

Response from Domestic Violence New South Wales:

Is Bettina Arndt correct in saying “*our official statistics show at least a third of the victims [of domestic violence] are male*”? Does this statistic reflect the reality of the problem of domestic violence in our community?

Ms Arndt’s statement does not reflect the reality of domestic violence in our community.

Statistical information, including that compiled by BOCSAR (using NSW Police data in NSW), the ABS (Personal Safety Survey), the research organisation ANROWS, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, and Our Watch, all point to the fact that the majority of domestic violence offences are against women by men in the context of an intimate relationship or family setting.

The crime of domestic violence is inherently gendered. From 2016 research, of the 29,227 recorded incidents of domestic violence assaults between April 2015 and March 2016, 69.54% of victims were female and 80.96% of alleged offenders were male.

Similarly, 83.09% of victims in the recorded incidents of breaches of ADVOs between April 2015 and March 2016 were female.

One Australian woman dies, on average, each week, at the hands of her partner or former partner.

One in 6 Australian women and 1 in 16 men have been subjected, since the age of 15, to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or previous cohabiting partner (ABS 2017b). Family, domestic and sexual violence happens repeatedly—more than half (54%) of the women who had experienced current partner violence, experienced more than one violent incident (ABS 2017b).

In 2016, on average, police recorded 52 sexual assaults each day against women and about 11 against men (ABS 2017d). Violence against men tends to be experienced from men in a public place; for women it takes place within the home.

Domestic and family violence is the leading cause of illness, injury and disability for women aged 18-44 years old.

High level results here: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/domestic-violence/family-domestic-sexual-violence-in-australia-2018/contents/summary>

Why are Bettina Arndt’s views so contentious?

Implicitly, Ms Arndt asserts that women are to blame for the violence they experience. Any read of her [website](#) leaves no doubt this is her assertion – that women dress and act too provocatively and that such behaviour shows disdain for men.

These views are also so contentious because they do not represent the reality of the experience of women experiencing violence.

The other problem with these views is that they give licence to the men who choose to use violence against their partners. These men are outraged at their loss of control over their former partner. Ms Arndt's views give a voice to those who claim that women bring this violence upon themselves because they leave the family home. Why don't we ever ask the question: why does he use violence against her, and why doesn't he stop?

How does the media need to approach Bettina Arndt when it comes to discussing domestic violence?

There ought to be a louder and more powerful denunciation of Ms Arndt's views. We need to question, properly, views that excuse men who choose to engage in violence and who are described as hapless victims of their own inability to regulate their behaviour.

In addition, improved recognition of the harm done to victims as a result of the crime of domestic violence is urgently required and important if we are to truly end the scourge of domestic violence within our community.

But the greater problem is that Arndt is uncontested in her assertions.

It's time Ms Arndt's views were contested. It's time that offenders were held accountable for their behaviour and for the sexual and domestic violence they choose to use.

It's time for us all to question the assumption and the assertion that women are to blame for the violence they experience.

It's time to question the notion that 'good men are driven' to acts of violence. Using violence is a choice.

Good fathers do not murder their children.

Does the highlighted statistic below (from your response) mean that Bettina Arndt is correct in saying that 1 in 3 victims of domestic violence is male?

From 2016 research, of the 29,227 recorded incidents of domestic violence assaults between April 2015 and March 2016, 69.54% of victims were female and 80.96% of alleged offenders were male.

Any act of violence is an abhorrent act. We do not, and must not ignore violence against men. DVNSW focuses on the service, support and legal response to women because they experience violence in such devastating numbers and with such devastating consequences.

We also reject the unstated proposition that male victims are always the victim of female violence. The statistic does not reveal that men's inclusion on these figures are assaults where men use violence against other men, and the victim is often another family member coming to the aid of the intended victim – the female partner of the perpetrator. This nuanced context is important and not a story revealed simply by the raw numbers.