



Voices of men and boys

Key findings

1. Men are willing to talk with friends and family about the other person's abusive relationship, but less likely to want to talk about their own

When asked how comfortable they would be talking about unhealthy or abusive relationships, the majority were either comfortable (45%) or very comfortable (20%) talking with a friend or family member who had told them about their abusive relationship. However, when asked how comfortable they would be talking with a friend or family member about their own abusive relationship, one in five (19%) felt comfortable and only 4% felt very comfortable.

2. A large proportion of men and boys feel that the prevalence and severity of domestic abuse is equal across genders

When asked whether the abusive person in a relationship is more likely to be male or female, nearly a third of men thought that they could be equally male or female. The same was said when asked about the likely gender of the person being abused. When looking at whether men feel the gender of the victim has an effect on the seriousness of domestic abuse, the vast majority (84%) felt it did not. 14% said that domestic abuse is a more serious issue when the victim is female and 2% when they are male.

3. Trust is consistently considered the most important factor in a healthy relationship

Respondents were given a list of behaviours that could potentially be part of a healthy relationship and asked to pick out the three most important behaviours before then being asked which they would say is the most important. The top five behaviours chosen as the most important were trust (39%), love (17%), respect of each other's needs (11%), honesty (10%) and friendship (9%).

4. One in five men (19%) didn't know where to seek help if they or someone they knew were in an abusive relationship

5. The majority of men would consider going to a specialist domestic abuse service

Over half (59%) of men said they would know where to seek help if they or someone they knew were in an abusive or unhealthy relationship. When given a list of potential people or services and asked who they would consider contacting, the top five were a specialist domestic abuse service (84%), the police

(69%), family or relative (55%), adult social services (41%) and GP (28%). In the male survivor survey however, less than a quarter (22%) of those that had told someone about the behaviours they experienced told a specialist domestic abuse service, with the most common being family (71%) or friends/neighbours (60%).

6. Help-seeking differs with age, with young people more likely to tell family or relatives than anyone else.

When split by age, the most common person to tell for those aged 11-19 was family or relative (80%). For everyone aged 20 or over the most common was a specialist domestic abuse service. GP only makes the top five for those aged 40-44 (36%), 45-49 (31%) and 50-54 (37%), coming 5th in each group.

7. Over a quarter of respondents aged 16+ (28%) had used behaviour within a relationship that they regretted.

When asked how the behaviour affected them, the most common answers were that they felt bad about it (83%), they felt shame or embarrassment (57%), they felt less respect for themselves (55%), they felt down (43%) and the behaviour scared them (38%).

8. One in twenty (5%) men who used behaviour within a relationship that they regretted said that it made them feel powerful.

The same proportion said that it made them feel in control.

9. Most men who had used behaviour they regretted said this occurred in early relationships.

The majority of these relationships occurred between the ages of 16 and 29 (64%). When comparing to the age of respondents, we see that two thirds of these relationships were historic, while 13% were current.

10. Men believe that society tells us men should be tough, and that society's view of masculinity can have a negative effect on the mental health of men and boys.

Respondents were asked how far they agreed with the statement "Society tells us men should be tough and that 'real men' don't cry". Half (50%) agreed with the statement, with a further 14% strongly agreeing. Respondents were also asked how far they agreed with the statement "Society's view of masculinity can have a negative effect on the mental health of men and boys". Nearly half (44%) strongly agreed, with a further 40% agreeing.

Quotes

'Looking back I do feel some of my actions were manipulative and I worry that things could have become worse had the relationship lasted longer.'

'I am the eldest of 4 boys. My father was abusive towards our mother. He was always in and out of our lives. My father was violent, controlling and intimidating. We all suffered. When he left, I was left with learned behaviour patterns. Where he had such power in the home, when he went I stepped into his role, I think this was because it was 'my normal'. I felt like a tornado, I controlled my mother and brothers, I was aggressive and intimidating...My mother worked hard, and took a lot of abuse even after our father left. I am studying Law. I am going to one day work with domestic abuse survivors and will champion any cause towards the law and changes that are needed.'

'You can't make someone love you. Making them fear you isn't the same thing.'

'I grew up with my stepdad abusing my mum and me plus my brother and sisters, I now have PTSD. I get really angry that I couldn't stop him or help her but I do take my anger out on her too. I don't want to be like him.'

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