The Adolescent Man Box

Findings from a survey with Australian adolescents aged 14–18 years

Jesuit Social Services
Building a Just Society

the men's project
A Jesuit Social Services initiative

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land where we work and live. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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To learn more

For further information about the study, please visit:
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Report snapshot: boys, masculinity and the road ahead

The Adolescent Man Box survey was conducted with 1401 young people aged between 14-18 years, of all genders, in March-April 2025. The study asked Australian teenagers about their beliefs in relation to how teenage boys should act, and about a range of attitudes, behaviours and experiences.

This report shines a light on the realities of what it means to be a teenage boy in Australia today. It highlights both promising signs and critical challenges that must be addressed if we are to support boys in leading fulfilling lives - free from violence and other harmful behaviours.

Reasons for hope

- There are encouraging signs that many boys are moving away from narrow and restrictive views of masculinity. This is especially true for the idea that boys must be emotionally stoic. A significant number of adolescents believe it's okay for boys to talk openly about their problems and comfort one another.
- Most boys believe in gender equality and reject sexist behaviours. The vast majority believe that girls should be treated as equals across all areas of life, and most express discomfort with witnessing sexist comments and harassment.
- Despite the growing influence of online spaces, boys continue to rely on 'real-life' relationships — especially parents — for guidance on personal issues and their understanding of masculinity.
- Most boys report feeling able to show vulnerability, whether with friends or family.
- Despite the pressures they face, most boys remain optimistic about their future.

Challenges we must confront

- Many boys feel pressure to always appear tough and confident. Those who most strongly internalise these restrictive masculine norms are more likely to hold harmful attitudes, engage in abusive behaviours, and struggle with their own wellbeing.
- A concerning proportion of boys expressed homophobic or transphobic views.
- A small but troubling number of boys report endorsing violence-supportive attitudes, retaliating when rejected, or having recently engaged in harmful behaviours — including physical violence, sexual harassment, bullying, and engagement with sexually explicit deepfakes. Notably, many boys who have recently used abusive behaviour have also experienced it recently themselves.
- Many of the boys surveyed are accessing pornography that depicts unsafe, aggressive or non-consensual acts — shaping distorted understandings of sex and relationships.
- Mental health is another pressing concern. Many boys reported experiencing poor mental health, yet a significant number are not seeking support for personal or emotional issues.

Each of these challenges is a call to action and this report makes a number of recommendations based on the findings. Positive change is already underway – but more must be done to create environments that not only reduce harm but open the door to better lives for boys, and for those in their lives.

Executive summary

Australian Government policy is clear: every child and young person in Australia deserves to grow up in a safe, supported, and connected environment that nurtures their ability to thrive (DSS, 2021). Yet, we are falling dramatically short. Many continue to face violence and harm, and some are involved in causing harm to others.

Adolescent boys are often in the media spotlight – ranging from concerns about poor mental health and loneliness, to the creation of image-based abuse material such as sexually explicit 'deep fakes' of their peers, consumption of violent pornography, and the use of sexual violence. There has also been a growing public conversation about how these experiences and behaviours are related to restrictive forms of masculinity. Of course, not all boys engage in these behaviours, and media coverage often highlights extreme or concerning cases without reflecting the full diversity of boys' experiences, values and development.

Nevertheless, the problems reported in the media are serious, and many individuals, groups and organisations are working hard to address them. We believe that understanding the perspectives of young people, and how their ideas and behaviours are shaped, is critical to implementing positive social change and achieving better outcomes for children, young people and the broader community. This study asks young people themselves about their beliefs and experiences, ensuring their voices are central to conversations about preventing and addressing violence and harm.

This aligns with Australia's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which affirms every child's right to be safe from violence, to express their views in matters affecting them, and to grow up with their best interests, dignity and development fully supported.

The Adolescent Man Box study

The Adolescent Man Box study examines the extent to which Australian male, female and non-binary adolescents perceive and endorse stereotypical masculine norms, as well as the relationship between boys' endorsement of these norms and their behaviours and experiences. It is the first study of its kind in Australia to provide a far-reaching picture of both social and health related measures and their associations with restrictive masculinity amongst adolescent boys aged 14 to 18 years. In doing so, beyond our focus on masculinities, we have also sought to understand the prevalence of a range of behaviours and life outcomes.

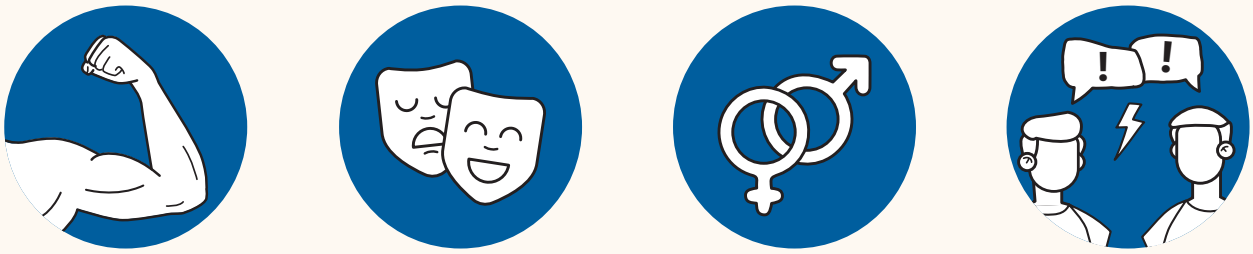
The Adolescent Man Box survey was implemented anonymously online with 1401 adolescent respondents aged 14-18 years old, including 655 boys, 736 girls and 10 non-binary respondents, over a five-week period in March and April 2025. The survey used a non-probability, opt-in online panel method. Our sample was weighted to be representative of the Australian population by age and gender, and broadly representative of state/territory and metropolitan and regional areas[1].

The research builds on earlier Man Box studies which examined similar issues in relation to men aged 18 to 30 and (later) 30 to 45 (The Men's Project & Flood, 2024, 2018). Unlike the adult iterations, however, the Adolescent Man Box study also considers the perspectives of girls and non-binary adolescents. This recognises that societal pressures and attitudes about masculinity are shaped by all in the community, and provides valuable insights into perspectives across genders.

The Adolescent Man Box refers to a collection of beliefs that place pressure on boys to behave in certain ways. Using a validated scale - the Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity scale (Oransky & Fisher, 2009) - it contains 27 'rules' that are grouped into four thematic pillars (**Constant effort to be manly, Emotional restriction, Heterosexism** and **Social teasing**). The Adolescent Man Box reflects rigid masculine norms such as "A teenage boy must always appear confident even if he isn't" and "When a teenage boy has a fear, he should keep it to himself".

