as likely to have ever experienced stalking behaviours such as tracking or monitoring (27% female; 8% male), and unwanted phone calls, emails and text messages (32% female, 9% male).”

The gender disparity was less evident when experience was considered over the 12 months prior to the survey date, particularly for social and emotional abuse such as being prevented from seeing friends or family, being repeatedly criticised to make them feel bad or useless and having an object thrown near them to cause fear. Again this is similar to the PSS, where in the past 12 months men and women were equally likely to have experienced emotional abuse from a current or former partner (female 4.8%; male 4.2%) (ABS PSS 2017). However, over the previous 12 months, local women still reported more experiences of stalking behaviours, with tracking or monitoring at five times the rate of men, and receiving unwanted phone calls, emails and text messages at more than twice the rate of men. Women also reported forced sex within the 12 months prior to the survey at more than twice the rate of male respondents.

Graph 2: Experiences of Violence Overall

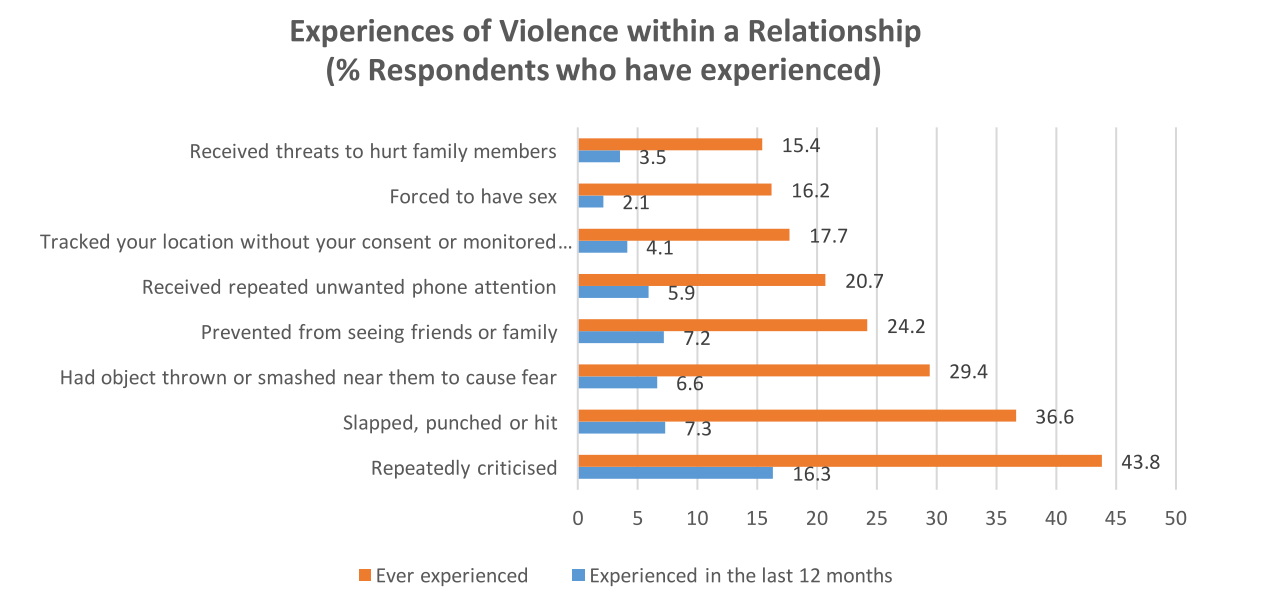


Table 2: Experiences of Violence by Gender

When, if ever, was your most recent experience of any of these from someone you were in a relationship with (dating, de-facto or married)?	Females Ever Experienced %	Males Ever Experienced %	Females Experienced in last 12 months %	Males Experienced in last 12 months %
Repeatedly criticized to make you feel bad or useless	55.1	32.4	17.8	14.8
Threw or smashed an object near you to cause fear	39.0	19.6	7.8	5.2
Prevented you from seeing friends and family	34.3	13.9	7.3	7.1
Tracked your location without your consent or monitored your phone calls and messages	26.7	8.2	6.7	1.3
Repeatedly sent you unwanted phone calls, emails, text messages and the like	32.2	9.0	8.5	3.3
Forced you to have sex	25.7	6.4	2.9	1.1
Threatened to hurt other family members	23.2	7.7	4.3	2.8
Slapped, pushed or hit you	40.8	32.4	6.5	8.3

Experiences of Violence by Aboriginal identification

A higher percentage of non-Aboriginal than Aboriginal respondents reported ever experiencing violence, across five of the eight categories of violence, with the largest differences being seen in physical abuse and being repeatedly criticised. Aboriginal respondents were more likely to have received threats to hurt family members, but there were very similar results between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents for being prevented from seeing friends and family.

However, when reflecting on violence over the last 12 months, a higher percentage of Aboriginal respondents reported experiencing violence in every category, although the percentage was very similar for being repeatedly criticised and for being ‘slapped, pushed or hit’. For example, more than three times as many Aboriginal respondents reported experiencing threats against family members, and more than twice as many Aboriginal respondents reported receiving unwanted phone calls, emails and text messages and being forced to have sex.

Note: It should be noted that these statistics are based upon Aboriginal respondents who reported experiences of violence, and the data does not give any inference of whether the perpetrators of these acts were Aboriginal or Non-Aboriginal.

Table 3: Experiences of Violence by Aboriginal Identification

When, if ever, was your most recent experience of any of these from someone you were in a relationship with (dating, de-facto or married)?	Aboriginal Ever Experienced %	Non-Aboriginal Ever Experienced %	Aboriginal Experienced in last 12 months %	Non-Aboriginal Experienced in last 12 months %
Repeatedly criticized to make you feel bad or useless	34.8	44.8	16.8	16.3
Threw or smashed an object near you to cause fear	25.8	29.8	9.0	6.4
Prevented you from seeing friends and family	25.3	24.0	12.6	6.7
Tracked your location without your consent or monitored your phone calls and messages	19.1	17.6	6.7	3.8
Repeatedly sent you unwanted phone calls, emails, text messages and the like	18.0	21.0	12.3	5.3
Forced you to have sex	14.4	16.6	4.4	2.0
Threatened to hurt other family members	19.1	14.9	9.0	2.8
Slapped, pushed or hit you	31.5	37.2	7.8	7.4

KNOWLEDGE OF FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Knowledge of Violence Overall

For the Knowledge of Violence section overall (Table 4), the respondent population in Geraldton was comparable and sometimes favourable to that of the NCAS sample in terms of recognising behaviours that are considered to manifest as part of FDV. There was higher recognition of repeatedly and unkindly criticising a partner and controlling their social life as being FDV and markedly greater recognition of financial control, tracking or monitoring a partner and repeated unwanted communications as being manifestations of FDV.

