

# AFRICAN MEN AS LEADERS & ROLE MODELS IN THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC

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Catalyst Project officer: *“Partnering with Men Toolbox - Tools to Build  
African Men as Leaders in the Prevention of Domestic Violence”*

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# Catalyst Foundation Project

## “Partnering with Men Toolbox - tools to build African men as leaders in the prevention of domestic violence”

- ▶ This project is funded by a *Stronger Families Stronger Communities Grant (June 2018 - June 2019)* awarded to the Catalyst Foundation.
- ▶ For over 23 years the Catalyst Foundation in South Australia has played an active and vital role in supporting CaLD communities.
- ▶ Rationale: There strong evidence from around the world, that males must be engaged as key allies in preventing violence. Many men can serve as important role models and spokespeople to promote gender equality in family relationships, and condemn the use of domestic violence (Campaigns to End Violence Against Women and Girls 2011).

# World Health Organisation 2017

- ▶ Domestic violence (DV) is **prevalent in most, if not all, countries and cultures in the world.**
- ▶ It is very **hard to detect**, as generally the victims are too powerless, fearful, intimidated or ashamed to disclose the abuse.
- ▶ Global and national data indicates that most men do not use violence against women but when violence against women and men occurs, it is **perpetrated overwhelmingly by men**
- ▶ DV is **frequently invisible** - it happens behind closed doors, and often systems and cultural norms do not treat it as a crime, but rather as a 'private' family matter, or a 'normal' part of life

# United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women

- ▶ *'The term **violence against women** means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life'.*

# Australian Human Rights Commission

In Australia, it is estimated that

- ▶ approximately **one woman is killed every week** by her current or former partner, often after a history of domestic and family violence.
- ▶ 17% of women have experienced violence from *a current or former partner* since the age of 18 (compared to 5.3% of men).
- ▶ family and domestic violence is present in 55% of physical abuses and 40% of sexual abuses against children
- ▶ **1 in 4 children are exposed to domestic violence.**

# Australian Government's *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children (2010-2022)*

- ▶ Domestic violence refers to acts of violence that occur between people who have, or have had, an **intimate relationship**.
- ▶ While there is no single definition, the central element of domestic violence is an **ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling a partner through fear**, for example by using behaviour which is violent and threatening.
- ▶ In most cases, the violent behaviour is part of a **range of tactics to exercise power and control over women and their children**, and can be both criminal and non-criminal.
- ▶ **Family violence is a broader term** that refers to violence between family members, as well as violence between intimate partners. It involves the same sorts of behaviours as described for domestic violence.

# Types of violence against women

*Controlling behaviours creating fear and intimidation, including:*

- ▶ *Verbal abuse*
- ▶ *Physical abuse*
- ▶ *Emotional abuse*
- ▶ *Social abuse*
- ▶ *Financial abuse*
- ▶ *Sexual abuse*
- ▶ *Spiritual abuse*
- ▶ *Pet abuse*
- ▶ *Stalking*

*Domestic homicide*

*Separation violence* - when women and children most at risk of being killed

# A review of the research

## highlights that violence against women:

- ▶ Is perpetrated by men who often can be seen as 'normal', credible, respected members of a community who commonly do not accept responsibility for the violence, instead they deny, minimise, blame or justify it
- ▶ Is common in patriarchal cultures, societies, communities and families where men have more power and control than women - DV both maintains and is the expression of men's power and control.
- ▶ Has social causes, including gender norms and gender inequality in a patriarchal culture and/or society
- ▶ Occurs at all levels of society - gender, religion, race, ethnicity, class, age and sexuality influence the experience and outcomes for victims.
- ▶ Comprises a diverse range of violent, coercive, or controlling behaviours and strategies which may or may not involve physical violence.
- ▶ May deliberately be hidden from public view.
- ▶ May or may not be illegal and criminal.
- ▶ May be seen as 'normal' or acceptable by community members.
- ▶ Is a fundamental barrier to gender equality and a denial of women's human rights and of women's rights to full citizenship.

(Flood 2010).

Victims in marginalised groups are doubly disadvantaged, such as people with disabilities, those from indigenous or culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (including migrants and refugees) or from rural areas.



## Other contributors to men's violence against women

Immigrant or refugee men, do not share equally in the benefits of a patriarchal society because power deficits, such as unemployment and racism, can modify men's power.

There are a number of reinforcing factors that, while not a direct cause of men's violence against women, may increase its likelihood and severity in African communities:

- ▶ discrimination
- ▶ experience of and previous exposure to violence
- ▶ alcohol and substance use
- ▶ some cultural and religious practices
- ▶ lack of knowledge of Australian laws
- ▶ loss of traditional family and community support systems.

# The difference between 'conflict' and 'violence'

Disagreements and conflicts are a normal part of a healthy relationship.

- ▶ **Conflict is necessary for good decisions, learning, change and intimacy.** Both parties should be able to put forward their different points of view or concerns and feel comfortable discussing them together on an equal footing.
- ▶ In a healthy relationship, both parties **treat each other with respect**, discuss the issues and may compromise, negotiate or problem-solve to seek solutions to overcome their problems that satisfy both of them.
- ▶ They may argue loudly but if they are not frightened of, or intimidated by, the other, and the **balance of power is roughly 'equal'**, then it can be described as 'conflict' NOT 'domestic violence'.