1 Details of the methodology, including study limitations (such as sample size and representation, response accuracy, validity of survey questions, and lack of intersectional analysis), are included in Appendix C of the report

Figure 1: The four pillars of the Adolescent Man Box



Constant effort
Belief that to be masculine, one must constantly, and without interruption, maintain one's tough, confident and strong public persona

Emotional restriction
Assumption that to be masculine, boys must be emotionally stoic and refrain from sharing their feelings with others

Heterosexism
Norm that masculinity is defined in opposition to homosexuality and femininity, and that one must distance oneself from behaviours and attitudes traditionally thought as "girly" or "gay"

Social teasing
Assumption that to be masculine, one must be able to both dole out and stand up to teasing and taunting in the peer context

**Using the Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale (Oransky & Fisher, 2009)*

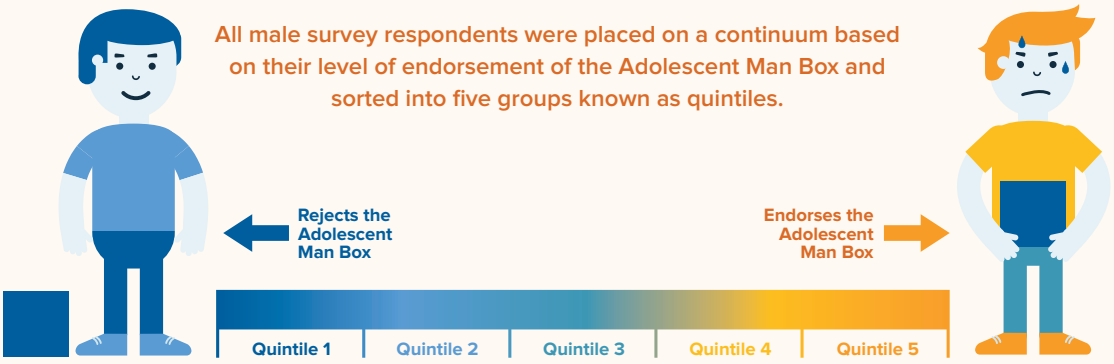
We examined how much adolescents (of all genders) endorse these rules, how much they perceive pressure in relation to these rules, and the association between boys' endorsing such beliefs and the use of behaviours such as bullying, aggression, risk-taking, and seeking help.

Based on their level of endorsement of each of the 27 rules, we gave each respondent an Adolescent Man Box score. Using these scores, we could then divide adolescent boys into five '**quintiles**', with the lowest-scoring 20% in quintile 1 (those with weakest endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box) and the highest-scoring 20% in quintile 5 (those with strongest Adolescent Man Box endorsement), to allow us to investigate associations between endorsement of stereotypical masculine norms and different behaviours and outcomes[2].

We also examined adolescents' endorsement of other attitudes not covered by the Adolescent Man Box scale, including attitudes about aggression and control, rigid gender norms, and gender equality. We considered these separately so as not to undermine the validity of the Adolescent Man Box scale. The study also asked questions to explore where adolescents' ideas about masculinity come from.

Responses were diverse, reflecting the diversity of adolescents themselves. Many adolescent boys no longer feel shaped or bound by traditional masculine norms, while a substantial minority clearly do. Understanding the context in which views are formed and the relationships between attitudes and behaviours is important for anyone working with young people today.

As with previous Australian Man Box studies (The Men's Project & Flood, 2024, 2018), this study was conducted by The Men's Project, an initiative established in 2017 by Jesuit Social Services. The Men's Project works with young people and community leaders to prevent violence and strengthens the national evidence base to include perspectives of boys and men on what is required to prevent harm to themselves and those around them. The adult Man Box studies have contributed to this evidence, and now the Adolescent Man Box expands this evidence to include a younger cohort.



2 Each quintile had approximately 130 respondents (ranging from 114 to 139). However, quintile counts were lower if boys opted out of questions – such as pornography questions. Please note, quintile analysis shows association between variables, not causation

What is life like for boys who rejected traditional masculine norms compared to boys who endorsed them?

Every adolescent is unique, and their views about masculinity are diverse. But when we consider those who least endorsed rigid masculine norms (quintile 1) with those who most endorsed the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 5), we start to see some commonalities between each group (for example, poor mental health symptoms across all quintiles), as well as some significant differences (for example, differences in relation to the use and experience of aggression).

Adolescent boys who rejected traditional norms (quintile 1) showed healthy attitudes towards gender equality and overwhelmingly rejected violence towards women. They were almost universally bothered when witnessing abuse and sexual harassment, and were more likely to want to intervene. They were themselves less likely to be involved in any form of bullying or harassment or physical fights. These boys recognise the value of emotional connection and empathy, and were comfortable listening to one another's problems and comforting friends. They were also comfortable maintaining friendships with transgender and gender diverse people.

Boys who least strongly endorsed the Adolescent Man Box said their family has a strong influence on their attitudes about masculinity. They were also more likely than boys in other quintiles to nominate female friends as having a big influence. They tended not to spend money on gambling, and while the level of poor mental health for these boys is a significant concern, they were more likely than other boys to seek help on these and other aspects of their life.

For boys who most strongly endorsed the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 5), on the other hand, life appears to be more lonely. Many of these boys have been victimised, appeared to have less supportive relationships with family, and were more likely than other boys to look online rather than around them for positive social connection. Almost half of these boys agreed that no one really knows them well and almost half agreed that their online social life is more engaging and rewarding than their offline social life. Relative to other boys in the survey, their parents, particularly their mothers, were perceived to be less likely to influence their attitudes about what it means to be an adolescent boy, while the influence of the online world was perceived to be higher.

Boys with the highest endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box were more likely than other boys to have been physically hurt on purpose, insulted or threatened, or sexually harassed. More than a quarter of boys in this group had experienced being physically hurt on purpose in the past month, more than double the proportion of boys in quintile 1.

While boys in the Adolescent Man Box were more likely to be victimised than other boys, they were also much more likely to perpetuate harm to others. Boys who most strongly endorsed the Adolescent Man Box rules were significantly more likely to report that in the past month they had bullied or physically hurt someone they knew on purpose, and they reported that they usually retaliate if rejected at more than three times the rate of boys in quintile 1. Most adolescents who had used aggression in the past month reported that they had been victimised in the same time period.

The boys who most strongly endorsed the Adolescent Man Box were also much more likely to endorse statements related to aggression and control. For example, more than a third of boys in this group agreed that if a teenage boy has sex with a teenage girl, he should decide what happens and what she does during sex, while almost no boys in quintile 1 felt this way. For these boys, there is a need to promote support and accountability.

