

Tell the Taskforce: Domestic and Family Violence survey

Executive summary

An online survey of community attitudes towards domestic and family violence (DFV) was conducted between 10 August 2014 and 4 September 2014. A total of 879 responses were included in the final analysis. It is important to note, participants to the survey were not representative of the broader Queensland population.¹ As a result, the responses reported here may not accurately reflect attitudes towards DFV among a more representative sample of Queenslanders.

The responses received largely reflected the views of middle-aged women who had direct or indirect experience of DFV. Specifically:

- 56% of the sample was aged 40 to 65
- 87% of the sample was female
- 92% of the sample identified that they or someone they know has experienced DFV.

There was broad consensus across participants regarding the behaviours that constitute DFV. Most participants (more than 97%) agreed that behaviours that were intended to cause harm or fear, to control, or to make a partner feel useless or embarrassed constituted DFV behaviours.

There was also agreement across participants that there is a need for people outside the DFV relationship to become more involved in supporting and responding to the needs of victims. For example, more than three quarters of participants believed *'most people turn a blind eye to, or ignore, domestic violence,'* while an even larger majority did not subscribe to the view that *'domestic and family violence is a private matter to be handled in the family'* or that *'most women could leave a violent relationship if they really wanted to.'*

Participants were asked what action they would take when confronted with DFV across a range of contexts, and what would prompt them to take such action. Most participants reported that they would take action if a family member, close friend or neighbour was experiencing DFV, although, a higher proportion of participants were likely to offer a neutral response when a neighbour was involved. When a family member or close friend was a victim of DFV, the actions participants were most likely to take included talking to the victim about the behaviour of the perpetrator and encouraging the victim to attend a domestic violence support service. When a neighbour was a victim of DFV, most participants reported they were likely to report the behaviour to police. In all cases, participants reported that their actions were most likely to be motivated by concern for the safety of the victim and for the victim's family.

Participants were asked about their perceptions of DFV in Queensland. Most participants believed that at least one in five people experience DFV. While participants acknowledged that both men and women can be victims or perpetrators of DFV, most participants believed that men are likely to be perpetrators and women are likely to be victims.

Those groups thought to be most vulnerable to DFV included:

- people from low socio-economic backgrounds (n = 718, 90%)
- people from Indigenous Australian backgrounds (n = 712, 89%)

¹ The survey approach did not include a deliberate sampling strategy and not all questions were answered by all respondents.

- people living with a disability (n = 632, 79%)
- people with limited education (n = 621, 78%)
- people from non-English speaking backgrounds (n = 607, 76%)
- people with no education (n = 598, 75%).

Participants were asked to consider a raft of initiatives that could be used to address DFV, and state how effective they believed each strategy to be. More than half of all participants believed each of the proposed initiatives is likely to be effective in responding to DFV, although slightly less support was shown for education programs in schools and offender treatment programs. Appropriate and timely police responses, increased prosecution for breaches of DVOs, and support services for victims and children exposed to DFV attracted the most support.

Participants were also asked to indicate who they believed was responsible for supporting someone affected by DFV. Participants reported that the community, service providers, families and government all have a role to play.

At the end of the survey, participants were invited to comment further on the issue of DFV. A range of responses were provided that were subsequently grouped around nine main themes:

- **Court processes and sentencing** - there is a need to increase penalties for DFV related offences and to improve the court process.
- **DVOs/VIOs** - protection orders often go unenforced, are not an adequate measure of protection, and breaches are not being punished effectively.
- **Education and awareness** - education and awareness building is an effective prevention mechanism.
- **Gender based responses** - gendered violence occurs in all communities and is inclusive of all identities including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersex, and queer.
- **Police responses** - further education is needed to improve the way police respond to DFV.
- **Policies and laws** – there is a need to increase the scope of laws around DFV and to make DFV a criminal offence.
- **Support services** – There is a need to increase funding for DFV support services.
- **Underlying causes of DFV** - the underlying causes of DFV include alcohol, drugs and mental illness, as well as extreme circumstances.
- **Miscellaneous** - Responses that did not fall into any other themes.

In conclusion, participants to the survey believe that DFV touches the lives of many Queenslanders and that more can be done across a range of sectors (police, courts service providers, education and awareness) to improve the response to DFV. Survey participants also identified that everyone in the community has a role to play in responding to DFV.

Background

The online survey opened at 12:00am on Sunday 10 August 2014 and closed at 12:00am on Thursday 4 September 2014.

Promotional activity for the survey focused on leveraging off distribution within Government and NGOs engaged with Government, with no unpaid or paid advertising utilised.

It is important to note that:

- Administration of the survey did not include a deliberate sampling strategy. Responses should, therefore, not be considered representative of the Queensland population.
- The Tell the Taskforce survey was not widely publicised amongst the general public. Responses to the current survey may therefore be more likely to reflect the views of those individuals with a particular interest in government policy relevant to domestic and family violence (DFV) than general attitudes among the broader Queensland population.
- A number of participants did not complete all questions in the survey. Response fatigue can impact on the quality of data participants provide, and may have further limited the representativeness of the results.

Sample size

A total of 897 participants commenced the survey. Of these, 18 people provided responses to the demographic questions only. Therefore, only 879 responses were subject to further analysis. Of these, 108 provided only partial responses (i.e., did not respond to every question in the survey). As not all questions were mandatory all participants were included in further analysis.

It should be noted that 54 (6%) participants were identified as either having come from outside Queensland ($n = 49$)² or to have entered an incorrect postcode ($n = 5$). These participants were included in further analysis as the survey was not specifically concerned with attitudes towards Queensland-specific responses to DFV but instead explored general attitudes towards DFV, and sought comment and ideas on a range of responses to DFV. As participants appear to be predominantly drawn from DFV service providers and individuals with experience of DFV, all responses are considered to make a valuable contribution to the discussion, regardless of participants' locations inside or outside Queensland.