Table 4: Knowledge of Violence Overall

Do you consider the following behaviours to be family and domestic violence?	LCAEVS				NCAS
	% Agree Sometimes	% Agree Usually	% Agree Always	% Agree combined	NCAS % Agree (2017)
Slaps or pushes their partner to cause harm or fear	2.1	6.6	87.6	96.3	97
Tries to scare or control their partner by threatening to hurt other family members	0.9	4.6	91.0	96.6	98
Throws or smashes objects near their partner to frighten or threaten them	2.8	6.6	87.3	96.7	96
Repeatedly criticises their partner to make them feel bad or useless	4.3	12.5	78.5	95.4	92
Controls their partner's social life by preventing them from seeing family and friends	2.6	10.5	82.1	95.2	91
Tries to control their partner by denying them money	5.8	13.5	75.7	94.9	81
Repeatedly keeps track of their partner or former partner's location, calls or activities	4.1	17.4	72.8	94.3	84
Repeatedly follows or watches a partner or former partner	3.0	11.0	80.5	94.4	92
Repeatedly sends their partner or former partner unwanted phone calls, emails, text messages and the like	2.6	10.3	82.3	95.2	90
Forces their partner to have sex	1.4	2.6	92.3	96.3	97

When responding to the question ‘How much do you agree or disagree with: It is a criminal offence for a man to have sex with his wife without consent?’, 92% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed, 5% were unsure and 3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Although asked in a slightly different way, this is again favourable compared to 81% who responded ‘Yes’ in the NCAS, 12% who were unsure and 7% who responded ‘No’.



Knowledge of Violence by Respondent Gender

However, there were highly significant differences in knowledge of what constitutes FDV by gender, with women more consistently demonstrating that they understood the behaviours that cause harm or fear and are frightening or controlling to be manifestations of behaviours that are part of FDV (details in Table 5). Women were generally 3-4 times more likely to recognise these behaviours as FDV. Repeatedly texting or calling a partner or former partner was the behaviour where women were closer to men in calling the behaviour FDV, but they still showed nearly 3 times greater recognition of this behaviour. The lowest recognition of FDV behaviours for males was for stalking behaviours (92%).

Table 5: Knowledge of Violence by Gender

Do you consider the following behaviours to be family and domestic violence?	% Sometimes / Usually / Always Agree Male	% Sometimes / Usually / Always Agree Female	Odds ratio	p-value (Chi square)	95% Confidence Interval
Slaps or pushes their partner to cause harm or fear	94.0	98.7	4.6	.000	1.9 – 11.0
Tries to scare or control their partner by threatening to hurt other family members	94.5	98.7	4.2	.000	1.8 – 10.2
Throws or smashes objects near their partner to frighten or threaten them	94.5	98.7	4.2	.000	1.8 – 10.2
Repeatedly criticises their partner to make them feel bad or useless	92.7	98.0	3.7	.000	1.8 – 7.7
Controls their partner's social life by preventing them from seeing family and friends	93.1	97.8	3.1	.001	1.6 – 6.3
Tries to control their partner by denying them money	92.9	98.0	3.6	.000	1.7 – 7.4
Repeatedly keeps track of their partner or former partner's location, calls or activities	91.8	97.8	3.8	.000	1.9 – 7.5
Repeatedly follows or watches a partner or former partner	92.4	98.0	3.8	.000	1.9 – 7.9
Repeatedly sends their partner or former partner unwanted phone calls, emails, text messages and the like	93.6	97.8	2.9	.002	1.5 – 6.0
Forces their partner to have sex	94.5	98.3	3.2	.002	1.5 – 7.0

Knowledge of Violence by Aboriginal Identification

The analysis of knowledge of FDV by Aboriginal Identification (Table 6) also showed substantial differences in the recognition of what constituted family violence across all questions. Although overall recognition of these behaviours as being manifestations of FDV was high (>80%) in both groups, Aboriginal respondents were more than 4 to 5 times as likely to consider slapping or pushing their partner to cause fear, threatening to hurt other family members and throwing or smashing objects near their partner and stalking behaviours not to be manifestations of FDV. The areas which were most under-recognised as FDV were repeated criticism of a partner to make them feel bad or useless, controlling a partner's social life by preventing them from seeing family and friends, and forcing a partner to have sex, all of which Aboriginal respondents were more than 5 times as likely to consider not manifestations of FDV. The lowest rates of recognition of FDV behaviours for Aboriginal respondents were coercive behaviours such as repeated criticism, social control and stalking behaviours (all 83%).

Table 6: Knowledge of Violence and Aboriginal Identification

Do you consider the following behaviours to be family and domestic violence?	% Sometimes / Usually / Always Agree Aboriginal	% Sometimes / Usually / Always Agree Non-Aboriginal	Odds ratio	p-value (Chi square)	95% Confidence Interval
Slaps or pushes their partner to cause harm or fear	88.6	97.1	3.9	.000	1.9 – 7.9
Tries to scare or control their partner by threatening to hurt other family members	88.6	97.5	4.5	.000	2.2 – 9.2
Throws or smashes objects near their partner to frighten or threaten them	88.6	96.7	4.7	.000	2.3 – 9.7
Repeatedly criticises their partner to make them feel bad or useless	83.1	96.7	5.2	.000	2.8 – 9.3
Controls their partner's social life by preventing them from seeing family and friends	83.1	96.7	5.1	.000	2.8 – 9.3
Tries to control their partner by denying them money	84.9	96.7	4.6	.000	2.5 – 8.6
Repeatedly keeps track of their partner or former partner's location, calls or activities	86.5	95.7	3.2	.000	1.7 – 5.9
Repeatedly follows or watches a partner or former partner	83.1	96.5	4.8	.000	2.7 – 8.5
Repeatedly sends their partner or former partner unwanted phone calls, emails, text messages and the like	85.1	96.8	4.8	.000	2.5 – 8.9
Forces their partner to have sex	86.5	97.5	5.3	.000	2.7 – 10.4



Knowledge of Violence by Respondent Age, Education and Employment

There was an interesting association between age of the respondents and their knowledge of behaviours that constitute FDV. Although recognition of all of these behaviours as FDV was extremely high in all age groups (>90%), there was a clear trend across the categories whereby both the youngest age group 15-24 years and the 65-74 year age group were the least likely to identify the behaviours as FDV. For educational attainment, again there was consistently high recognition of these behaviours being manifestations of FDV (>90% across all groups and categories). Those who had completed university education were slightly more likely to recognise most types of FDV behaviours, and those who had completed Year 10 or below were less likely. The exception to these trends was for recognition of stalking behaviours as FDV where those who had completed Year 11 or 12 were most likely to recognise these as being a form of FDV, more so than those who had been to university. For those who had completed formal education in Year 10 or below, the lowest rates of recognition of FDV were for stalking behaviours, repeated criticism and control of social life. Looking at trends by employment or training, the recognition of these behaviours as being FDV was consistently lowest among students across all categories, with the lowest rates of recognition of FDV being for stalking behaviours, repeated criticism and control of social life and for forcing their partner to have sex (all 84%). This groups’ responses were closely followed by those who were unemployed at the time of the survey. Those who were retired, employed or a carer/parent more often agreed that the behaviours are manifestations of FDV.

Table 7: Knowledge of Violence by Age

Do you consider the following behaviours to be family and domestic violence?	% Sometimes / Usually / Always Agree by Age (Years)					
	15-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65-74 years
Slaps or pushes their partner to cause harm or fear	91.9	97.2	97.3	97.0	99.3	91.8
Tries to scare or control their partner by threatening to hurt other family members	93.9	97.2	97.3	97.0	99.3	91.8
Throws or smashes objects near their partner to frighten or threaten them	93.9	97.2	98.0	97.0	99.3	91.8
Repeatedly criticises their partner to make them feel bad or useless	92.6	97.2	93.2	96.4	97.8	91.8
Controls their partner's social life by preventing them from seeing family and friends	91.2	97.2	93.2	96.4	98.6	91.8
Tries to control their partner by denying them money	92.4	97.1	95.3	95.2	97.9	91.8
Repeatedly keeps track of their partner or former partner's location, calls or activities	93.9	97.1	93.2	96.4	97.1	91.8
Repeatedly follows or watches a partner or former partner	91.7	97.1	93.2	96.4	97.9	91.8
Repeatedly sends their partner or former partner unwanted phone calls, emails, text messages and the like	91.8	97.2	95.2	97.0	97.8	91.8
Forces their partner to have sex	92.6	97.2	97.3	97.0	99.3	91.8

Note: The 75+ age group has not been reported because of the low number of respondents.