Key findings

Attitudes, influences and pressures related to being a teenage boy

Finding 1:

While many boys do not feel bound by traditional masculine norms, a significant proportion do.

Many adolescents rejected individual rules of the Adolescent Man Box. When we looked at each of the 27 Adolescent Man Box rules separately, we found that in most cases there were more adolescents who did not personally endorse that rule compared with the number who did (See Figure 2). This was especially so for girls.

Although the majority of adolescents did not endorse most individual rules when considered separately, **many adolescents nonetheless agreed with a substantial number of rules overall**. Specifically, 71% of boys and 35% of girls reported agreement with at least half of the 27 rules in the Adolescent Man Box.

Most boys appear to recognise the value of emotional connection and empathy, rejecting rules related to the Adolescent Man Box pillar of **emotional restriction**. Only 7% of boys believed that it is **not** important to listen to each other's problems, and 13% said it's **not** their role to comfort a friend who is upset.

There were higher levels of endorsement in relation to the other aspects of restrictive masculinity. In the **Heterosexism** pillar, almost half of boys (48%) believed that being thought of as gay makes them seem like less of a man and 47% agreed they should never act like a girl.

Teasing one another appears to be a way of life for the majority of boys, with 62% agreeing it's normal for boys to make fun of their friends.

And a significant proportion of boys endorsed the need to project confidence, strength and toughness (**Constant effort to be manly**) – 44% believed they should always appear confident even if they're not and 43% believed they must appear strong no matter what.

Figure 2: Proportion of adolescents who personally endorsed Adolescent Man Box rules, by gender (n=1401)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed that 'In my opinion...

Adolescent Man Box rules	Boys	Girls	Total*
Pillar 1: Constant effort to be manly			
A teenage boy should always seem as manly as other boys that he knows	37%	11%	25%
A teenage boy should never back down from a challenge in public	25%	10%	18%
Acting manly should be the most important goal for teenage boys	26%	8%	17%
A teenage boy must always appear confident even if he isn't	44%	15%	30%
No matter what happens, a teenage boy should seem strong to others	43%	13%	29%
Getting made fun of helps teenage boys become tough	32%	15%	24%
Teenage boys should try to appear manly in almost all situations	38%	14%	27%
Pillar 2: Emotional restriction			
It's weird for a teenage boy to talk about his feelings with other teenage boys	34%	14%	24%
When a teenage boy has a fear, he should keep it to himself	22%	5%	14%
It's hard to respect a teenage boy who shows his feelings	14%	5%	10%
If a teenage boy has hurt feelings he should hold it in	23%	5%	15%
It is not a teenage boy's job to comfort a friend who is upset	13%	6%	10%
It's not important for teenage boys to listen to each other's problems	7%	2%	4%
Teenage boys should not talk about their worries with each other	12%	2%	7%
Pillar 3: Heterosexism			
A teenage boy who wears nail polish is hard to take seriously	53%	24%	40%
It's embarrassing to have a lot of gay friends	33%	12%	23%
Being thought of as gay makes a teenage boy seem like less of a man	48%	26%	38%
It would be embarrassing for a teenage boy to say that he is interested in being a hairdresser	25%	12%	19%
A good way to seem manly is to not act gay	47%	30%	39%
A teenage boy should be embarrassed if someone says he "runs like a girl"	40%	16%	29%
There is something wrong if a teenage boy wants to do activities usually done by girls	27%	12%	20%
Teenage boys should never act like a girl	47%	24%	36%
Pillar 4: Social teasing			
A teenage boy should be able to take teasing from his friends, even if it's mean or degrading	33%	10%	22%
There's nothing wrong with a teenage boy who picks on his friends, even if they get upset	15%	6%	11%
It's normal for teenage boys to make fun of their friends	62%	54%	58%
In order to fit in, teenage boys must be able to tease other teenage boys	24%	13%	19%
Teenage boys do not pick on each other to be mean	54%	35%	45%

**includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

When we look at younger adolescent boys (14-15 years old) compared with older adolescent boys (16-18) we see that endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box rules was notably lower for the older group. Endorsement of the rule that a teenage boy should always seem as manly as other boys he knows fell from 46% (younger group) to 31% (older group), and the rule that a teenage boy should never back down from a challenge in public dropped from 29% to 23%. In the emotional restriction pillar, endorsement of the rule that teenage boys should keep their fears to themselves fell from 27% (younger group) to 18% (older group), while in the heterosexism pillar older boys appeared more comfortable having gay friends or being seen to "act like a girl" than the younger group. This may suggest that some views soften with maturity and social experience – and may highlight a window of critical vulnerability in the early teenage years when identity pressures peak. The only rule more strongly endorsed by older adolescents related to social teasing. However, it is not possible to interpret these results with any certainty, and it is possible that these differences may also reflect emerging generational differences.

Finding 2:

Societal pressures on teenage boys to be 'a real man' were equally observed by both boys and girls. The pressure to be manly remains strong in our society, even in adolescence.

Alongside personal endorsement we asked adolescents about what 'most Australians believe' as an indication of the level of social pressure to conform to these restrictive masculine norms. These questions were focused on the **Constant effort to be manly** pillar.

Between 60% and 63% of boys and girls believe that most people in Australia expect teenage boys to be manly, confident, and strong at all times. Almost half of boys (46%) and a greater number of girls (50%) indicated there was a social pressure on teenage boys to never back down from a challenge in public. More than half of both boys (53%) and girls (56%) said most Australians believe that getting made fun of helps teenage boys to become tough.

Previous research, including the adult Man Box, has highlighted the social pressure that boys and men perceive around rigid masculine norms. The Adolescent Man Box demonstrates that this social pressure is also recognised by girls, and recognised by girls **at the same level** as their male peers.

Figure 3: Perceived social expectation for teenage boys to adhere to Adolescent Man Box rules related to 'constant effort to be manly' (n=1391).

Percentage of male and female respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed that 'Most people in Australia believe...'.

Adolescent Man Box pillar 1 - Constant effort to be manly	Boys	Girls
A teenage boy should always seem as manly as other boys that he knows	60%	62%
A teenage boy should never back down from a challenge in public	46%	50%
Acting manly should be the most important goal for teenage boys	52%	52%
A teenage boy must always appear confident even if he isn't	62%	61%
No matter what happens, a teenage boy should seem strong to others	63%	62%
Getting made fun of helps teenage boys become tough	53%	56%
Teenage boys should try to appear manly in almost all situations	62%	63%

Finding 3:

While the perception of what others expect of teenage boys is consistent for girls and boys, girls personally endorse restrictive forms of masculinity at much lower rates than boys.