**In a relationship where domestic and family violence is occurring, the balance of power is 'unequal'.** The victim feels threatened - too frightened to argue back or too scared to disagree or express an opinion. The perpetrator has power over the victim and controls many aspects of their lives.

**Australian Human Rights Commission (2010) report - *In our own words.*  
*African Australians: A Review of human rights and social inclusion issues***

**Consultation with 2500 Africans plus service providers identified deep concern at levels of family violence, a growing problem. Major contributing factors included:**

- ▶ the changing roles and dynamics within families after settlement, including the roles of men, women and young people
- ▶ violence or threats of violence by young people against their elders
- ▶ legal approaches and service interventions based on an understanding of 'family' that was not relevant or appropriate, contributing to family breakdown
- ▶ uncertainty about reporting family violence because of fear of police and law enforcement agencies, as well as fear that women and children may be removed from their family home
- ▶ very few options for men who wanted assistance to address violent behaviour and
- ▶ a lack of bilingual counsellors and support persons.

# Why don't female victims report DV or leave?

Research studies commonly report that female victims find it extremely difficult to leave abusive situations and find domestic violence hard to disclose and/or report for many reasons.

In particular, migrant and refugee women may:

- ▶ think the behaviour is 'normal' if they have been raised in an abusive home
- ▶ stay because of religious and cultural beliefs, persuasions or norms
- ▶ think that the term 'domestic violence' refers to physical violence only
- ▶ have feelings of powerlessness and fear, or lack the confidence to leave because of constant criticism and 'put downs'
- ▶ feel ashamed and/or do not want to shame their family or community by reporting it - want to protect his and the family's image
- ▶ still love their partner when he is not abusing them and hope or believe he will change
- ▶ stay for the children; any father is better than none

# Why don't female victims report DV or leave?

## They may also:

- ▶ feel responsible for the violence and blame themselves; think if they themselves change the abuse will stop
- ▶ believe that seeking help for domestic violence will hurt their men and/or lead to family breakdown
- ▶ fear losing their children, or the perpetrator harming their children if they report it
- ▶ fear that they will not be believed or taken seriously - he may be an elder or important person in the community or church
- ▶ fear that they may lose contact with their family and/or community
- ▶ be socially isolated and have little or no contact with family and friends - have no place to go and/or fear living alone
- ▶ not know where to go for help or if there is any available
- ▶ be afraid to access the services that are available, e.g. the police, because of prior experiences in their country of origin, and
- ▶ not have enough funds, support or resources to leave the situation or to employ a lawyer or other advisors.

# SA Research with Liberian women (Zannettino 2012)

From the Liberian women's perspective, there were four main aspects of culture impacting on domestic violence in their homes and communities. These were:

- ▶ **disruption to traditional gender roles (e.g. women receiving the Centrelink payments),**
  - ▶ **beliefs surrounding rape in marriage (which is against the law in Australia),**
  - ▶ **the acceptability of using violence within the family for child discipline and chastisement (hitting children is against the law in Australia), and**
  - ▶ **the belief that parenting is women's responsibility.**
- ▶ War and living in camps had led to a breakdown in the usual societal roles and standards for protecting children → a broken sense of trust that adults would protect rather than harm them.
  - ▶ The men's sense of identity relied heavily upon their capacity to deal with and overcome adversity but the complexities of resettlement, made this difficult.
  - ▶ Refugee men may use domestic violence as a way of expressing feelings and dealing with the stress as well as a strategy for gaining control and re-establishing power following the experience of violence and trauma in their homelands.

# Why engage individual men as partners and allies in the prevention of domestic violence?

- ▶ Studies show that men commit the vast majority of domestic and sexual violence and therefore have a special responsibility to end the violence.
- ▶ Gender norms and roles set by society benefit men. It is therefore important for men to challenge those norms and roles.
- ▶ Traditional ideas of what it means to be ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ promote unequal relations and can be challenged.
- ▶ When men commit acts of violence, it becomes more difficult for the affected women to trust any man, which in turn makes relationships less enjoyable for men and for women.
- ▶ Most men care deeply about the women and girls in their lives
- ▶ Men play a critical role in setting a positive example for other men, by treating women and girls with respect and by challenging other men’s harmful attitudes and behaviours.

# What can individual men do to help prevent or reduce men's violence against women?

Michael Flood (2011) highlights that there are three broad forms of action individual men can take to prevent or reduce violence against women:

- (a) modelling by behaving non-violently themselves;
- (b) taking action among other men and women as bystanders and educators; and
- (c) taking wider collective action in their communities.