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“Although recognition of all of these behaviours as FDV was extremely high in all age groups (>90%), there was a clear trend across the categories whereby both the youngest age group 15-24 years and the 65-74 year age group were the least likely to identify the behaviours as FDV.”

Table 8 – Knowledge of Violence by Education

Do you consider the following behaviours to be family and domestic violence?	% Sometimes / Usually / Always Agree by Education			
	Year 10 or below	Year 11 or 12	Trade/TAFE	University
Slaps or pushes their partner to cause harm or fear	95.2	96.9	95.7	100.0
Tries to scare or control their partner by threatening to hurt other family members	95.2	96.9	96.4	100.0
Throws or smashes objects near their partner to frighten or threaten them	95.2	97.4	96.4	100.0
Repeatedly criticises their partner to make them feel bad or useless	92.9	96.9	96.0	97.4
Controls their partner's social life by preventing them from seeing family and friends	92.9	96.1	96.3	98.2
Tries to control their partner by denying them money	94.0	96.5	95.3	97.4
Repeatedly keeps track of their partner or former partner's location, calls or activities	92.9	98.3	93.2	97.4
Repeatedly follows or watches a partner or former partner	92.9	96.9	95.6	96.5
Repeatedly sends their partner or former partner unwanted phone calls, emails, text messages and the like	94.0	96.5	95.7	98.2
Forces their partner to have sex	95.1	96.5	96.4	100.0

Table 9 – Knowledge of Violence by Employment

Do you consider the following behaviours to be family and domestic violence?	% Sometimes / Usually / Always Agree by Employment					
	Employed	Unemployed	Carer/parent	Student	Retired	Unable to work
Slaps or pushes their partner to cause harm or fear	97.4	90.6	100.0	87.5	96.9	96.7
Tries to scare or control their partner by threatening to hurt other family members	97.4	90.6	100.0	87.5	98.1	96.7
Throws or smashes objects near their partner to frighten or threaten them	97.4%	92.5	100.0	87.5	98.1	96.7
Repeatedly criticises their partner to make them feel bad or useless	96.0	88.7	100.0	83.9	98.1	96.7
Controls their partner's social life by preventing them from seeing family and friends	96.3	88.7	95.6	83.9	98.1	96.7
Tries to control their partner by denying them money	96.3	88.7	95.6	87.0	98.1	96.7
Repeatedly keeps track of their partner or former partner's location, calls or activities	95.6	88.7	100.0	89.3	95.0	96.7
Repeatedly follows or watches a partner or former partner	95.9	88.7	100.0	83.9	97.5	96.7
Repeatedly sends their partner or former partner unwanted phone calls, emails, text messages and the like	96.5	88.7	95.6	87.0	98.1	96.7
Forces their partner to have sex	97.4	90.6	100.0	84.2	98.1	96.7

Knowledge of Gender Symmetry

Consistent with the evidence from the national survey (ANROWS 2017), most local respondents agreed that domestic violence is perpetrated mainly by men or by men more often (77% compared to 64% NCAS*). In addition, the majority of local respondents agreed that women are more likely to experience physical harm as a result of FDV, although this was lower than national rates (64% compared to 81% NCAS*).

* Note: question formats and wording were different between LCAEVS and NCAS for both questions.

Knowledge of Additional Factors Contributing to Ongoing Violence

Overall, 55% of local respondents knew where to go to get support about a domestic violence issue, which was lower than the national survey results (60%). For local Aboriginal people, the number was slightly higher (66%).

Use of illegal drugs (91.5%), alcohol (89.0%) and men wanting to control women (83.6%) were seen by the community as the key underlying causes of FDV.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Attitudes Towards Violence Overall

Compared to the NCAS, LCAEVS survey respondents were less likely to agree with statements supporting violence against women (Table 10). For instance, only 7% of LCAEVS respondents thought that family and domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family compared to 12% of NCAS respondents. A quarter (24%) of LCAEVS respondents thought that a woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing, compared to almost a third of NCAS respondents. However, in both the NCAS and LCAEVS, 13% of respondents thought that if a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders it is shameful for her family. Similarly, 5% of both LCAEVs and NCAS respondents agreed that violence by a man against his female partner can be excused if the offender is heavily intoxicated by alcohol (although in the NCAS this question was asked in a gender-neutral manner: ‘Domestic violence can be excused if the victim is heavily affected by alcohol’). Overall, the highest agreement both locally (24%) and nationally (32%) was for the statement ‘A woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing’.

Table 10: Attitudes Towards Violence Overall

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	LCAEVS	NCAS
	% Agree	% Agree
Family and domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family	7	12
Family and domestic violence can be excused if afterward, the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done	10	14
If a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders it is shameful for her family	13	13
Many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence	13	23
If a woman is raped while she is drunk or affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible	8	13
A woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing	24	32
Women often say ‘no’ when they mean ‘yes’	8	12
If a woman wears revealing clothing, she is at least partly responsible for rape	5	-
Violence by a man against his female partner can be excused if the offender is heavily intoxicated by alcohol	5	5



Attitudes Towards Violence by Respondent Gender (Table 11)

Compared to women in the Geraldton region, men were almost 6 times as likely to think that family and domestic violence can be excused if afterward the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done, and to think that violence by a man against his female partner can be excused if the offender is heavily intoxicated by alcohol. These are both examples of minimising the responsibility of the perpetrator.

Men were also 5 times as likely to think that women often say ‘no’ when they mean ‘yes’ and to think that if a woman wears revealing clothing, she is at least partly responsible for rape. Men were 4 times as likely to think that many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence, with one in five males believing this to be the case. Males were also 3 times as likely as women to think that if a woman is raped while she is drunk or affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible and that a woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing, with one third of men believing this to be the case. These are all examples of ‘victim blaming’, where the responsibility for the violence is shifted from the perpetrator to the person experiencing the violence.

Men were twice as likely to think that if a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders it is shameful for her family and to consider family and domestic violence a private matter to be handled within the family.

Table 11: Attitudes Towards Violence by Respondent Gender

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	% Agree / Strongly Agree Male	% Agree / Strongly Agree Female	Odds ratio	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
Family and domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family	9.0	4.8	2.0	.1	1.2 – 3.4
Family and domestic violence can be excused if afterward, the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done	16.5	3.5	5.5	<.001	3.2 – 9.6
If a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders it is shameful for her family	17.4	8.9	2.2	<.001	1.4 – 3.2
Many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence	19.9	6.1	3.8	<.001	2.5 – 6.0
If a woman is raped while she is drunk or affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible	12.1	3.9	3.4	<.001	2.0 – 5.
A woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing	33.7	13.9	3.2	<.001	2.3 – 4.4
Women often say ‘no’ when they mean ‘yes’	12.6	2.6	5.4	<.001	2.8 – 10.2
If a woman wears revealing clothing, she is at least partly responsible for rape	7.7	1.5	5.4	<.001	2.4 – 12.4
Violence by a man against his female partner can be excused if the offender is heavily intoxicated by alcohol	8.2	1.5	5.8	<.001	2.5 – 13.1

“Men were 4 times as likely to think that many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence, with one in five males believing this to be the case.”