As with the adult Man Box research, there is a marked difference between what respondents personally believe, and what broader society expects. For each of the seven rules in the **Constant effort** pillar of the Adolescent Man Box, the perceived social pressure was greater than the level of personal endorsement for respondents of all genders (See Figure 4 and 5).

Particularly noteworthy, however, was the much greater differential for girls than boys when we compared perception of social pressure with personal endorsement. As highlighted in Finding 1, there remains strong endorsement of some of the rules by boys. For girls, however, endorsement was rarely above 15%.

For example, while the same percentage of both boys and girls (52%) agreed there is social pressure for teenage boys to be manly, only 8% of girls personally endorsed this rule compared with 26% of boys. And while almost the same numbers of boys and girls perceived there is social pressure on boys to appear confident even when they aren't (62% of boys and 61% of girls perceived this), boys personally endorsed this rule at nearly 3 times the rate of girls (44% to 15%).

Figure 4: Proportion of boys who personally endorsed Adolescent Man Box rules compared with those who perceived social pressure (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who personally endorsed Adolescent Man Box rules ('In my opinion...') compared with the percentage of male respondents who perceived social pressure ('Most people in Australia believe')

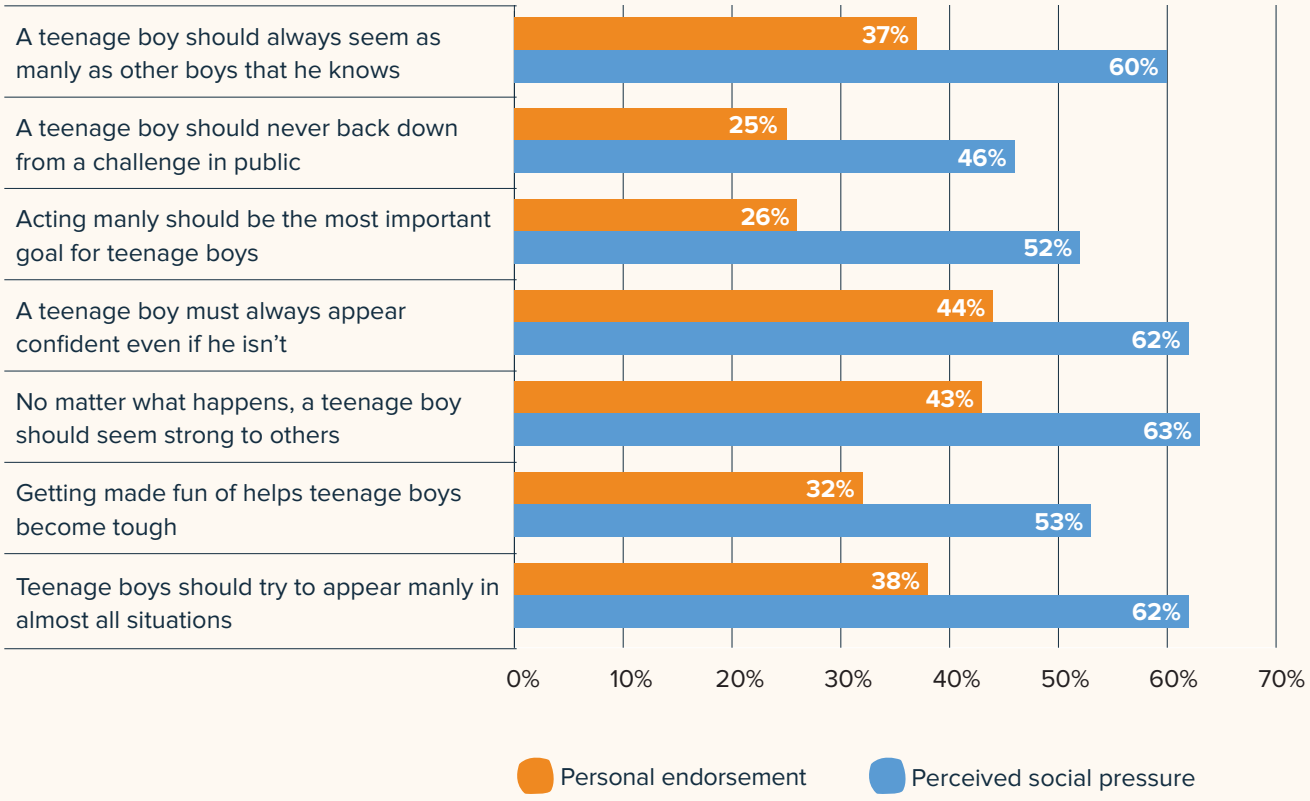
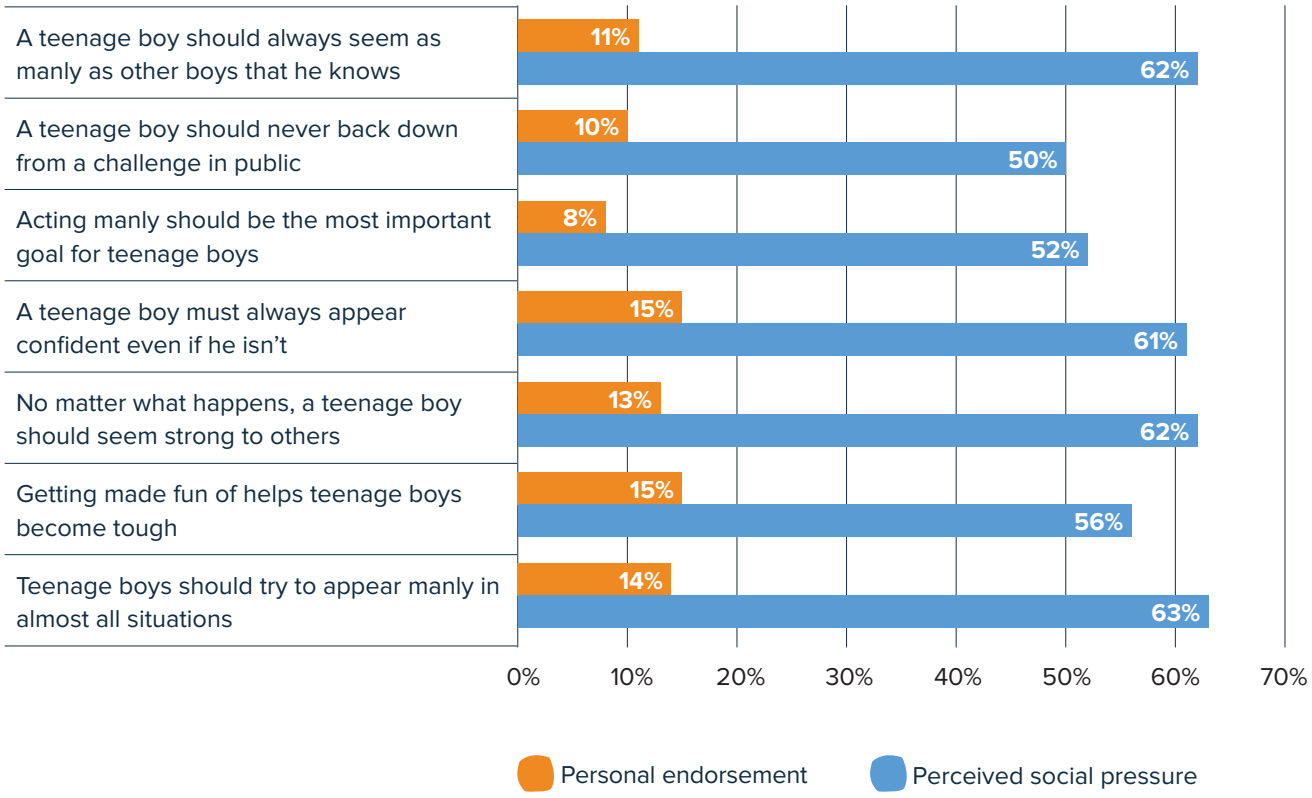