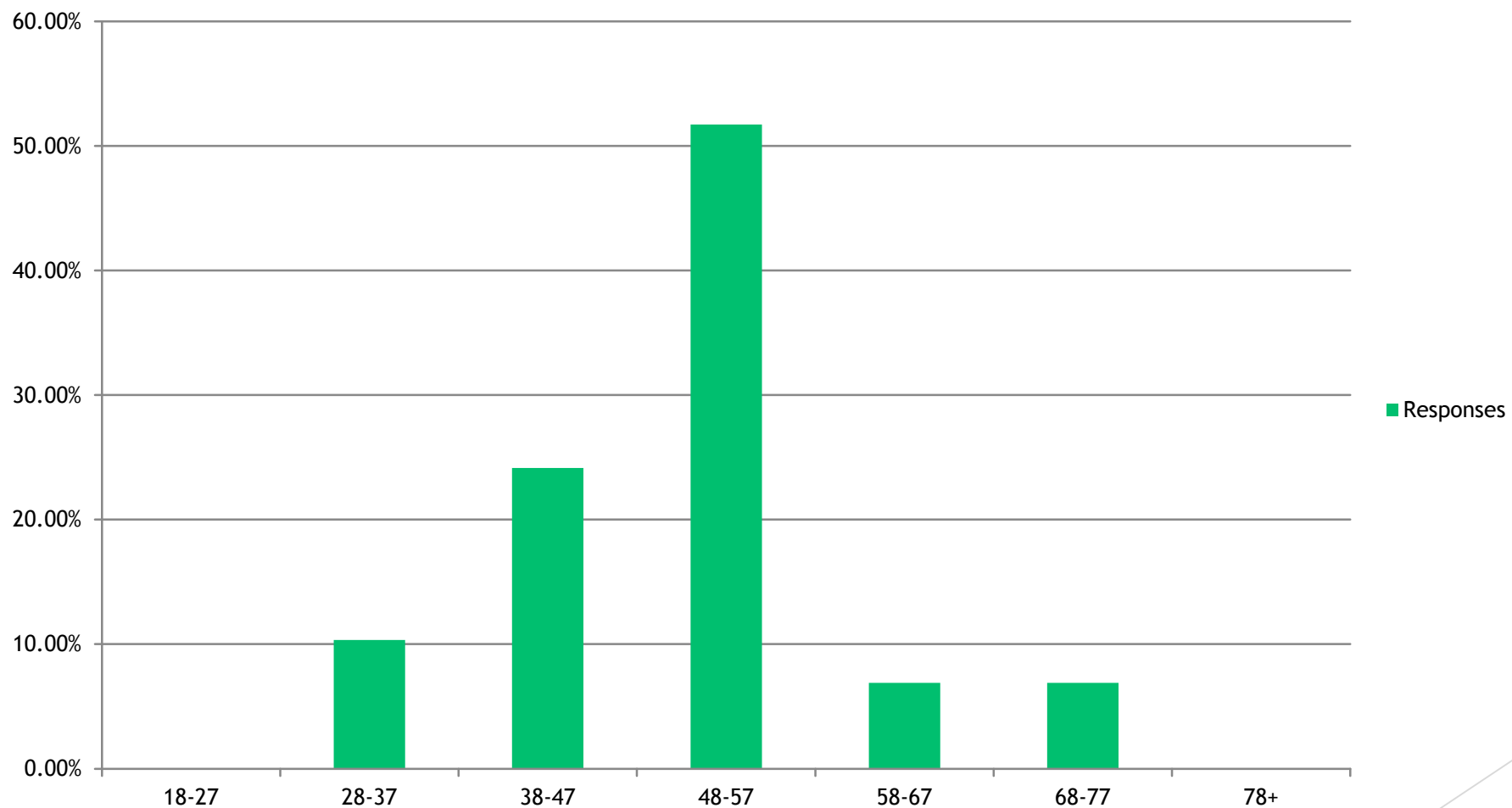


# OUR RESEARCH AND ACTIVITIES TO DATE

- ▶ Literature Review
- ▶ The development of the following:
  - ▶ Fact Sheets with summaries of relevant research and reports
  - ▶ Information about relevant laws on DV, FV and Child Abuse - State and National
  - ▶ Videos that depict DV in African families
  - ▶ A Drop Box with relevant reports and articles
  - ▶ Glossary, including definitions of relevant terms
  - ▶ A range of workshop material, including role plays
  - ▶ An online survey
  - ▶ Power point presentations on Domestic and Family Violence
  - ▶ Relevant Help Lines and Services for Men, Women and Children with contact details
- ▶ Contact and meetings with African leaders and groups in South Australia
- ▶ Presentation on DV and a workshop with 29 African Men at a Men's Retreat

## Survey with 29 African men at a Men's Retreat prior to a presentation on Domestic Violence (DV). 22/9/18

Which age range do you fit into?