Attitudes towards violence by Aboriginal identification

Regarding attitudes towards violence, Aboriginal respondents were more likely to agree with statements that reduced the responsibility of perpetrators (for example, Aboriginal respondents were 6 times as likely to respond that violence by a man against his female partner can be excused if the offender is heavily intoxicated by alcohol) and with statements that increase the blame on the victim (Table 12).

Aboriginal respondents were 6 times more likely to consider family and domestic violence a private matter to be handled within the family and almost 4 times as likely to think that if a woman reports abuse to outsiders it is shameful for her family.

Overall, the highest agreement was with the statement, ‘A woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing’ (36%). Agreement with this statement was also high among non-Aboriginal respondents (22%).

Table 12: Attitudes Towards Violence by Aboriginal Identification

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	% Agree / Strongly Agree Aboriginal	% Agree / Strongly Agree Non-Aboriginal	Odds ratio	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
Family and domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family	24.7	5.0	6.3	<.001	3.5 – 11.2
Family and domestic violence can be excused if afterward, the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done	22.5	8.6	3.1	<.001	1.8 – 5.4
If a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders it is shameful for her family	31.5	11.1	3.7	<.001	2.2 – 6.0
Many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence	24.7	11.6	2.5	<.001	1.5 – 4.2
If a woman is raped while she is drunk or affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible	19.3	6.8	3.3	<.001	1.8 – 6.0
A woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing	36.0	22.4	2.0	.004	1.2 – 3.1
Women often say ‘no’ when they mean ‘yes’	15.7	6.7	2.6	.002	1.4 – 4.9
If a woman wears revealing clothing, she is at least partly responsible for rape	15.7	3.3	5.5	<.001	2.8 – 11.0
Violence by a man against his female partner can be excused if the offender is heavily intoxicated by alcohol	17.0	3.5	5.6	<.001	2.9 – 11.0

“Aboriginal respondents were 6 times more likely to consider family and domestic violence a private matter to be handled within the family and almost 4 times as likely to think that if a woman reports abuse to outsiders it is shameful for her family.”

Attitudes Towards Violence by Age, Education and Employment

When analysing attitudes towards violence by age, the 15-24 (youngest) age group were generally much more likely to agree with attitudes that may perpetuate ongoing violence. In particular, 25% of this group felt that women tend to exaggerate the problem of violence, and 30% believed that if a woman doesn’t leave a violent relationship they are at least partly responsible for the abuse continuing. These are both examples of victim blaming, which places the responsibility of the violence on the victim rather than the perpetrator. This group was closely followed by the 55-64 age group who were also more likely to agree with victim-blaming attitudes towards violence. This older group were most likely to believe that women often say ‘no’ when they mean ‘yes’ (10%) and that if a woman wears revealing clothing, they are at least partly responsible for rape (10%).

In terms of educational background, there is a clear trend across the categories that those who have spent more years in formal education (trade training, apprenticeship, TAFE or university) were less likely to agree with victim-blaming statements. The largest difference was seen in the category of ‘A woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing’, where agreement occurred for one third (34%) of those who completed Year 10 or below, 29% of those who completed Year 11 or 12, 16% of those who completed further trade training and 10% of those who completed a university course.

Those who were employed at the time of the survey showed the lowest agreement with attitudes that perpetuate violence, along with those who were carers or parents, across most statements. Retired persons were most likely to agree with victim-blaming statements such as partial responsibility for rape if the victim is drug or alcohol affected or if the woman does not leave an abusive relationship; and they were also most likely to question consent, with almost one quarter (23%) responding that women often say ‘no’ when they mean ‘yes’. Unemployed respondents were the most likely to agree with reporting violence being shameful on the family, that women who wear revealing clothing are partially responsible for rape, and that perpetrators who are intoxicated with alcohol can be excused for violent behaviours. Throughout all employment groups, there was high agreement with the statement ‘A woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing’, with 47% retirees, 32% students, and 32% of those not employed agreeing with this statement. There was also higher agreement with this statement for those groups who generally had more favourable attitudes towards violence in other categories, for example 22% of carers and parents, and 16% of those employed also agreed.

Table 13: Attitudes Towards Violence by Age

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	% Agree / Strongly Agree by Age (Years)					
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74
Family and domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family	12.8	8.5	7.4	3.0	0	2.2
Family and domestic violence can be excused if afterward, the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done	17.6	7.8	3.4	1.8	0	3.6
If a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders it is shameful for her family	16.3	8.5	8.1	9.0	8.2	10.0
Many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence	24.5	11.3	4.1	12.6	12.4	9.4
If a woman is raped while she is drunk or affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible	8.1	3.5	0.7	6.0	7.2	5.7
A woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing	29.7	18.3	12.9	14.9	24.7	19.3
Women often say ‘no’ when they mean ‘yes’	5.4	6.3	0.7	3.6	10.3	2.2
If a woman wears revealing clothing, she is at least partly responsible for rape	8.2	5.6	0	3.6	10.3	3.6
Violence by a man against his female partner can be excused if the offender is heavily intoxicated by alcohol	6.8	4.9	2.0	4.8	3.1	1.4

Table 14: Attitudes Towards Violence by Education

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	% Agree / Strongly Agree by Education			
	Year 10 or below	Year 11 or 12	Trade, Apprenticeship or TAFE	University
Family and domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family	10.0	5.2	6.3	3.5
Family and domestic violence can be excused if afterward, the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done	19.3	5.2	8.3	1.8
If a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders it is shameful for her family	17.1	11.4	11.9	10.4
Many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence	14.9	17.5	10.9	5.2
If a woman is raped while she is drunk or affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible	15.2	6.5	4.3	3.5
A woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing	34.0	29.3	15.6	9.6
Women often say ‘no’ when they mean ‘yes’	13.8	9.6	3.0	1.8
If a woman wears revealing clothing, she is at least partly responsible for rape	7.1	6.5	2.3	0.9
Violence by a man against his female partner can be excused if the offender is heavily intoxicated by alcohol	8.6	5.7	2.3	0.9

Table 15: Attitudes Towards Violence by Employment Status

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	% Agree / Strongly Agree by Employment					
	Employed	Not Employed	Carer / Paren	Student	Retired	Unable to work
Family and domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family	4.2	14.8	6.7	14.3	8.8	20.0
Family and domestic violence can be excused if afterward, the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done	3.2	18.9	2.2	32.1	25.2	13.3
If a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders it is shameful for her family	7.0	30.2	11.1	17.9	26.4	20.0
Many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence	9.1	26.4	6.7	26.8	15.1	33.3
If a woman is raped while she is drunk or affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible	3.2	9.4	8.9	8.9	22.6	16.7
A woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing	16.1	32.1	22.2	32.1	46.5	16.7
Women often say ‘no’ when they mean ‘yes’	2.8	7.4	4.4	8.9	23.3	16.7
If a woman wears revealing clothing, she is at least partly responsible for rape	2.5	15.1	6.7	8.9	5.0	13.3
Violence by a man against his female partner can be excused if the offender is heavily intoxicated by alcohol	3.0	9.4	2.2	7.1	8.8	4.9

ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

Attitudes Towards Gender Equality Overall

Overall, compared to the NCAS, the LCAEVS results for ‘Attitudes Towards Gender Equality’ were generally more supportive of gender equality than those reported in the NCAS (Table 16). It should be noted that where some questions were modified for the local survey, these were not directly comparable to the NCAS.