Figure 5: Proportion of girls who personally endorsed Adolescent Man Box rules compared with those who perceived social pressure (n=736)

Percentage of female respondents aged 14-18 who personally endorsed Adolescent Man Box rules ('In my opinion...') compared with the percentage of female respondents who perceived social pressure ('Most people in Australia believe...')



Finding 4:

Nearly all adolescents support gender equality in concept, but many boys believe they have it harder than girls.

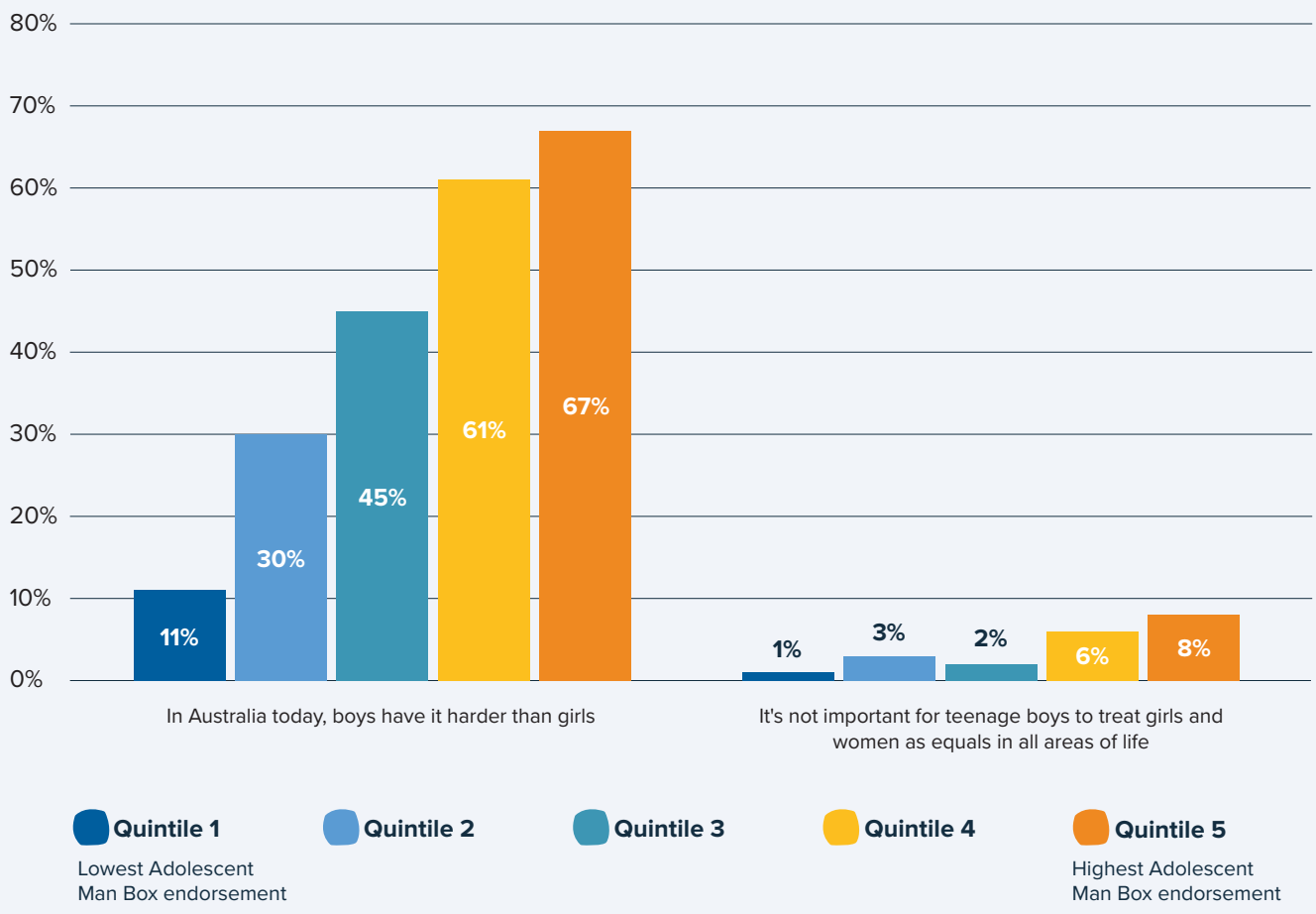
The vast majority of boys (96%) believe it's important for teenage boys to treat girls as equals.

However, their views on equality in practice differ. A much higher proportion of boys than girls agreed that, in Australia today, boys have it harder than girls (42% of boys agreed compared with 13% of girls).

Boys who most strongly endorse the Adolescent Man Box rules were significantly more likely to agree that boys have it harder than girls (67% of boys in quintile 5 compared with 11% of boys in quintile 1).

Figure 6: Proportion of boys who endorsed attitudes about gender equality, by quintile (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement



Finding 5:

Parental figures and male friends are perceived by adolescent boys to have a significant impact on their attitudes about masculinity.