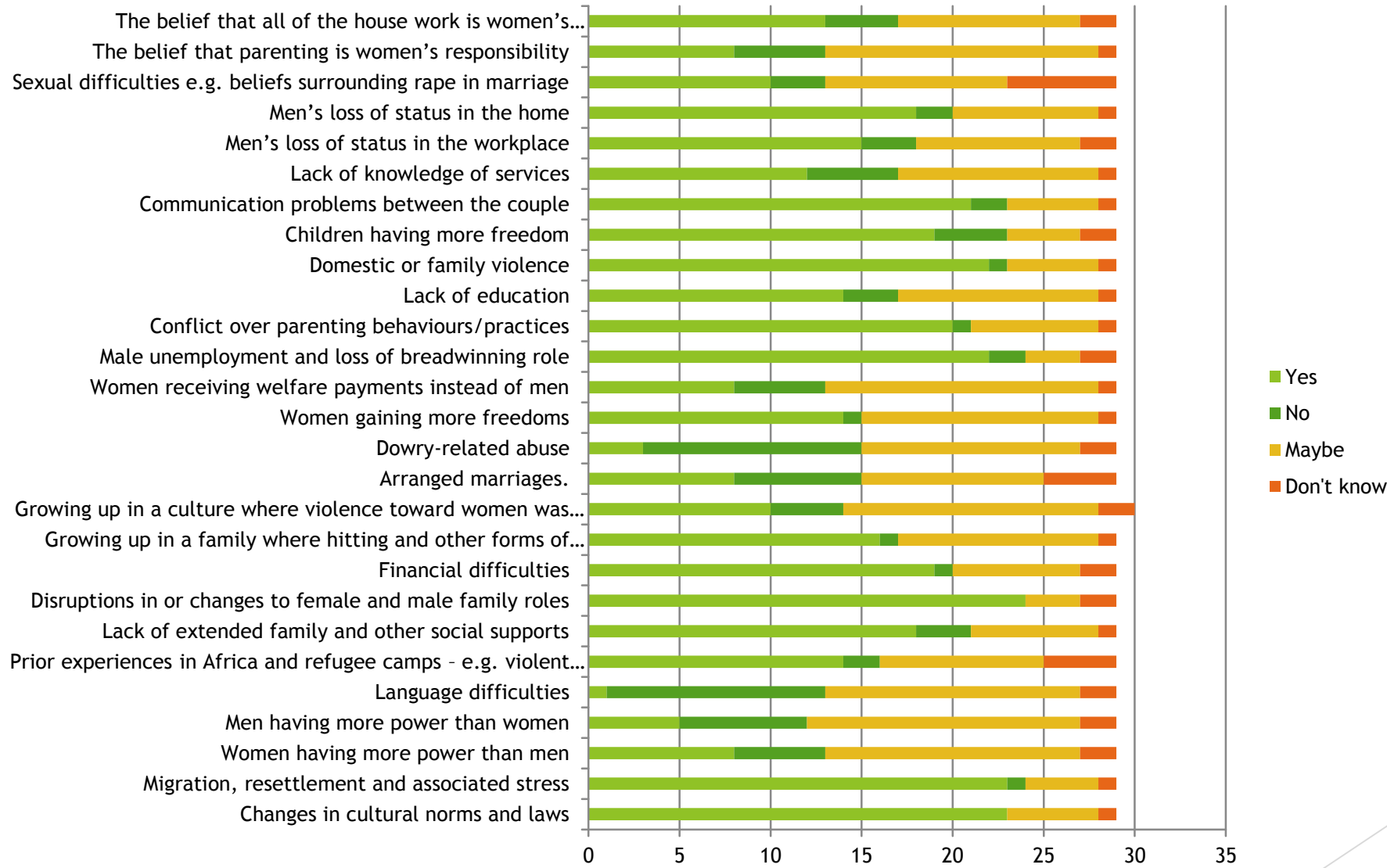


# Outcomes of the survey

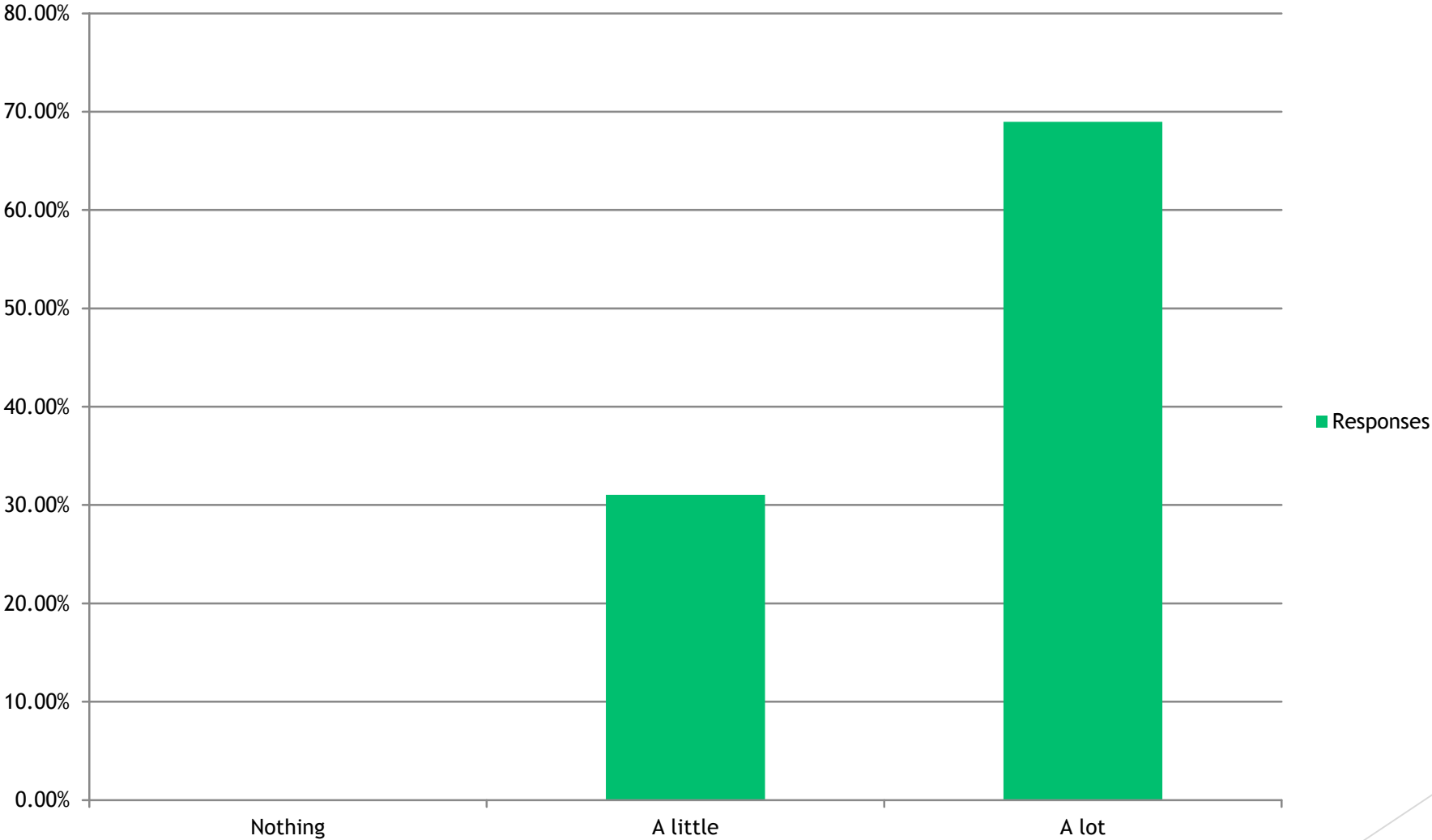
The major factors identified as contributing to marriage breakdown in African families in Australia were:

- ▶ Disruptions in or changes to female and male family roles (24)
- ▶ Changes in cultural norms and laws (23)
- ▶ Migration, resettlement & associated stress (23)
- ▶ Domestic and family violence (22)
- ▶ Male unemployment and loss of breadwinning role (22)
- ▶ Conflict over parenting behaviours/practices (20)
- ▶ Communication problems between the couple (21)
- ▶ Children having more freedom (19)
- ▶ Lack of extended family and other social supports (18)
- ▶ Men's loss of status in the home (18)

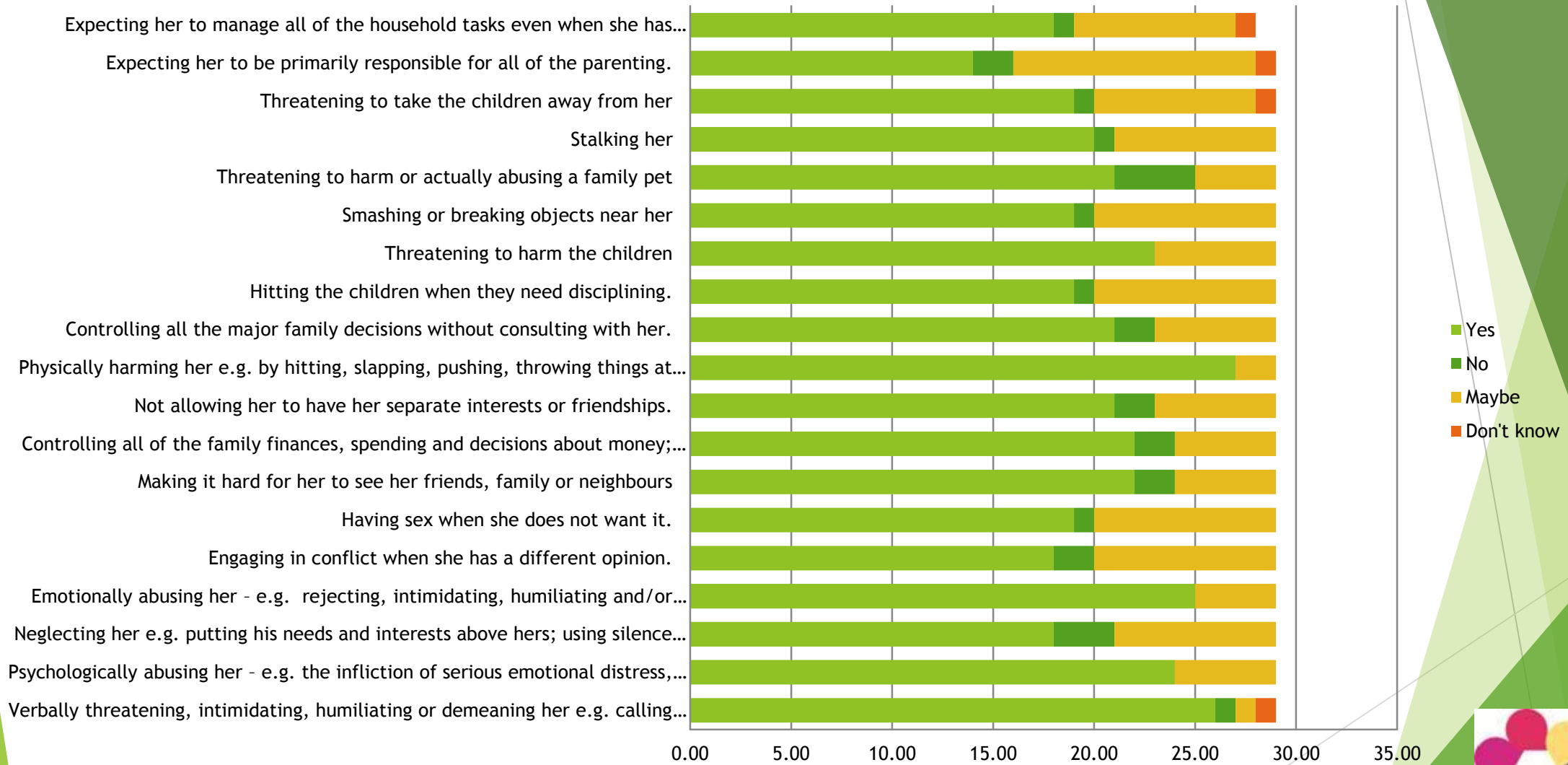
# The factors identified as contributing to marriage breakdown