The statements of gender inequality with the highest rates of agreement were that women seek to gain power by gaining control over men (19%), that ‘It’s ok for men to whistle at women while they are walking down the street’ (18%) and ‘I think there’s no harm in men making sexist jokes about women when they are among their male friends’ (17%). Only 5% of respondents overall agreed that they were more likely to listen to a man’s opinion that a woman’s.

Table 16: Local Attitudes Towards Gender Equality Overall Compared to the NCAS

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	LCAEVs	NCAS
	% Agree / Strongly Agree	% Agree / Strongly Agree
I’m more likely to listen to a man’s opinion than a woman’s	5	-
It’s ok for men to whistle at women while they are walking down the street.	18	-
I think there’s no harm in men making sexist jokes about women when they are among their male friends	17	24
Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household	12	16
Men make better political leaders than women	8	14
In the workplace, men generally make more capable bosses than women	9	14
Women seek to gain power by gaining control over men	19	-

Attitudes Towards Gender Equality by Respondent Gender

In comparing male and female responses regarding attitudes to gender inequality, male respondents were consistently more likely to believe in gender stereotypes. For example, men were 11 times as likely to agree that men make better political leaders than women, more than 6 times as likely to believe that men should take control in relationships and be head of the household and almost 6 times as likely to feel that they would listen to a man’s opinion more than a woman’s, among others as shown below in Table 17.

Table 17: Attitudes Towards Gender Equality Overall

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	% Agree / Strongly Agree Male	% Agree / Strongly Agree Female	Odds ratio	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
I’m more likely to listen to a man’s opinion than a woman’s	8.4	1.5	5.9	<.001	2.6 - 13.4
It’s ok for men to whistle at women while they are walking down the street.	23.0	12.6	2.1	<.001	1.5 - 2.9
I think there’s no harm in men making sexist jokes about women when they are among their male friends	27.3	7.2	4.9	<.001	3.2 – 7.3
Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household	20.1	3.9	6.2	<.001	3.7 – 10.5
Men make better political leaders than women	14.6	1.5	11.0	<.001	5.0 – 24.3
In the workplace, men generally make more capable bosses than women	13.2	4.1	3.5	<.001	2.1 – 6.0
Women seek to gain power by gaining control over men	28.7	9.1	4.0	<.001	2.8 -5.9

Attitudes Towards Gender Equality by Aboriginal Identification

There were also significant differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents towards gender equality. Aboriginal respondents were more likely to agree with attitudes of power imbalance between men and women, for example Aboriginal respondents were 6 times as likely to agree that they would listen to a man’s opinion over a woman’s. Aboriginal respondents were also more likely to agree that men make better politicians and workplace bosses, and that men should take control of relationships and be head of the household. Other smaller differences are outlined below in Table 18.

Table 18: Attitudes Towards Gender Equality by Aboriginal Identification

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	% Agree / Strongly Agree Aboriginal	% Agree / Strongly Agree Non-Aboriginal	Odds ratio	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
I’m more likely to listen to a man’s opinion than a woman’s	18.0	3.5	6.0	<.001	3.1 - 11.6
It’s ok for men to whistle at women while they are walking down the street.	23.6	17.1	1.5	.127	0.9 – 2.5
I think there’s no harm in men making sexist jokes about women when they are among their male friends	28.1	15.9	2.1	.004	1.3 – 3.4
Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household	27.0	10.3	3.2	<.001	1.9 – 5.4
Men make better political leaders than women	17.0	7.1	2.7	.001	1.4 – 4.9
In the workplace, men generally make more capable bosses than women	21.6	7.2	3.6	<.001	2.0 – 6.3
Women seek to gain power by gaining control over men	32.6	17.3	2.3	<.001	1.4 – 3.7

Attitudes Towards Gender Equality by Age, Education and Employment status (Table 19)

Younger respondents in the 15-24 and 25-34 year age groups were the most likely to agree that there is no harm in men making sexist jokes about women and that men should take control and be head of the household. The 25-34 age group were also most likely to agree that men make better political leaders than women and that men make more capable bosses. When considering attitudes of gender equality by educational attainment, those who finished formal education in Year 9 or 10 consistently had higher agreement with statements of gender inequality across the categories. Those with university education had the lowest agreement with statements of gender inequality except for one category ‘Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household’, where those with education in a trade had the lowest levels of agreement. Attitudes to gender equality by employment status showed no particular pattern or consistency between the groups, with rates of agreement across the groups varying greatly depending on the specific question.

Table 19: Attitudes Towards Gender Equality by Age

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	% Agree / Strongly Agree by Age (Years)					
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74
I’m more likely to listen to a man’s opinion than a woman’s	6.8	4.2	6.1	4.2	0.0	5.0
It’s ok for men to whistle at women while they are walking down the street	10.9	9.9	12.2	12.0	20.6	11.4
I think there’s no harm in men making sexist jokes about women when they are among their male friends	17.6	20.4	13.6	13.8	10.3	10.8
Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household	13.5	15.5	10.8	8.3	5.2	7.1
Men make better political leaders than women	6.1	9.2	6.1	4.2	5.2	7.1
In the workplace, men generally make more capable bosses than women	4.8	10.6	8.1	4.8	9.3	7.1
Women seek to gain power by gaining control over men	21.1	12.7	15.5	11.9	18.6	15.8

Table 20: Attitudes Towards Gender Equality by Education

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	% Agree / Strongly Agree by Education			
	Year 10 or below	Year 11 or 12	Trade, Apprenticeship or TAFE	University
I’m more likely to listen to a man’s opinion than a woman’s	7.8	4.4	4.3	0.9
It’s ok for men to whistle at women while they are walking down the street.	28.0	11.7	16.6	8.8
I think there’s no harm in men making sexist jokes about women when they are among their male friends	22.4	15.3	16.6	9.6
Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household	13.8	14.4	9.0	10.5
Men make better political leaders than women	14.1	7.0	4.7	4.4
In the workplace, men generally make more capable bosses than women	10.4	9.6	7.3	6.1
Women seek to gain power by gaining control over men	21.6	15.2	21.2	13.0

Table 21: Attitudes Towards Gender Equality by Employment Status

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	% Agree / Strongly Agree by Employment					
	Employed	Not Employed	Carer / Parent	Student	Retired	Unable to work
I’m more likely to listen to a man’s opinion than a woman’s	3.0	18.9	6.5	3.6	3.8	26.7
It’s ok for men to whistle at women while they are walking down the street.	9.5	22.6	13.3	14.0	47.2	26.7
I think there’s no harm in men making sexist jokes about women when they are among their male friends	13.1	24.5	8.9	25.0	25.8	33.3
Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household	8.6	30.2	15.6	5.4	17.6	20.0
Men make better political leaders than women	4.7	11.3	6.5	8.9	17.6	13.3
In the workplace, men generally make more capable bosses than women	7.5	11.3	13.3	0.0	12.6	13.3
Women seek to gain power by gaining control over men	12.1	28.3	6.7	28.6	36.5	36.7

General Violence Construct Questions

Table 22: General violence construct questions, local responses compared to the NCAS 2017

General Violence Construct Statements	LCAEVS % Agree or Strongly Agree	NCAS % Agree (2017)
If a person hits you, you should hit them back	19.8	22
It is okay to hit children if they have done something wrong	24.8	24
If people threaten my family / friends they deserve to get hurt	24.1	20

Compared to the NCAS, local responses were generally comparable. However, there were higher rates of respondents agreeing with the statement ‘If people threaten my family / friends they deserve to get hurt’ (24% locally compared to 20% nationally).