² New South Wales ($n = 21$), Victoria ($n = 13$), South Australia ($n = 11$), Western Australia ($n = 4$)
Not Government Policy

Demographics

Gender and age

The gender and age of participants is reported and compared to the general Queensland population showing that (see Table 1):

- Females were overrepresented among participants.
- Participants between the ages of 26 to 39 and 40 to 65 were over-represented in the survey.
- No participants were under the age of 18 years.

As a result, the responses presented here largely reflect the views of middle-aged women.

Table 1. Gender and age of participants compared to Queensland population

Age	Female		Male		Total		QLD Population ^a	
	N	% of total	N	% of total	N	% of total	N	% of total
Under 18	0	-	0	-	0	-	1 088 135	24.1%
18 to 25	43	6%	8	7%	51	6%	527 148	11.7%
26 to 39	258	34%	22	19%	280	32%	897 581	19.9%
40 to 65	418	55%	73	63%	491	56%	1 478 053	32.7%
Over 65	44	6%	13	11%	57	6%	525 444	11.6%
Total	763	87%	116	13%	879	100%	4 516 361	100%
QLD Population ^b	2 184 518	50.4%	2 148 221	49.6%	4 332 739	100%		

Notes:

a. Sourced from ABS Catalogue 3201.0 – Population by Age and Sex, 2010 – Table 3. Queensland.

b. Sourced from Office of Economic and Statistical Research – Bulletin: Census 2011: Women in Queensland.

The total percentage may sum to more or less than 100% due to rounding.

Disability Status

As shown in Table 2, the majority of participants did not identify as someone with a disability (n = 806, 90%). Persons identifying as someone with a disability are underrepresented among participants as 18 per cent of the Queensland population report having a disability.³

Table 2. Disability status

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	6.8%	60
No	90.1%	790
Prefer not to say	3.1%	27
Total		877

Note: Two participants chose not to answer this question. The percentages reported reflect the proportion of participants who chose to answer the question.

Indigenous status

As shown in Table 3, the majority of survey participants reported not being of either Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin (n = 859, 96%). Four per cent of participants (n = 35) identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This compares to 3.6 per cent of the Queensland population.⁴

Table 3. Indigenous status

Indigenous Status		
Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander	841	96.1%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	35	3.9%
<i>Aboriginal</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>3.5%</i>
<i>Torres Strait Islander</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0.3%</i>
<i>Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0.1%</i>
Total	894	100.0%

Note: Three participants chose not to answer this question. The percentages reported reflect the proportion of participants who chose to answer the question.

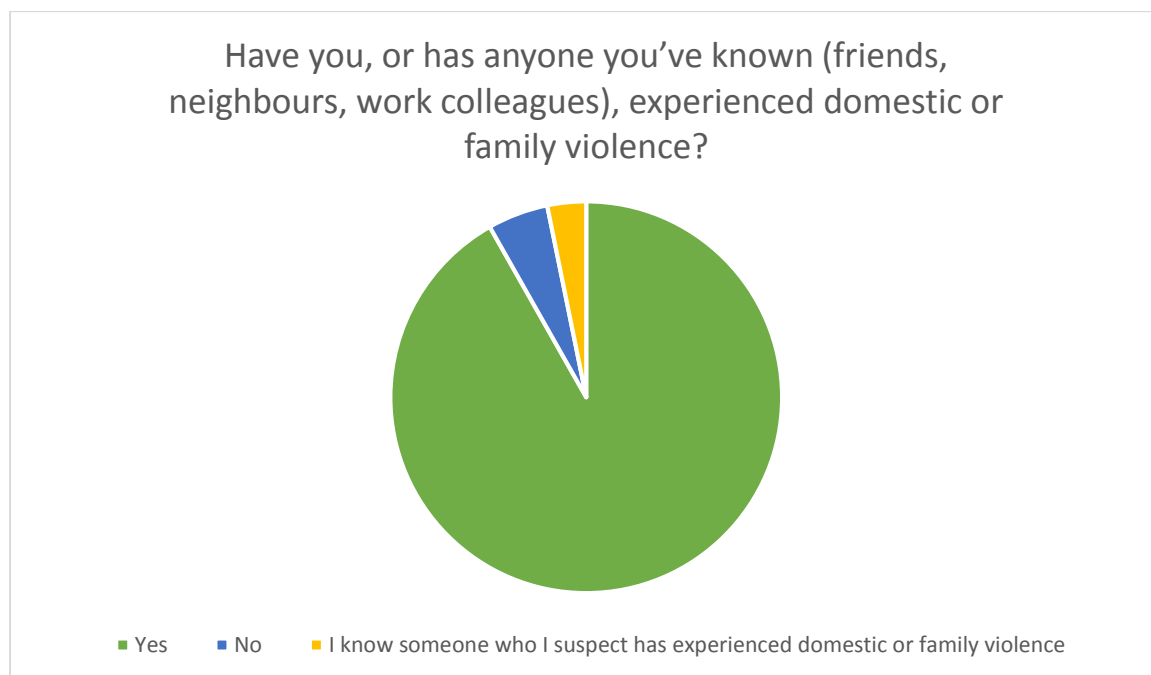
³ Sourced from the 2012 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) (ABS 4430.0 2012).

⁴ Office of Economic and Statistical Research – Bulletin: Census 2011: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population in Queensland (2nd edition).