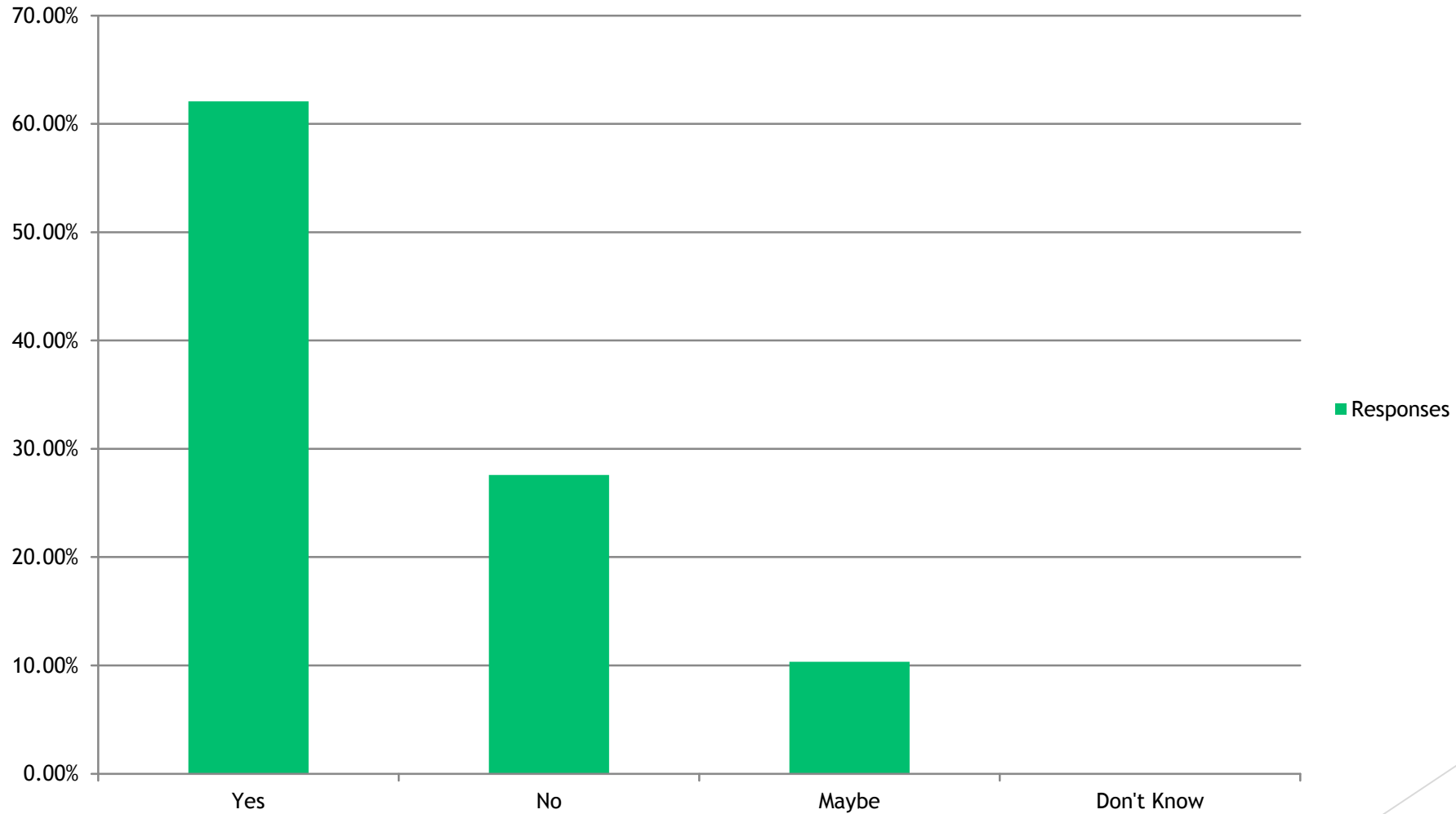
# How much do you know about 'domestic violence' and what the term means in Australia?