Qualitative Analysis

The LCAEVS Survey left space for free-text comments throughout the survey. One hundred and forty-six (146) separate comments were made, with some comments short and specific, while others were as long as 250 words and covered several issues. The comments are grouped and summarised below, with selected quotes for each group to represent the range of comments made by survey respondents.

1. General support for the survey

Thirty-two comments were positive about the survey intention, layout and content.

This survey is a great tool to improve on what is a big issue in our community, and I am fully supportive on the improvement of dealing with domestic violence. Well made survey overall.

Thanks for putting this survey together and offering it to the public. I hope you get a lot of responses. It is healthy to think about these things and question ourselves

2. Perception that the survey was skewed against men

Fifteen comments were specifically on what they saw as a bias against men.

Survey skewed. Very obvious bias towards domestic abuse perpetrated by men. Questions and survey do not do justice to the issue of domestic violence and abuse as a whole of community problem which has victims for both genders.

It is this continuing bias against men that means domestic abuse can never be discussed openly and honestly or addressed as a community issue, really quite disappointing.

I think that more time should be taken to look into women being violent against men. I feel that this was a one sided questionnaire and that men struggle with domestic violence and abuse too.

3. Perception that the survey was 'loaded' or unclear

Four respondents commented that the survey questions were 'loaded' or 'too black and white'.

If you are going to play God get real views not misleading views from a preloaded questionnaire

Survey questions are too black and white.

Four comments expressed confusion about definitions or felt that some of the scenarios were confusing or didn't match their reality.

...you don't really take into consideration constant or frequent put downs that whittle away at a person's sense of worth when asking have you ever had to you or done to someone

I have pushed away, hit and thrown things at former partners, teachers and a family member when I was being violently attacked in self defense so was a bit unsure on how to answer those questions. Have never lashed out otherwise.

4. Need to raise awareness, improve policing / judicial services and advertise support services more

Thirteen comments made suggestions about areas for improvement in community education, policing, judicial responses and services.

I do believe there is not enough knowledge out there about domestic violence and many do not know where to turn when they are victim of domestic violence. There is still a lot of stigma and stereotypes out there that surround domestic violence

The police do a wonderful job but the judicial system can be lenient.

5. Visibility of violence and Aboriginal issues.

Twelve comments were directly about the visibility and level of violence within Geraldton and ten concerned the Aboriginal community. Two comments suggested greater understanding of and respect towards Aboriginal people

We need community education about the truth of the past.

We need an indigenous voice in all work places, schools, churches and particularly in the Council of Greater Geraldton.

I would like to see respect given to indigenous shoppers, and more places to sit and talk

More education to understand [A]boriginal beliefs regarding domestic violence in the community would be helpful for the wider community

Eight comments focused on the visibility, level and extent of the violence.

I have never seen/ experienced seeing such violent, hideous, anti social, destructive, behaviour anywhere, as I have in Geraldton, especially with Indigenous, at risk, children in my area/Street..... emulating adult violent behaviour which I also witness on a regular basis as well.

6. Personal responses to FV, suggested causes and remedies

Thirty comments concerned personal responses to and views about FV, and suggested causes of and remedies for FV. Six comments mentioned alcohol and other drugs as causes or contributors to FV.

I think violence in the community is terrible and ruins a community spirit

The increasing use of illicit drugs and cheap alcohol significantly contribute to domestic violence, lack of employment also a factor, the answers to the issues are complex

I definitely believe that society can do better against domestic violence. But a lot of it is the people themselves and they'll keep re offending time and time again. Meth doesn't help.

Several noted the intergenerational transmission of FV and its normalisation within the community.

There needs to be a lot more on healthy relationships and what they are. The flow on effect of generations of domestic violence is another concern. If seen in a family for years they may see that as normal behaviour.

It would be great to see no more DV, but unfortunately you see it with high school male students hitting female students, something that these students probably have learnt at home.

7. Children

Twenty responses were directly related to children. Of those, twelve concerned adverse impacts on children.

The children always suffer if involved or witnessing any kind of violence

Children are not mentioned enough in this survey especially when it comes to family violence. Many times the children are harmed, whether it is physically, psychologically, emotionally, sexually, financially etc.... and the perpetrators don't see the extreme harm this causes the children, at times life threatening....

Three responses suggested stronger punishments for children.

Smacking kids when they continuously do wrong things knowingly should be allowed. School heads should be allowed to discipline naughty kids by smacking them.

We need more punishment to suit the crime even if they are young or no one will learn respect.

8. Personal experiences of violence

Eight comments were directly about the respondents' own history of abuse and violence.

This survey feels like my life. Thank you for letting me know I'm not alone in this matter. 14 months on and I'm still suffering from PTSD and having nightmares about my daughters abusive father.

You stay out of fear and keep from telling anyone because of the consequences

Difficult to answer some of the questions because the abuse was a long time ago. This is the first opportunity I've had to acknowledge it in confidence. My generation of women just had to put up with it, I was very middle class and that sort of thing was never talked about or admitted to.

9. Implications for the survey itself and for community education

Respondents' suggested changes to the survey speak to wider issues of community education about FV:

- *Acknowledging that women also perpetrate violence*
- *The impacts of FV on children*
- *Including 'constant or frequent put downs that whittle away at a person's sense of worth' as a form of abuse in the survey questions*
- *Clarifying that the survey questions about violence perpetrated did not include acts of self-defence*
- *Consider changing survey wording that can be interpreted as "sexist, implies stereotypes and is hetero-centric"*
- *A focus on workplace behaviour*
- *Include questions on possible preventive measures and ideas*
- *Education about the relationship between alcohol and other drugs and violence*

Discussion

Experiences of Domestic Violence

The reported experiences of violence both for all respondents and by specific demographic subgroups has raised some interesting results, both expected and unexpected. Overall, the most common type of relationship violence reportedly ever experienced by local respondents was emotional abuse in the form of being repeatedly criticised to make them feel bad or useless (44%). This was followed by high levels of physical violence in the form of ever being slapped, punched or hit (37%). However, social and emotional abuse along with intimidation and stalking behaviours were also found to be prevalent. Feedback from local community members on these results both in person and in the comments sections of the survey has provided additional useful insights. For example, the survey did not consider the severity or frequency of physical violence, only whether it had been experienced at all within a certain time period. The PSS found that 54% of women and 65% of men who experience violence by a current partner have experienced more than one incident of violence by that partner (ABS PSS 2017). The same is true of previous partners, with 68% of women and 61% of men having experienced more than one incident by previous partners. Another consideration is that the only measure of physical violence was being 'slapped, punched or hit', with feedback indicating that this may not be considered by some as violence, depending on the severity and effect, especially if it was not intended to cause any harm or injury. The PSS indicated that women who had experienced physical violence by a male stated that the most common experiences were of being 'pushed, grabbed or shoved' (71%), having something thrown at them (36%) or being 'kicked, bitten or hit with a fist' (23%), all of which may be interpreted differently to a 'slap, punch or hit'. Additionally, the question on violent experiences asks 'When, if ever, was your most recent experience of any of these from someone you were in a relationship with (dating, in a de-facto relationship or married to)?', whereas in

"Overall, the most common type of relationship violence reportedly ever experienced by local respondents was emotional abuse in the form of being repeatedly criticised to make them feel bad or useless (44%). This was followed by high levels of physical violence in the form of ever being slapped, punched or hit (37%)."

the community, and within the Aboriginal community in particular, feedback indicated that there are high rates of violence between many different extended family members (particularly following relationship breakdowns) and also between young girls, mainly spurred by social media. This type of extended family violence was therefore not fully captured in these results.