Exposure to domestic and family violence

The majority of survey participants (n = 802, 92%) identified that they or someone they know have experienced DFV. Three per cent (n = 28) of participants reported they know someone who they suspect has experienced DFV. Five per cent (n = 44) of participants reported they had not experienced DFV and did not know someone who has experienced DFV. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Prevalence of experiences of domestic and family violence⁵

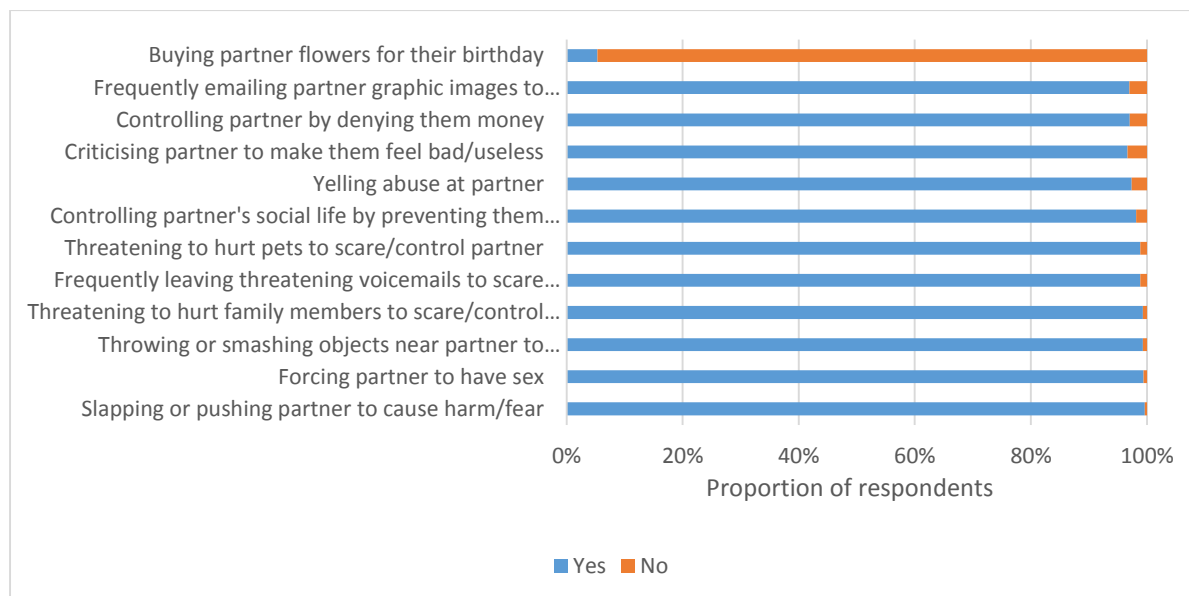


⁵ Five respondents chose not to answer this question. The percentages reported reflect the proportion of respondents who chose to answer the question.

Perception of domestic and family violence behaviours

There was broad consensus across participants regarding the behaviours that constitute DFV. Most participants (more than 97%) agreed that behaviours that were intended to cause harm or fear, to control, or to make a partner feel useless or embarrassed constituted DFV behaviours. See Figure 2.

Figure 2. Behaviours identified as constituting domestic and family violence



In your opinion, which of these behaviours constitute domestic and family violence?	Yes	No	Chose not to respond
Buying partner flowers for their birthday	43 (5.3%)	769 (94.7%)	67
Frequently emailing partner graphic images to embarrass/scare them at work	845 (97.0%)	26 (3.0%)	8
Controlling partner by denying them money	848 (97.0%)	26 (3.0%)	5
Criticising partner to make them feel bad/useless	842 (96.7%)	29 (3.3%)	8
Yelling abuse at partner	851 (97.4%)	23 (2.6%)	5
Controlling partner's social life by preventing them from seeing friends/family	859 (98.2%)	16 (1.8%)	4
Threatening to hurt pets to scare/control partner	867 (98.2%)	10 (1.1%)	2
Frequently leaving threatening voicemails to scare partner	863 (98.9%)	10 (1.1%)	6
Threatening to hurt family members to scare/control partner	867 (99.3%)	6 (< 1%)	6
Throwing or smashing objects near partner to frighten/threaten	870 (99.3%)	6 (< 1%)	3
Forcing partner to have sex	870 (99.4%)	5 (< 1%)	4
Slapping or pushing partner to cause harm/fear	873 (99.7%)	3 (< 1%)	3

Perceptions of domestic and family violence situations

There was agreement across participants that there is a need for people outside the DFV relationship to become more involved in supporting and responding to the needs of victims. For example (see Table 4):

- more than three quarters (n = 687, 79%) of participants believed *'most people turn a blind eye to, or ignore, domestic violence'*
- the majority of participants (n = 822, 94%) did not subscribe to the view that *'domestic and family violence is a private matter to be handled in the family'*
- the majority of participants (n = 703, 81%) did not subscribe to the view that *'most women could leave a violent relationship if they really wanted to.'*

Table 4. Perceptions of domestic and family violence situations

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Most people turn a blind eye to, or ignore, domestic violence ¹	16 (2%)	83 (10%)	84 (10%)	445 (51%)	242 (28%)
Domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family ¹	693 (80%)	129 (15%)	33 (4%)	5 (1%)	10 (1%)
Most women could leave a violent relationship if they really wanted to ²	406 (47%)	297 (34%)	83 (10%)	49 (6%)	37 (4%)

¹ Nine participants chose not to answer this question. The percentages reported reflect the proportion of participants who chose to answer the question.

² Seven participants chose not to answer this question. The percentages reported reflect the proportion of participants who chose to answer the question.

Scenarios

Participants were asked to answer a series of questions based on a stated fictional relationship with a person experiencing DFV, including what action they would take and their motivation for doing so.

If someone in the respondent's family was experiencing domestic and family violence

Most participants would take action if someone in their family was experiencing DFV. Only 10% (n = 84) of participants reported being extremely likely, likely or felt neutral towards taking no action.

Typically, participants reported being extremely likely or likely to talk to the victim about the behaviour of the perpetrator (n = 820, 97%), and encourage the victim to attend a domestic violence support service (n = 799, 94%). Participants were likely or extremely likely to be motivated by concern for the victim's safety (n = 840, 99%), and concern for the safety of the victim's family (n = 836, 98%).