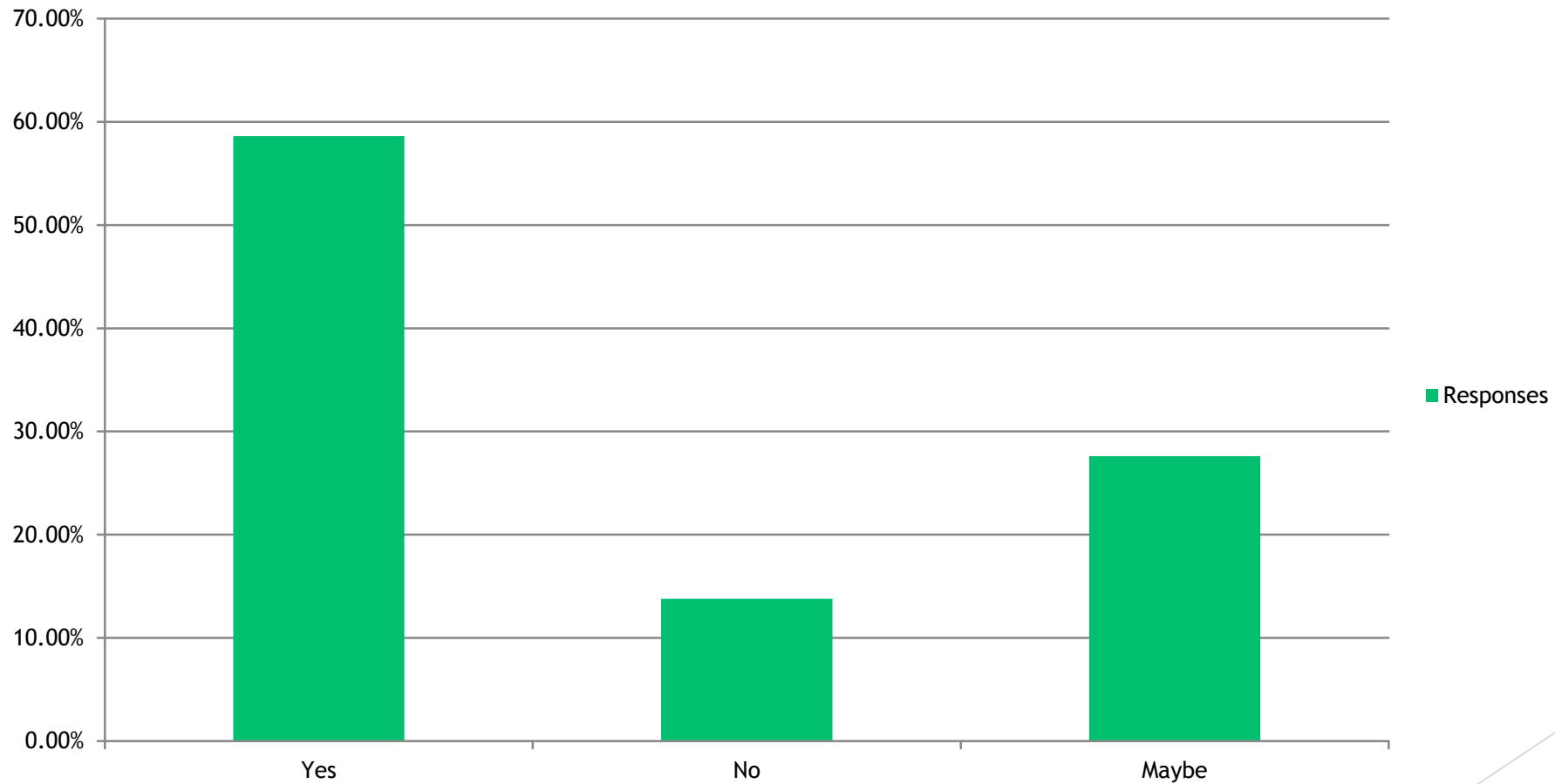
# Which of the following male behaviours toward their female partner and their children do you think would be included in the definition of DV in Australia?



# Have you ever witnessed domestic violence, or been aware of cases of domestic violence in your African community since arriving in Australia?