Although we do not expect to see rapid changes in these measures, it will be useful to monitor the trends in these reported experiences over time.

Knowledge of Violence Overall

Efforts to prevent FDV require that people understand the nature and various forms of FDV, to recognise it and take action against both the underpinning drivers of FDV and provide supportive care to those who are experiencing it. Often, even those who are subjected to FDV can take months or years to recognise the behaviours that constitute FV, which occurs on a continuum - from subtle forms of intimidation through to acts that involve unwanted sex, physical injury and death. It has also been highlighted that a good understanding of the causes, dynamics, patterns and prevalence of violence against women is important to ensure appropriate responses by and towards those affected by violence (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009). Hence, measuring the understanding of the population about what they consider to be FDV is an important component of measuring the progress of the implementation of the CRE and other prevention efforts in Geraldton.

Although knowledge of behaviours that are considered to be manifestations of FDV were generally comparable or favourable to national results, there were certain subgroups who had lower recognition of these behaviours, namely men (who were 3-4 times less likely to identify FDV behaviours), those in the younger (15-24years) and older (65-74) age groups and students. These trends warrant further analysis in future surveys. In particular, the finding of lower rates of FDV recognition in younger age groups was concerning and it will be important to determine whether there is an unmet need for more educational messaging around FDV for younger people in the community, for example through local schools, sporting groups and other educational facilities such as university and TAFE. It is also interesting to note that although overall there were high rates of recognition of FDV behaviours, there was a reasonably high percentage of the respondent population who were aware of the Community, Respect and Equality (CRE) project (40%). It is not possible to tell how this has influenced the overall results, but it is likely that those who were aware of the project may have had more exposure to educational opportunities or had more interest around FDV issues.

An area of future focus could additionally include enhancing community knowledge of service availability for those experiencing or perpetrating FDV, as just over half of respondents (55%) felt that they would know where to go for support with a FDV issue. Although this number was slightly higher for Aboriginal respondents (66%), it will still be important to increase awareness of appropriate services for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the region.

Although research is showing that gender inequality is likely to be the main underlying driver of FDV, our results indicated that most local respondents felt that illegal drug use (92%) and alcohol (89%), along with men wanting to control women (84%) were the main underlying causes of FDV. These results may reflect the experience of respondents within the community, with a seemingly high association of FDV with alcohol and drug use in addition to the gendered drivers. It is known that both drugs and alcohol increase the frequency and severity of violent behaviours through reducing inhibitions. However, further analysis and messaging could be utilised as part of prevention efforts to ensure that drug and alcohol use is not seen by the community as an 'excusing' factor for the use of violent behaviours.

Attitudes Towards Violence

Attitudes supporting violence against women can be classified into acceptability of violence, minimisation of the importance of violence and legitimisation of violence (Sanchez-Prada et al. 2020). Acceptability of violence includes accepting violence, approving violence and tolerating violence. Legitimation of violence can include victim blaming (for example blaming women's 'revealing' clothing for rape) or justification of violence and exoneration of the perpetrator (for instance blaming violence on alcohol or excusing a perpetrator if they apologise after the fact). Excusing violence leads to violence becoming more acceptable and blaming alcohol or other factors prevents individuals from accepting responsibility for their behaviour and can lead to more violence against women (Webster et al. 2018). Unfavourable attitudes towards violence against women are a causal factor for the perpetuation of violence and as a review by Flood and Pease (2006) found, men are more likely than women to have violence-supportive attitudes. These findings were reflected in the LCAEVS responses, with male respondents being more likely to agree with statements that both minimised the responsibility of the perpetrator and shifted the responsibility for the violence on to the victim. These attitudes are shaped by traditional gender-role attitudes, that are associated with greater acceptance of violence against women, but also a wide range of multi-level factors including

cultural norms (Flood and Pease 2009). Particular cultural and social norms can also influence violence towards women (World Health Organization 2009) (see also section below on Attitudes towards gender equality). Aboriginal respondents were also more likely to agree with statements that both minimised the responsibility of the perpetrator and shifted the responsibility for the violence on to the victim. However, *Change the Picture* (Our Watch 2015) explains that this is not due to traditional gender roles in pre-colonial Aboriginal society but instead is a reflection of a society where colonisation set the underlying context for a complex interaction of gender inequality, social determinants, cultural loss and psychological harm such as intergenerational trauma. Any further education and communication around these issues will need to be designed with the local Aboriginal community in the context of the *Change the Picture* framework.

Employed persons were the least likely to hold attitudes that are likely to perpetuate violent behaviours. This is important to note as some CRE messaging was initially rolled out through local workplaces (Community, Respect and Equality 2017). Although workplaces remain an essential element of the strategy, these findings show a need to ensure that communications are reaching beyond workplaces and are filtering out into the wider community, as outlined the wider CRE strategy. This is more likely to be achieved through a recent aspect of the CRE and *Conversations for Change* projects, the 'Leading Lights' group. This group consists of workplace members of the CRE (mainly media representatives) who attend group strategy sessions once per month to develop coordinated primary prevention community messaging, for example through activities internally in their organisations, with clients, social media posts or holding community events. The aim is that this coordinated approach will bring more relevant and targeted prevention messaging to a wider audience, through the reach of many local businesses and organisations, including social services, not-for-profit organisations and government departments such as the WA police.

It should be noted that one quarter of LCAEVS respondents (and even more nationally), agreed with the statement 'A woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing'. Locally, this agreement was even higher in males, Aboriginal persons, bimodally in the age brackets of 15-24 years and 55-64 years, in those with high school or below formal education, retirees, students, and the unemployed. There was also higher agreement with this statement for those groups who generally had more favourable attitudes towards violence in other categories, for example many carers, parents and employed persons also agreed.

This shows that further messaging and education around this subject could be particularly useful, both within these community subgroups and for the wider community. Improving local knowledge around the complexities and risks of FDV relationships, along with reducing the blame and stigma often placed on victims of FDV by this public perception of responsibility, could aid those experiencing FDV in seeking help through lowering feelings of shame or self-blame.

There was a mixture of comments at the end of this section, many reiterating that there is never an excuse for violence and abuse, no matter the situation. However, many other respondents used the comments section to clarify some of their responses to specific questions. For example, related to their answers to some of the victim-blaming questions, there were several comments clarifying their answer by saying that the perpetrator is responsible for violence but that they felt victims could reduce their vulnerability to violence in certain ways, for example 'To a degree we are all responsible for our own safety within the environment that we are in'.

Attitudes towards gender equality

Gender equality questions were included in the survey as gender inequality within society is thought to be one of the main underlying drivers of FDV against women. Our Watch states 'Although there is no single cause of violence against women and their children, the latest international evidence shows there are certain factors that consistently predict - or drive - higher levels of violence against women. These include beliefs and behaviours reflecting disrespect for women, low support for gender equality and adherence to rigid or stereotypical gender roles, relations and identities' (Our Watch 2015).