Table 5. Action and motivations should a family member be experiencing domestic and family violence

	Extremely unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Extremely Likely	Total
Report the offender's behaviour to police	19 (2%)	98 (11%)	119 (14%)	343 (40%)	275 (32%)	854
Encourage the offender to attend a domestic violence support service	60 (7%)	144 (17%)	131 (15%)	259 (30%)	257 (30%)	851
Encourage the victim to attend a domestic violence support service	4 (< 1%)	21 (2%)	29 (3%)	245 (29%)	554 (65%)	853
Take no action	527 (62%)	240 (28%)	47 (5%)	19 (2%)	16 (2%)	849
Talk to the victim about the behaviour of the perpetrator	5 (< 1%)	3 (< 1%)	22 (2%)	282 (33%)	538 (63%)	850
Talk to the offender about their behaviour	105 (12%)	193 (23%)	135 (16%)	276 (32%)	142 (17%)	851
Talk to a service provider yourself	30 (3%)	108 (13%)	120 (14%)	328 (38%)	267 (31%)	853

Note: The percentages reported reflect the proportion of participants who chose to answer the question.

	Extremely unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Extremely Likely	Total
Concern for your personal safety	56 (6%)	118 (14%)	100 (12%)	346 (40%)	236 (27%)	856
Concern for the victim's safety	3 (< 1%)	3 (< 1%)	7 (< 1%)	185 (22%)	655 (77%)	853
Concern for the offender's safety	279 (33%)	292 (34%)	145 (17%)	98 (11%)	41 (5%)	855
Concern for the safety of the victim's family (e.g. children)	4 (< 1%)	3 (< 1%)	9 (1%)	148 (17%)	688 (81%)	852

Note: The percentages reported reflect the proportion of participants who chose to answer the question.

If a close friend of the respondent was experiencing domestic and family violence

Most participants would take action if a close friend was experiencing DFV. Only 13% (n = 104) of participants reported being extremely likely, likely or felt neutral towards taking no action.

Participants reported that in this situation they were extremely likely or likely to talk to the victim about the behaviour of the perpetrator (n = 808, 97%), and encourage the victim to attend a DFV support service (n = 777, 93%). As in the situation above, participants were likely or extremely likely to be motivated by concern for the victim's safety (n = 820, 99%) and the safety of the victim's family (n = 814, 98%).

Table 6. Action and motivations should a close friend be experiencing domestic and family violence

	Extremely unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Extremely Likely	Total
Report the offender's behaviour to police	28 (4%)	106 (13%)	152 (18%)	309 (37%)	239 (29%)	834
Encourage the offender to attend a domestic violence support service	92 (11%)	195 (23%)	151 (18%)	223 (27%)	172 (21%)	833
Encourage the victim to attend a domestic violence support service	4 (< 1%)	20 (2%)	33 (4%)	255 (30%)	522 (62%)	834
Take no action	426 (51%)	296 (36%)	75 (9%)	13 (1%)	16 (2%)	826
Talk to the victim about the behaviour of the perpetrator	3 (< 1%)	7 (< 1%)	15 (2%)	264 (32%)	544 (65%)	833
Talk to the offender about their behaviour	154 (18%)	226 (27%)	168 (20%)	197 (24%)	87 (10%)	832
Talk to a service provider yourself	38 (4%)	103 (12%)	130 (16%)	306 (37%)	253 (30%)	80

Note: The percentages reported reflect the proportion of participants who chose to answer the question.

	Extremely unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Extremely Likely	Total
Concern for your personal safety	57 (7%)	124 (15%)	113 (13%)	297 (36%)	241 (29%)	832
Concern for the victim's safety	3 (< 1%)	2 (< 1%)	6 (< 1%)	197 (24%)	623 (75%)	831
Concern for the offender's safety	285 (34%)	272 (33%)	137 (16%)	89 (11%)	47 (6%)	830
Concern for the safety of the victim's family (e.g. children)	3 (< 1%)	3 (< 1%)	10 (1%)	168 (20%)	646 (78%)	830

Note: The percentages reported reflect the proportion of participants who chose to answer the question.

If a neighbour that the respondent did not know very well was experiencing domestic and family violence

Most participants would take action if a neighbour was experiencing DFV, although, a higher proportion of participants than observed in the previous scenarios reported a neutral response (n = 136, 20%). Only 8% (n = 66) of participants reported being extremely likely or likely to take no action.

Most participants reported that in this circumstance, they were likely or extremely likely to report the offender's behaviour to police (n = 670, 83%). Participants were likely or extremely likely to be motivated by concern for the victims' family (n = 757, 95%) and/or the safety of the victim (n = 753, 94%).

Table 7. Action and motivations should a neighbour be experiencing domestic and family violence

	Extremely unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Extremely Likely	Total
Report the offender's behaviour to police	18 (2%)	43 (5%)	71 (9%)	307 (38%)	363 (45%)	802
Encourage the offender to attend a domestic violence support service	258 (32%)	238 (30%)	140 (17%)	104 (13%)	60 (7%)	800
Encourage the victim to attend a domestic violence support service	37 (5%)	110 (14%)	126 (16%)	324 (40%)	206 (26%)	803
Take no action	280 (35%)	317 (40%)	136 (17%)	43 (5%)	23 (3%)	799
Talk to the victim about the behaviour of the perpetrator	41 (5%)	123 (15%)	146 (18%)	325 (41%)	163 (20%)	798
Talk to the offender about their behaviour	327 (41%)	250 (31%)	131 (16%)	64 (8%)	30 (4%)	802
Talk to a service provider yourself	93 (11%)	144 (18%)	160 (20%)	239 (29%)	177 (22%)	813

Note: The percentages reported reflect the proportion of participants who chose to answer the question.