While adolescent boys encounter a wide range of influences on their understanding of how teenage boys should behave, their responses to this survey reveal that they perceive real-life relationships as shaping their views more strongly than online media.

Respondents were provided with a list of people, groups and media and asked how much impact each item has on their ideas about how teenage boys should act. For each item on the list, they could select whether it had a 'big impact', 'some impact' or 'no impact' on their ideas. There was no limit to how many items respondents could rate as having each level of impact.

Parents and male friends were perceived by adolescent boys to have the greatest influence on their ideas about how teenage boys should behave: 59% of boys indicated that their father or male parental figure had a 'big impact' on their attitudes about adolescent masculinity (with the remainder of boys rating their father as having 'some impact' or 'no impact'), 48% rated their mother or female parental figure as having a big impact, and 42% ranked male friends as having a big impact. A lower proportion of adolescent boys rated online media as having a big impact on their ideas about how teenage boys should behave. For example, 22% of boys ranked social media and online influencers as having a big impact, and 14% ranked pornography as having a big impact.

Real-life relationships were perceived to shape adolescent boys' views of masculinity more strongly than online media, regardless of quintile. However, boys who most strongly endorse the Adolescent Man Box rules (quintile 5) were more likely than boys in other quintiles to report that online media has a big impact on their ideas: over half (52%) of those who most strongly endorse the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 5) believe that media has a big influence on their ideas about how to be a boy in the world (compared with 34-37% for other quintiles). On a related point, this group is also more likely than other boys to say that their online social life is more rewarding than their offline interactions (47% of quintile 5 compared with 32% for quintile 1). Meanwhile, boys in quintile 5 are significantly less likely than boys in other quintiles to report their mum or female parental figure as having a big impact (34% for quintile 5 compared with 42-66% for other quintiles).

While parents were perceived by all adolescents to be significant in shaping attitudes about how teenage boys should behave, we should not overlook the enormous breadth of influences in young people's lives. For example, when asked to name an online influencer or content creator that they follow, a staggering 438 unique online content creators were named, and the vast majority of these were mentioned by only one respondent (355 content creators were mentioned only once). This is a reminder that the online world is vast, the sources of influence are diverse, and each adolescent experiences this online landscape differently.

Figure 7: Proportion of adolescents who rated people, institutions and media as having a big impact on their ideas about masculinity

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who rated each item as having a 'big impact' (as opposed to 'no impact' or 'some impact') on their own ideas about how teenage boys should act

People, groups and media	Boys	Girls	Total*
Family			
Dad or male parental figure	59%	60%	60%
Mum or female parental figure	48%	45%	47%
Family members (other than parents)	29%	30%	29%
Any of the above	68%	70%	69%
Friends, peers and partners			
Male friends	42%	48%	45%
Romantic or sexual partners	23%	28%	25%
Female friends	19%	21%	20%
Gender diverse friends	9%	12%	11%
Peers who are not your main friends	6%	8%	7%
Any of the above	56%	62%	59%
Formal figures and institutions			
Sports clubs or sports people	21%	25%	23%
Teachers	20%	17%	19%
Coach or mentor	20%	20%	20%
Religion	18%	21%	19%
Any of the above	48%	50%	49%
Media			
Social media and online influencers	22%	32%	27%
Video games	15%	18%	17%
Movies and television	14%	26%	20%
Advertising	12%	17%	14%
Pornography	14%	22%	18%
Any of the above	39%	52%	45%

**includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Attitudes and experiences of violence

Finding 6:

A significant proportion of boys and girls showed a tolerance for technology-facilitated surveillance, and a smaller but concerning proportion of boys agreed with other violence-supportive attitudes including those about image-based abuse.

The survey asked about a range of attitudes that are related to violence and control, including technology-facilitated surveillance and image-based abuse. For both boys and girls, 18% agreed that continually checking who their partner was communicating with on social media was normal in a relationship, and almost a quarter of both boys and girls agreed that it was okay to send multiple texts, phone calls, social media messages when their partner wasn't responding immediately, or when they were frustrated with them (24% of boys, 23% of girls). The embedding of tracking capabilities in social media apps including those used by parents may have influenced the behaviour and expectations among adolescent boys and girls – and adolescents may not perceive this as control or violence.

Only small numbers of adolescents of any gender thought activities such as changing a photo or video of someone into something sexual or sharing intimate photos after a break-up (both are forms of image-based abuse) were acceptable, but it is important that efforts are made to change the attitudes of this small group (which includes more boys than girls), given the potentially devastating consequences. Around 6% of boys said it was okay to change a photo or video of someone into something sexual (compared with 2% of girls) and 8% of boys said sharing intimate photos after a break-up was not a big deal (compared with 4% of girls).

A small, but concerning, proportion of boys agreed with other violence-supportive attitudes – at more than twice the rate of girls. For example, 10% of boys agreed that if a man is violent to his partner it's probably because his partner did something to provoke or deserve it, compared with 5% of girls. One in ten boys said a teenage boy should use violence to get respect if necessary compared with 4% of girls. While 13% of boys believe if a teenage boy has sex with a teenage girl he should decide what happens and what she does during sex, only 5% of girls agreed with this.

Figure 8: Proportion of adolescents who personally endorsed violence-supportive attitudes, by gender (n=1401)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed that 'In my opinion...'

Attitudes about masculinity as aggressive and controlling	Boys	Girls	Total*
Attitudes about masculinity as aggressive and controlling			
If a teenage boy has a girlfriend, he should know where she is all the time	12%	7%	10%
A teenage boy should use violence to get respect if necessary	10%	4%	7%
If a man is violent to his partner, it's probably because his partner did something to provoke / deserve it	10%	5%	8%
If a teenage boy has sex with a teenage girl, he should decide what happens and what she does during sex	13%	5%	9%
Attitudes about intimate partner abuse and technology-facilitated abuse			
It's ok to send multiple texts, phone calls, social media messages when your partner isn't responding immediately, or when you are frustrated with them	23%	24%	24%
It's okay to call your partner mean names when they disagree with you or your beliefs	8%	5%	7%
Continually checking who my partner is communicating with on social media is normal in a relationship	18%	18%	18%
It's okay to use a photo or video of someone and change it into something sexual	6%	2%	4%
Sharing intimate photos of your partner after a breakup is not a big deal	8%	4%	6%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Finding 7:

The more strongly adolescent boys hold rigid views about masculinity, the more likely they are to cause harm to others, and to hold violence-supportive attitudes.

When we divide the boys surveyed into five groups ('quintiles') along a continuum according to their level of agreement with the restrictive rules of the Adolescent Man Box, we see a particularly concerning picture for the group who most strongly agree with these rules.