Similar to the knowledge and attitudes towards violence sections, we again saw that the LCAEVS results were overall similar or favourable to those reported in the NCAS, with certain subgroups having higher rates of agreement. These included male, Aboriginal and younger respondents (15-24 and 25-34 years), being more likely to believe in gender stereotypes. Gaining further understanding and clarification of these views within these subgroups, potentially through further consultation and community meetings, is likely to aid and further inform education and communication in the primary prevention space as the project continues.

There was a mixture of comments at the end of this section, many reiterating that there is never an excuse for violence and abuse, no matter the situation.

Limitations

The response rate to the survey was 3% of the Greater Geraldton population (914 / 30,602) aged 15 years or older. Other than the specific weighting process (which accounted for differences between the survey sample and the general population for age, Aboriginal identification, gender and education), we do not have any data on how respondents differed from the general population. It is likely that this survey may have attracted those with an interest in or experience of FDV, which has the potential to introduce some bias. We can speculate that those with an interest or experience in FDV would be likely to have greater knowledge of FDV and this may partially account for the higher FDV knowledge of local respondents compared to the NCAS. The survey was widely distributed around the community and on social media, and paper copies of the survey were available for those with a lack of computer access (for example at the prison). However, the survey and advertisements were in English language only, which may have excluded some from linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The weighting process helped to ensure that the responses reported better match those of the population profile of the City of Greater Geraldton by increasing the weight of responses from demographic groups that were under sampled and reducing the

weight of the over sampled groups. However, weighting is based upon the responses received and can introduce some bias and assumptions, particularly if the under sampled survey participants were unrepresentative (in terms of knowledge, attitudes and experiences) compared to the wider population group, as these will have been magnified in the weighted results. Although statistical analysis was performed, this has not yet included a regression analysis which could take into account the multiple factors determining attitudes (for example, being male, university educated and Aboriginal).

The free-text comments indicated that some of the questions and definitions in the survey were difficult for respondents, particularly given the closed categories for responses and the complexity of circumstances respondents felt needed to be considered, which would be scenario-dependent. This is a challenge of keeping the LCAEVS survey concise and consistent with the NCAS questions so that it is possible to compare the local responses with national data and a more generic challenge of Likert responses in survey questionnaires. It is not possible to consider all individual situations, as everyone's circumstances and experiences of violence are unique. Of note is that the NCAS data is widely used as a source of data in policy and in the media. Other survey comments with feedback are highlighted below in Box 1. All of this helpful feedback will be considered when preparing the next survey round.



Box 1: Feedback regarding difficulties with the survey / responding

Many answers would be scenario-dependent, this is not a 'black and white' topic.

- The need for a definition of violence in the survey to help determine whether certain behaviours are 'violence' or 'abuse' - 'Some questions indicate domestic abuse but not necessarily violence ... but it is all in the definition and understanding of what is meant by abuse or violence'.
- Comments about the gendered nature of the questions rather than neutrality to be inclusive of both men and women in the survey and relationships other than those of heterosexual persons - 'Some of these questions are sexist and stereotype men as the primary perpetrators of domestic violence. The questions also imply that all relationships are heterosexual.'
- Suggestions were made around questions that respondents felt were missing. For example, the only measure of physical violence was being 'slapped, pushed or hit'. In particular, the survey did not cover any other forms of physical violence including high-risk offences such as strangulation, effects on children or clarification around acts of violence in self-defence.
- The survey did not consider the severity and frequency of violence experienced.

Conclusions and Future Directions

The LCAEVS survey has allowed for the collection of locally relevant data on the knowledge, attitudes and experiences of the community related to FDV, across multiple sociodemographic subgroups. The survey has revealed interesting areas for further primary prevention strategies and education, including for subgroups within the wider community, to continue to address the underpinning drivers of FDV. In addition, it has shown other areas outside of primary prevention that could be improved, such as increasing local awareness of FDV services in the region. Although local experiences of violence are prevalent and wide-ranging in nature, there was a high percentage of respondents with knowledge and attitudes that were favourable to preventing FDV. For example, there were higher rates of overall agreement with gender equality and lower rates of agreement with statements supporting violence against women compared to those in the national survey (ANROWS 2017). It is not possible based on this one survey to understand the significance of this, although it is noted that the CRE had been in place for two years at the time of LCAEVS.

The aim is to deliver the survey to the community regularly, initially after two years, to enable monitoring of changes in relevant measurements over time and to inform the local primary prevention program content and ongoing impact evaluation. Feedback given both in the form of survey comments and from community feedback on the results will be considered, discussed and implemented where appropriate, prior to the next survey being distributed in early in 2022.

"The aim is to deliver the survey to the community regularly, initially after two years, to enable monitoring of changes in relevant measurements over time and to inform the local primary prevention program content and ongoing impact evaluation."

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Appendix

APPENDIX 1 – WEIGHTING METHODOLOGY

Weights were calculated using publicly available Geraldton population statistics accessed via the Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (see Appendix 2 for weight calculations). Weights were applied to the data using the raking function on IBM SPSS 27 which created a combined weight for sex, education, age and Aboriginal identification.

Table 1: Process of calculating weights by demographic subgroup

	Variable	Population Proportion (ABS Geraldton)	Sample proportion (participants)	Population/sample	Weight
Sex	Female	0.504	0.7324	0.504/0.7324	0.688148553
	Male	0.496	0.2676	0.496/0.2676	1.853512706
	Total	1	1		1
Aboriginality	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	0.097	0.082	0.097/0.082	1.18292683
	Non-Aboriginal	0.903	0.918	0.903/0.918	0.98366013
Education	Year 10 or below	0.294	0.148	0.294/0.148	1.98648649
	Year 12 or 11	0.251	0.14	0.251/0.14	1.79285714
	Trade/TAFE	0.330	0.329	0.330/0.329	1.00303951
	University	0.125	0.383	0.125/0.383	0.32637076
Age	1 (15-24 years)	0.1616	0.091	0.1616/0.091	1.775824
	2 (25-34 years)	0.1553	0.173	0.1553/0.173	0.897688
	3 (35-44 years)	0.1616	0.220	0.1616/0.220	0.734545
	4 (45-54 years)	0.1831	0.244	0.1831/0.244	0.75041
	5 (55-64 years)	0.1528	0.196	0.1528/0.196	0.779592
	6 (65-74 years)	0.1061	0.063	0.1061/	1.684127
	7 (75+ years)	0.0795	0.013	0.0795/	6.115385



Table 2: Summary of weights utilised by demographic subgroup

Variable	Category	Weights
Sex	Male	0.69
	Female	1.85
Education	Year 10 or below	1.28
	Year 11 or 12	1.16
	Trade, Apprenticeship or TAFE	1.71
	University	0.27
Age (categories)	15-24 years	1.78
	25-34 years	0.90
	35-44 years	0.73
	45-54 years	0.75
	55-64 years	0.78
	65-74 years	1.68
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identification	75+ years	6.12
	Yes	1.17
	No	0.98

It should be noted that weighting data introduces biases and assumptions. It is therefore important to understand the impact of weighting on the results. Weighting does not create 'new' participants with different responses, it instead increases the weight of responses from a demographic group that was under sampled and reduces the weight of an over sampled group. This means that if the under sampled survey participants were unrepresentative (in terms of knowledge, attitudes and experiences) of the population group this effect will be magnified in the weighted results. Additionally, weighting is limited by the availability and presentation of population level data available.

Conversations for Change

Local Community Attitudes and Exposure to Violence Survey (LCAEVS): Report on Baseline (2019) Survey

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