	Extremely unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Extremely Likely	Total
Concern for your personal safety	38 (5%)	79 (10%)	89 (11%)	285 (35%)	312 (39%)	803
Concern for the victim's safety	3 (< 1%)	7 (< 1%)	39 (5%)	259 (32%)	494 (62%)	802
Concern for the offender's safety	329 (41%)	238 (30%)	135 (17%)	69 (9%)	31 (4%)	802
Concern for the safety of the victim's family (e.g. children)	4 (< 1%)	6 (< 1%)	32 (4%)	197 (25%)	560 (70%)	799

Note: The percentages reported reflect the proportion of participants who chose to answer the question.

Perceptions around prevalence of domestic violence

When asked 'How many people in Queensland do you believe experience domestic and family violence?' almost half (n = 391, 48%) of participants believed that more than 1 in 5 people experience DFV, and 27 per cent (n = 218) believed that the figure is closer to 1 in 5 people. That is, participants believed that DFV is a significant issue experienced by many Queenslanders.

Table 8. How many people in Queensland experience domestic and family violence

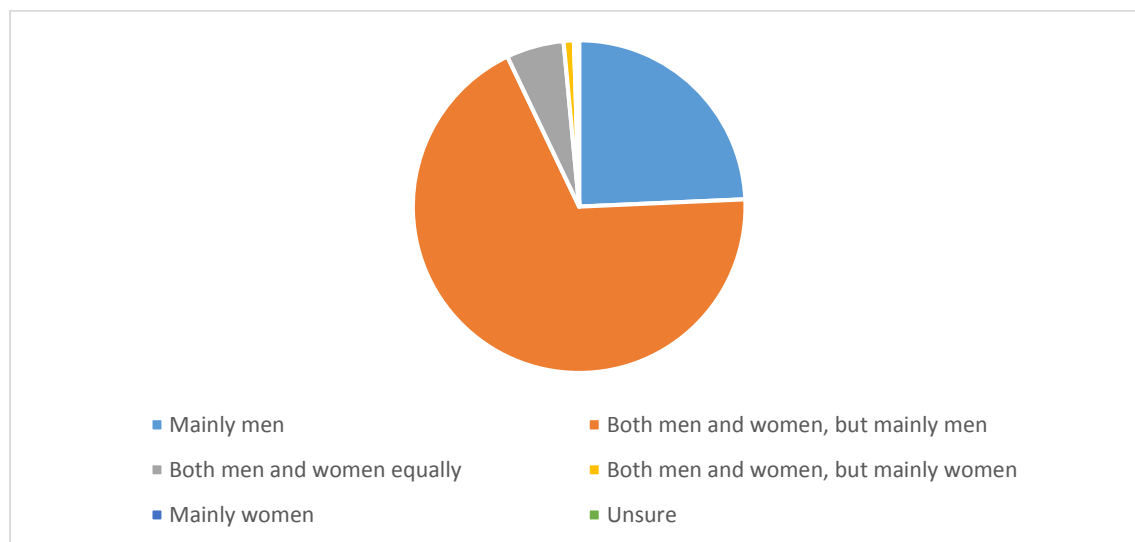
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
More than 1 in 5 people	47.8%	391
1 in 5 people	26.7%	218
1 in 10 people	15.8%	129
1 in 50 people	5.9%	48
1 in 100 people	2.2%	18
1 in 500 people	1.2%	10
Fewer than 1 in 500 people	0.5%	4

Note: Sixty-one participants chose not to answer this question. The percentages reported reflect the proportion of participants who chose to answer the question.

Who is involved in domestic and family violence

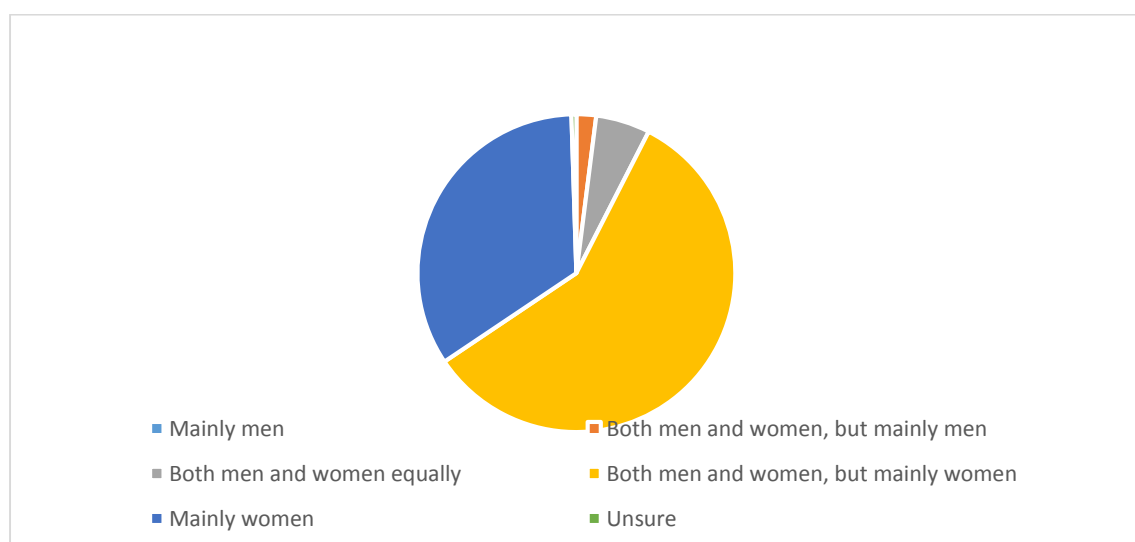
Participants were asked ‘*who, in your opinion, commits acts of domestic and family violence?*’ Responses indicated that most participants believed that both men and women, but mainly men commit acts of DFV (n = 560, 69%), with close to one quarter of participants (n = 198, 24%) believing that the perpetrators are mainly men.