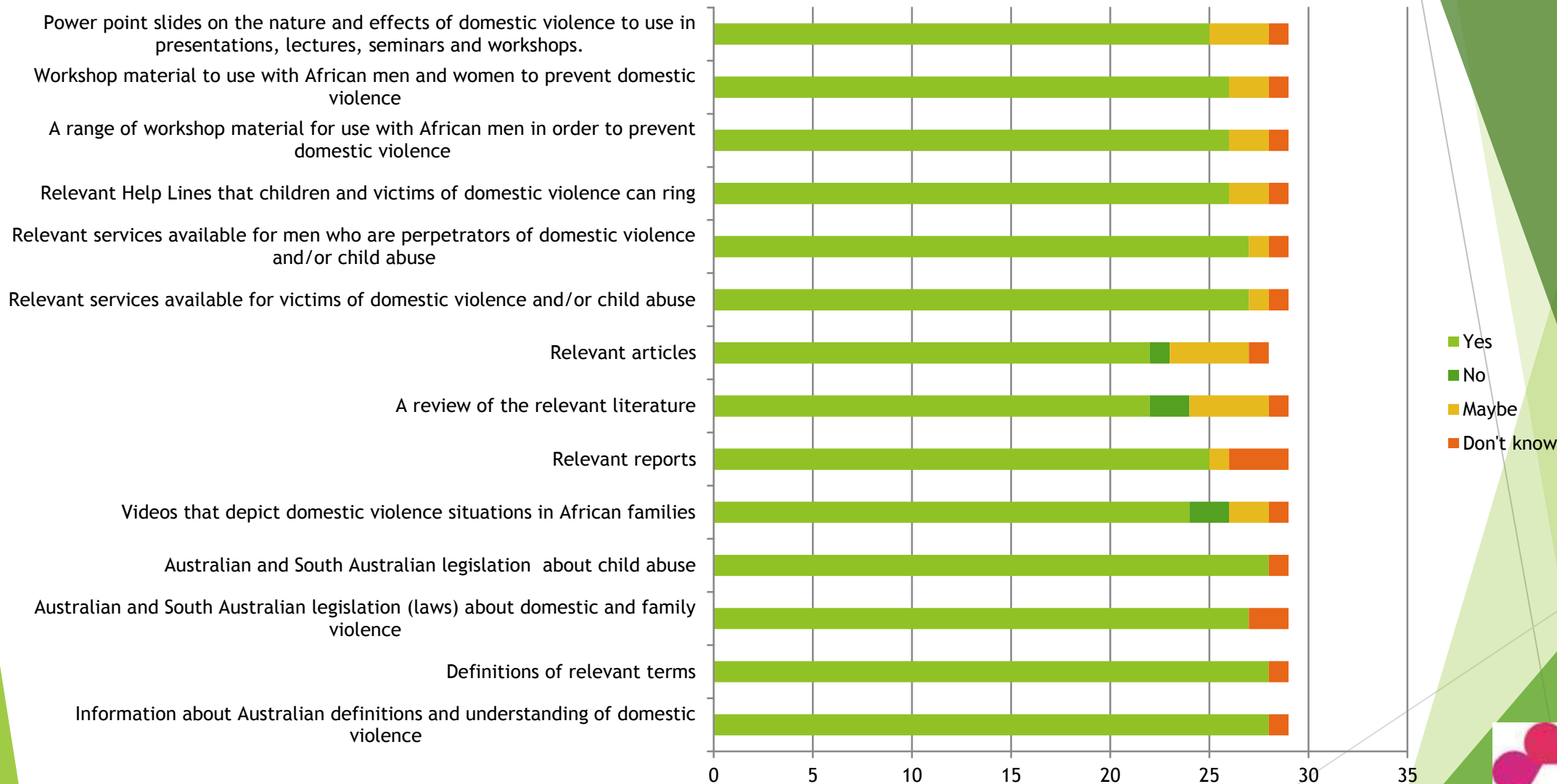


Would you be interested in participating in a program for African men who want to be role models and leaders for other African men to help to stop and/or prevent domestic violence in your community, in particular violence against women?





## Finally, what do you think should be in the Toolbox that we are developing that will be of assistance to leaders, mentors and role models when they work with other men to prevent domestic violence?



# African Men's Retreat, Victor Harbour 22/9/18

## FINALLY - OUTCOMES OF SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES AFTER A PRESENTATION ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

### 1. *On reflection, how has the learning in this workshop made you think differently about relationships between men and women in your culture? What has changed?*

- ▶ Most groups said that the definitions of domestic violence in Australian law was much broader than they previously thought.
- ▶ Some had thought DV only included physical abuse.
- ▶ Many also did not previously know or understand Australian laws in relation to DV, rape in marriage, stalking and intervention orders.

### 2. *How does violence perpetrated by men toward women damage men's lives as well?*

Feedback from the small groups included the following:

- ▶ If exposed, DV perpetrators can become isolated from their community, family and children and become extremely lonely and depressed
- ▶ Suicide was mentioned as a consequence for some African male DV perpetrators
- ▶ Leads to unsatisfactory relationships with the perpetrator's partner and children, including a diminished sex life.
- ▶ Loss of respect from members of the community
- ▶ Poor modelling for their sons and daughters who may go on to be abusers or abused

## OUTCOMES OF SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES AFTER A PRESENTATION ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

### *3. What do you think you can do as an individual or a group to create a world in which women and children don't live in fear of men's violence?*

#### Actions mentioned included:

Educating men and boys in their communities about DV and Australian laws seen as a top priority - the Toolbox we are developing will assist with this

Its important to reflect on one's own behaviour.

Need to consider giving the wives and children in their families “more space”

Need to control anger by walking away or going to someone in their community to talk about it

# Finally

- ▶ The Tool Box will be made freely available to local African and other CaLD communities and service providers.
- ▶ It will be easily accessible through the Catalyst Foundation information and resource centre and also through their close partnership organisations and networks with culturally diverse communities and organisations.
- ▶ The toolbox will help build community capacity and, through a community development approach, build confident male leaders, foster coalitions and networks, and support male role models to confront domestic violence issues.

# THANK YOU

If you would like copies of this presentation or have further queries please contact Dale Bagshaw: [dale.bagshaw@unisa.edu.au](mailto:dale.bagshaw@unisa.edu.au) Mobile: 0408 805 641.

If you are interested in finding out more about our Catalyst Foundation Project please contact:

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