The boys with the strongest endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 5) are far more likely than their peers to have used a form of bullying, physical violence or sexual harassment in the past month, and are also more likely to hold violence-supportive attitudes.

Nearly two in five boys (39%) in quintile 5 reported that they had used bullying, physical violence or sexual harassment in the past month, compared with 7% of boys in quintile 1.

More than half of boys (52%) who most strongly endorse the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 5) believe it's okay to call or text their partner multiple times when they don't respond immediately and two in five (42%) believe that it's normal to continually check who their partner is communicating with. These figures are far higher than boys at the other end of the scale.

Respondents were also asked about their propensity to retaliate if rejected. Overall, 16% of boys agreed they usually try to get back at someone if they are rejected. Boys who most strongly endorsed the Adolescent Man Box were significantly more likely to say they would retaliate if rejected, with more than a third of boys in quintile 5 (35%) agreeing they would do so compared with 11%-15% across the other four quintiles.

Figure 9: Proportion of boys who endorsed attitudes about intimate partner abuse, by quintile (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement

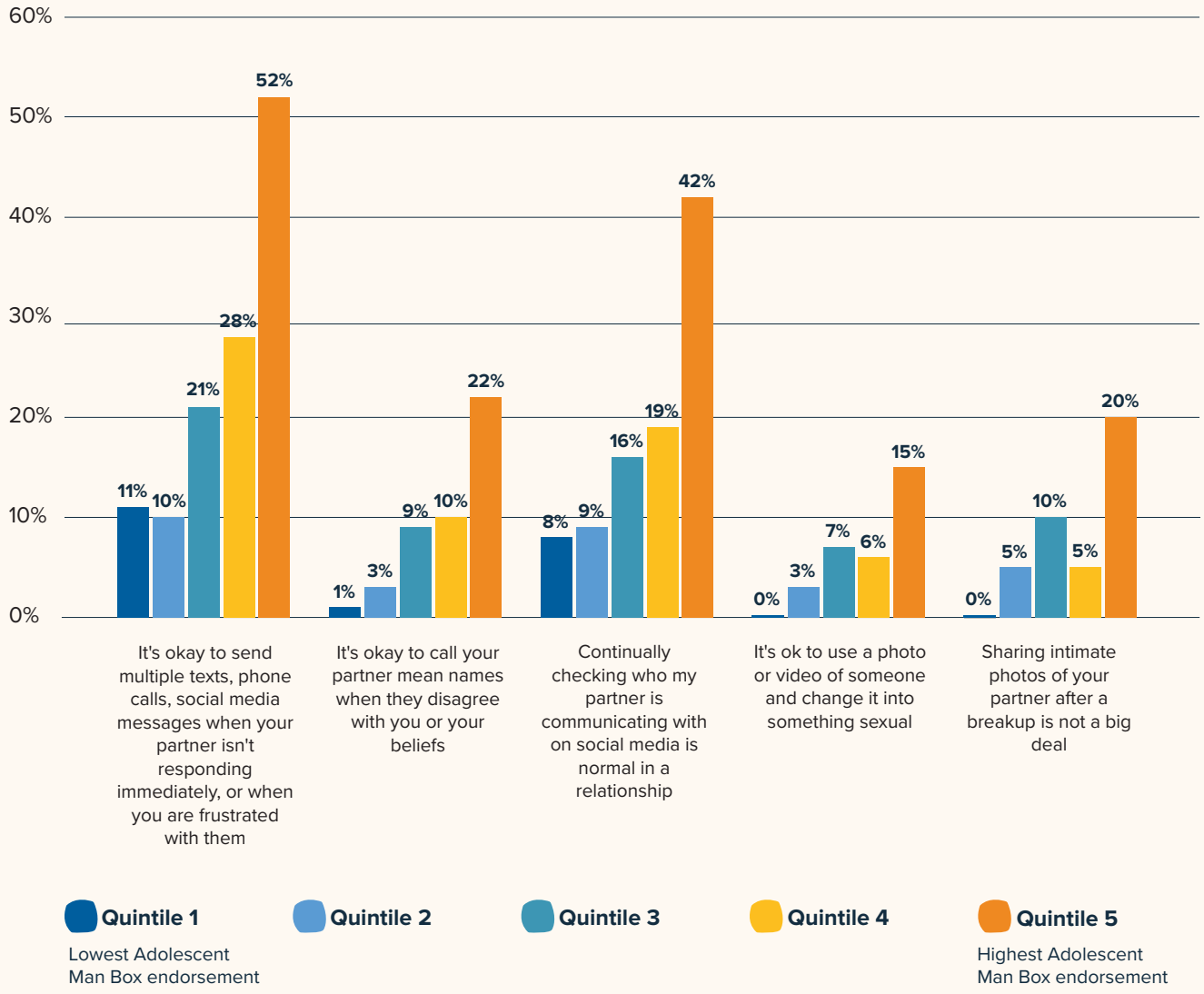


Figure 10: Proportion of boys who used physical violence, bullying or sexual harassment behaviours, by quintile (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported using each behaviour in the past month