Figure 3. Who participants believe commit acts of domestic and family violence⁶



Participants were then asked ‘*who, in your opinion, is most likely to experience domestic and family violence?*’ Of those surveyed 58 per cent (n = 474) believed that both men and women, but mainly women are victims of DFV, and around one third (n = 277, 34%) believed that it is mainly women.

Figure 4. Who participants believe are subject to acts of domestic and family violence⁷



⁶ Sixty-three respondents chose not to answer this question. The percentages reported reflect the proportion of respondents who chose to answer the question.

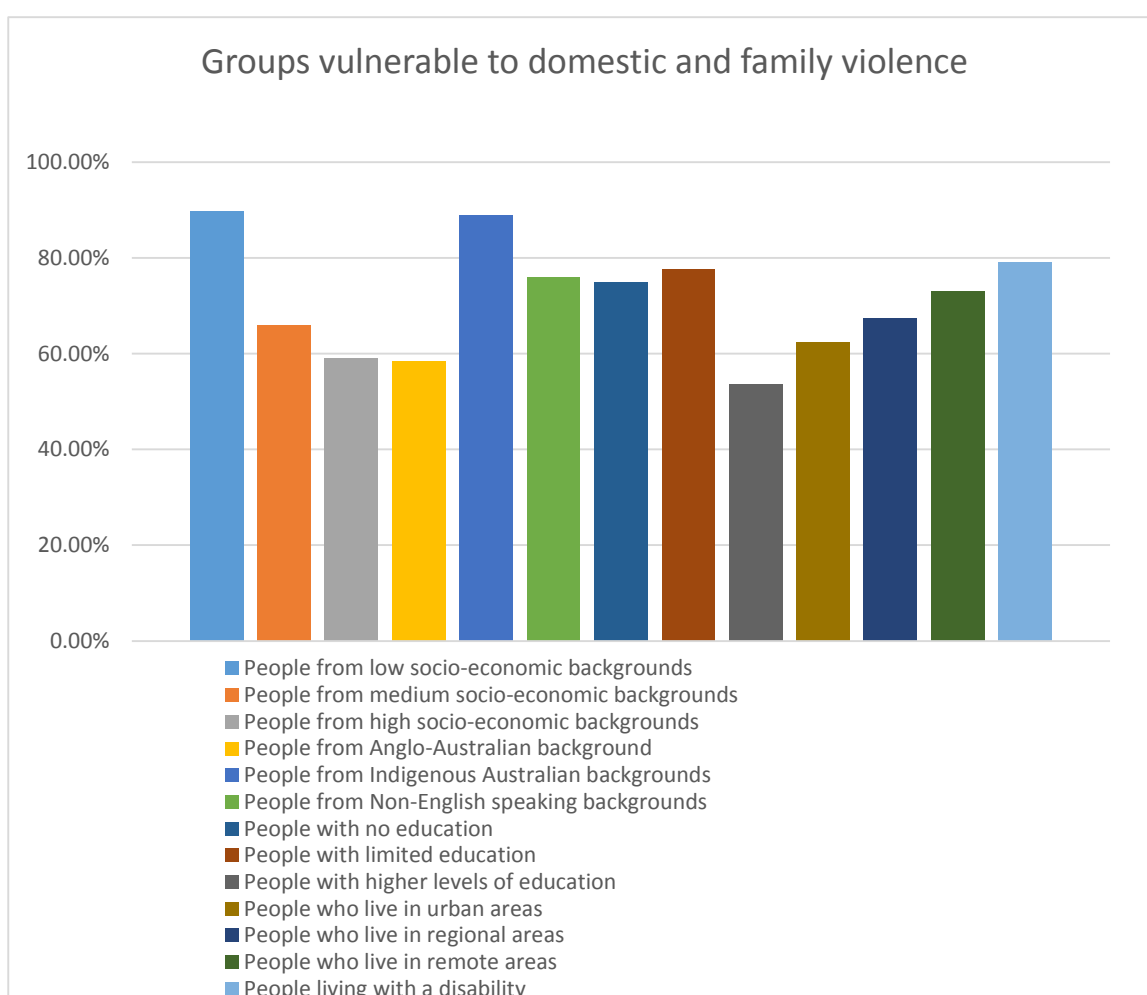
⁷ Sixty respondents chose not to answer this question. The percentages reported reflect the proportion of respondents who chose to answer the question.

Groups vulnerable to domestic and family violence

Participants were asked ‘which groups in Queensland do you believe are most vulnerable to domestic and family violence?’ Participants were allowed to choose more than one response to the question. The groups identified by more than three quarters of participants as most vulnerable to DFV were:

- people from low socio-economic backgrounds (n = 718, 90%)
- people from Indigenous Australian backgrounds (n = 712, 89%)
- people living with a disability (n = 632, 79%)
- people with limited education (n = 621, 78%)
- people from non-English speaking backgrounds (n = 607, 76%)
- people with no education (n = 598, 75%)

Figure 5. Groups vulnerable to domestic and family violence⁸



⁸ Seventy-nine respondents chose not to answer this question. The percentages reported reflect the proportion of respondents who chose to answer the question.

Responses to domestic and family violence

Participants were asked to consider a raft of initiatives that could be used to address DFV, and state how effective they believed each strategy would be. These included police responses, support services, health care, and changes to the justice system.

Responses to this question revealed strong support for the effectiveness of each of the responses proposed. Initiatives considered to be *effective* by more than two thirds of participants included:

- appropriate and timely police responses (n = 547, 68%)
- increased prosecution for breaches of DVOs (n = 535, 66%).

Support services for victims and children exposed to DFV, and advocacy services for victims were also considered effective by a high proportion of participants, while education programs in schools and offender treatment programs attracted slightly less support.

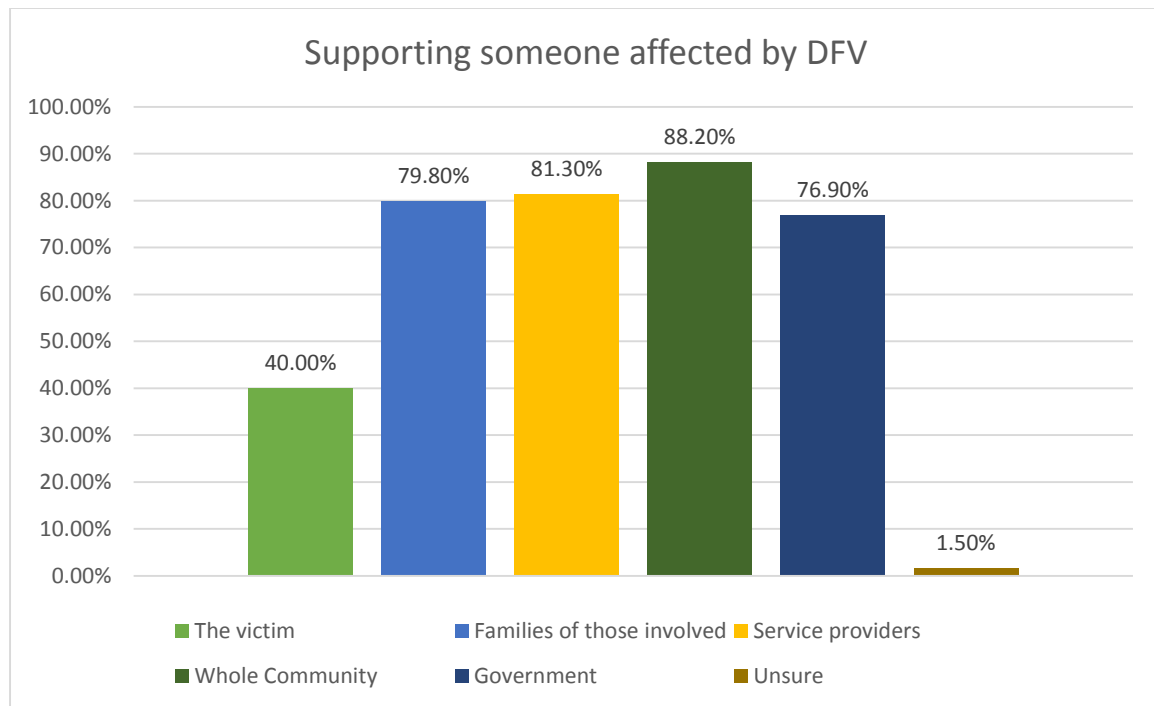
Table 9. How effective or ineffective do you believe the following strategies are in responding to domestic and family violence.

	Ineffective	Slightly ineffective	Neutral	Slightly effective	Effective	Total
Education programs in schools	52 (6%)	42 (5%)	59 (7%)	303 (38%)	350 (43%)	806
Early identification of those at high risk of domestic and family violence	55 (7%)	41 (5%)	59 (7%)	240 (30%)	409 (51%)	804
Support services for victims	31 (4%)	37 (5%)	20 (2%)	192 (24%)	527 (65%)	807
Support services for children exposed to domestic violence	41 (5%)	39 (5%)	26 (3%)	184 (23%)	514 (64%)	804
Support for victims to remain in their homes (as opposed to a victim leaving their home, and perpetrator remaining)	135 (17%)	80 (10%)	109 (14%)	165 (20%)	315 (39%)	804
Housing support services for families	67 (8%)	50 (6%)	68 (8%)	186 (23%)	436 (54%)	807
Housing support services for victims	67 (8%)	50 (6%)	52 (6%)	174 (21%)	466 (58%)	809
Safe refuge/foster care services for animals of domestic violence affected families	63 (8%)	45 (6%)	126 (16%)	169 (21%)	405 (50%)	808
Better access to health services for victims	43 (5%)	40 (5%)	102 (13%)	216 (27%)	406 (50%)	807
Appropriate and timely police responses	60 (7%)	43 (5%)	39 (5%)	119 (15%)	547 (68%)	808
Increased prosecution for breaches of Domestic Violence Orders	89 (11%)	43 (5%)	44 (5%)	99 (12%)	535 (66%)	810
Increased sentences for offenders	90 (11%)	47 (6%)	67 (8%)	136 (17%)	465 (58%)	805
Offender treatment programs	98 (12%)	77 (10%)	98 (12%)	187 (23%)	345 (43%)	805
Integrated court support services	62 (8%)	38 (5%)	101 (13%)	185 (23%)	419 (52%)	805
Advocacy services for victims	42 (5%)	34 (4%)	42 (5%)	178 (22%)	511 (63%)	807

Supporting those affected by domestic and family violence – everyone is responsible

Participants were asked to indicate who they believed was responsible for supporting someone affected by DFV. Multiple responses were allowed to this question. Figure 4 shows that participants believed the community, service providers, families and government are all responsible for supporting people affected by DFV.

Figure 6. Who is responsible for supporting someone affected by domestic and family violence⁹



⁹ Sixty-eight respondents chose not to answer this question. The percentages reported reflect the proportion of respondents who chose to answer the question.

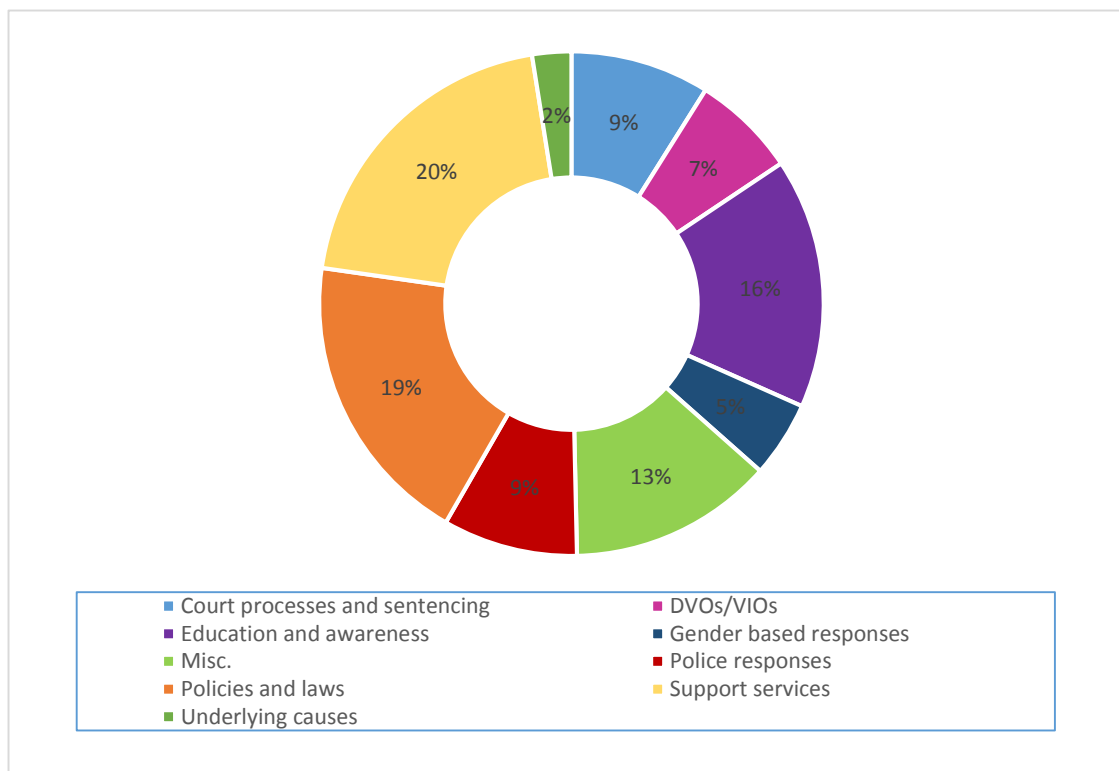
Open ended responses

At the end of the survey, participants were invited to comment further on the issue of DFV. In total, 534 people responded to this question.

A range of responses were provided across 9 main themes (see Figure 5):

- Court processes and sentencing
- DVOs/VIOs
- Education and awareness
- Gender based responses
- Police responses
- Policies and laws
- Support services
- Underlying causes of DFC
- Miscellaneous

Figure 7. Free text responses



Court processes and sentencing

Participants who commented on court processes and sentencing suggested there is a need to increase penalties for DFV related offences. A number of people also made reference to cases where they or someone they know had personally had an issue with the court process.

'Tough penalties for re-offenders and zero tolerance by law enforcement and courts may flow on to change what the community tolerates.'

DVOs/VIOs

Protection orders of all forms were raised by participants with a number noting that the orders can go unenforced, are not an adequate measure of protection, and breaches are not being punished effectively. When protection orders were discussed there were a large number of other themes including police responses; court processes and sentencing; and policies and laws.

'DVO (sic) aren't that effective there needs to be more stringent orders and punishment in place.'

Education and awareness

Education and awareness building was identified as an effective prevention mechanism by many participants. School based programs were often mentioned by participants. There was also a large desire for more community ownership of the issues surrounding DFV.

'I think that domestic and family violence is everyone's business and there still need (sic) to education and awareness that needs to be done in communities around this issue as it is still seen as "what happens behind closed doors is their business/private" but that is far from the truth because it affects people around them.'

Gender based responses

These responses included participants identifying that a sole gender was either the offenders or the victims. A strong theme was also that different gendered violence occurs in all communities and is inclusive of all persons and forms of relationships including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersex, and queer.

'As a MALE VICTIM of domestic violence I am fascinated and offended that this aspect of society does not receive EQUAL consideration.'

Police responses

Police responses to domestic and family violence were consistently raised by participants in both personal experiences and recommendations for where improvements need to be made. Participants often commented that further education was needed for police around responding to DFV, and re-education on how to deal with confronting situations without making assumptions about the offender-victim dichotomy.

'I work as a volunteer for an NGO supporting victims of DFV. I am profoundly concerned by the police attitude to breaches of domestic violence ordered (sic). On the whole, indeed endemically, it is grossly inadequate and exposes a need for greater resources and education for police to deal with breaches'

Policies and laws

Policy and law reform was frequently mentioned by participants. They identified a need to increase the scope of laws around DFV and for general law reform to make DFV a criminal offence.

'Reflection of national/international strategies that have worked to reduce DV, and how it could be applicable, not necessary replicated, but certainly discussed with communities'

Support services

The need to increase funding and government support for DFV support services was identified by a large proportion of participants, including both those who identified as support service workers and those who reported dealings with support services.

'...the issues (sic) is not always whether the service is effective, it may also be how accessible is the service or is the service sufficiently funded to meet the needs. Often the service will not be sufficiently funded to meet the need.'

Underlying causes

Within those responses that were seeking to identify the underlying causes of domestic and family violence a strong theme was that alcohol, drugs and mental illness were significant contributing factors. A number of participants also commented that a combination of underlying causes and extreme circumstances lead to a DFV incident.

'It is so common that it is the 'norm' in some communities. Substance abusers should not have children in their care as there is always, and will always be, domestic violence.'

Miscellaneous

Responses that did not fall into any other themes were categorised into miscellaneous.

'I would like to applaud the Government for taking this stance against domestic violence. The community I come from should accept the Government assistance with open arms. It is about time a review is made of this dangerous problem we have in our communities.'