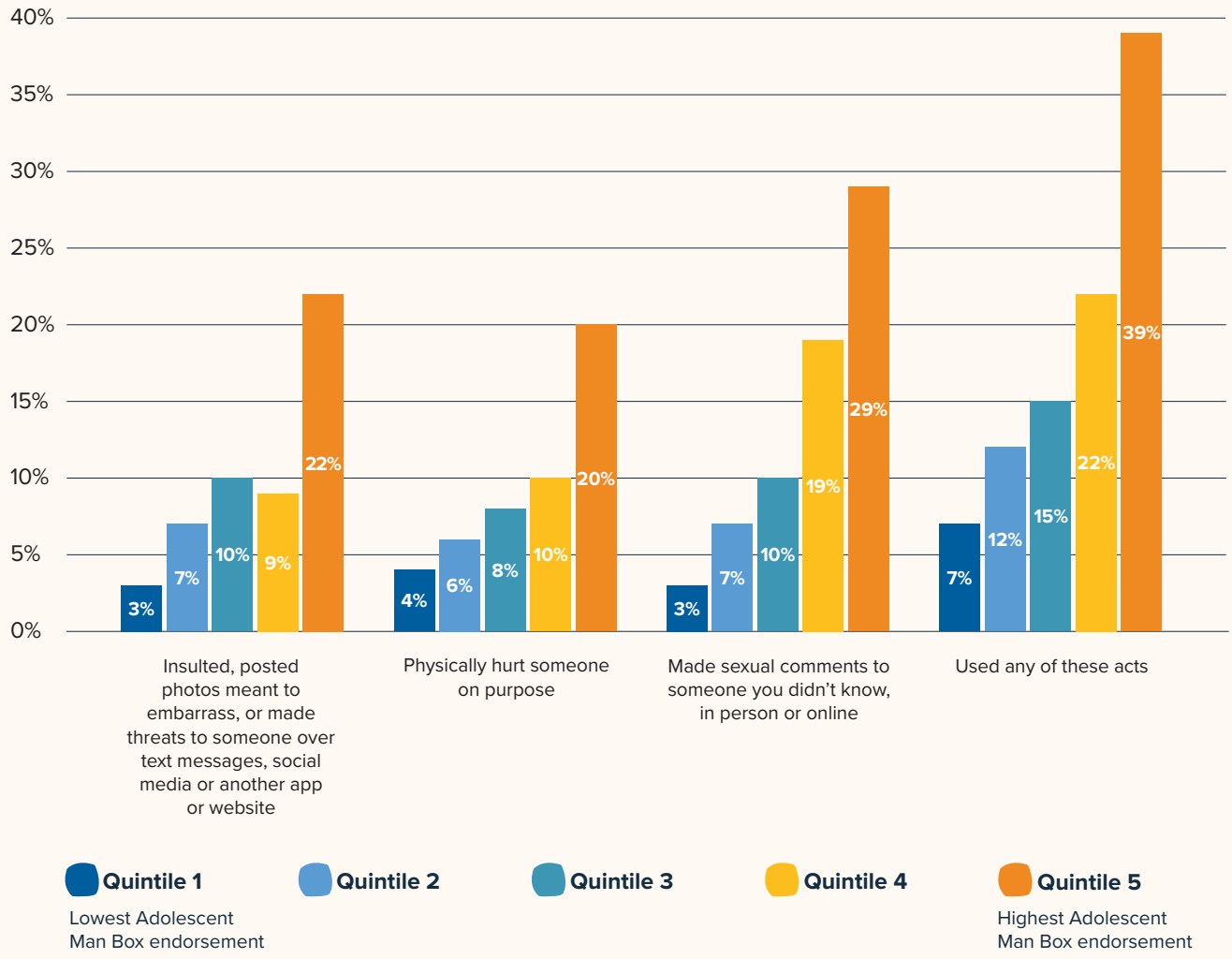
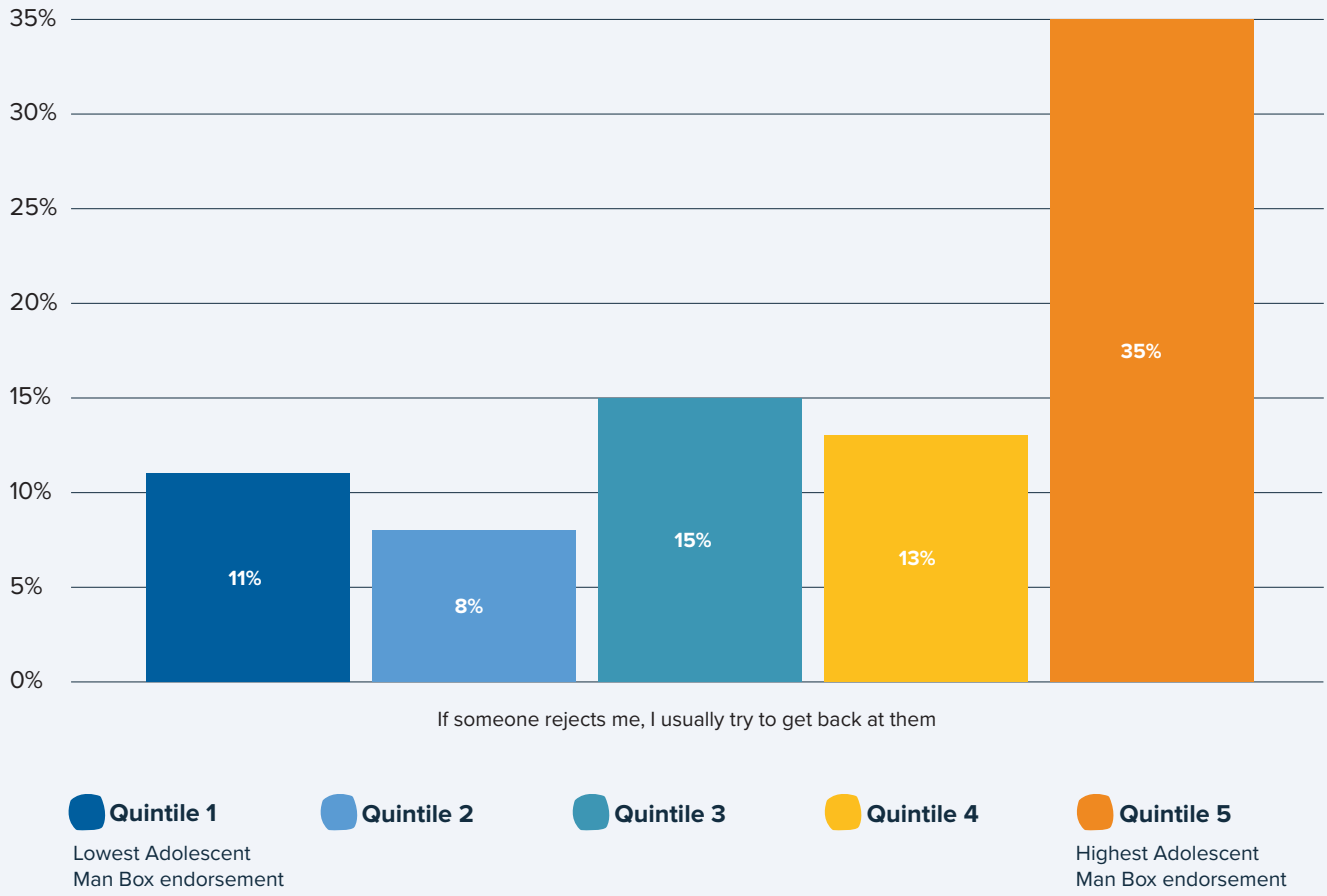


Figure 11: Proportion of boys who would probably retaliate if rejected, by quintile (n=640)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'If someone rejects me, I usually try to get back at them'



Finding 8:

Victimisation is a common experience in teenage life – but it's even worse for those who strongly endorse the Adolescent Man Box. And those who use aggressive acts are also more likely to have been victims themselves.

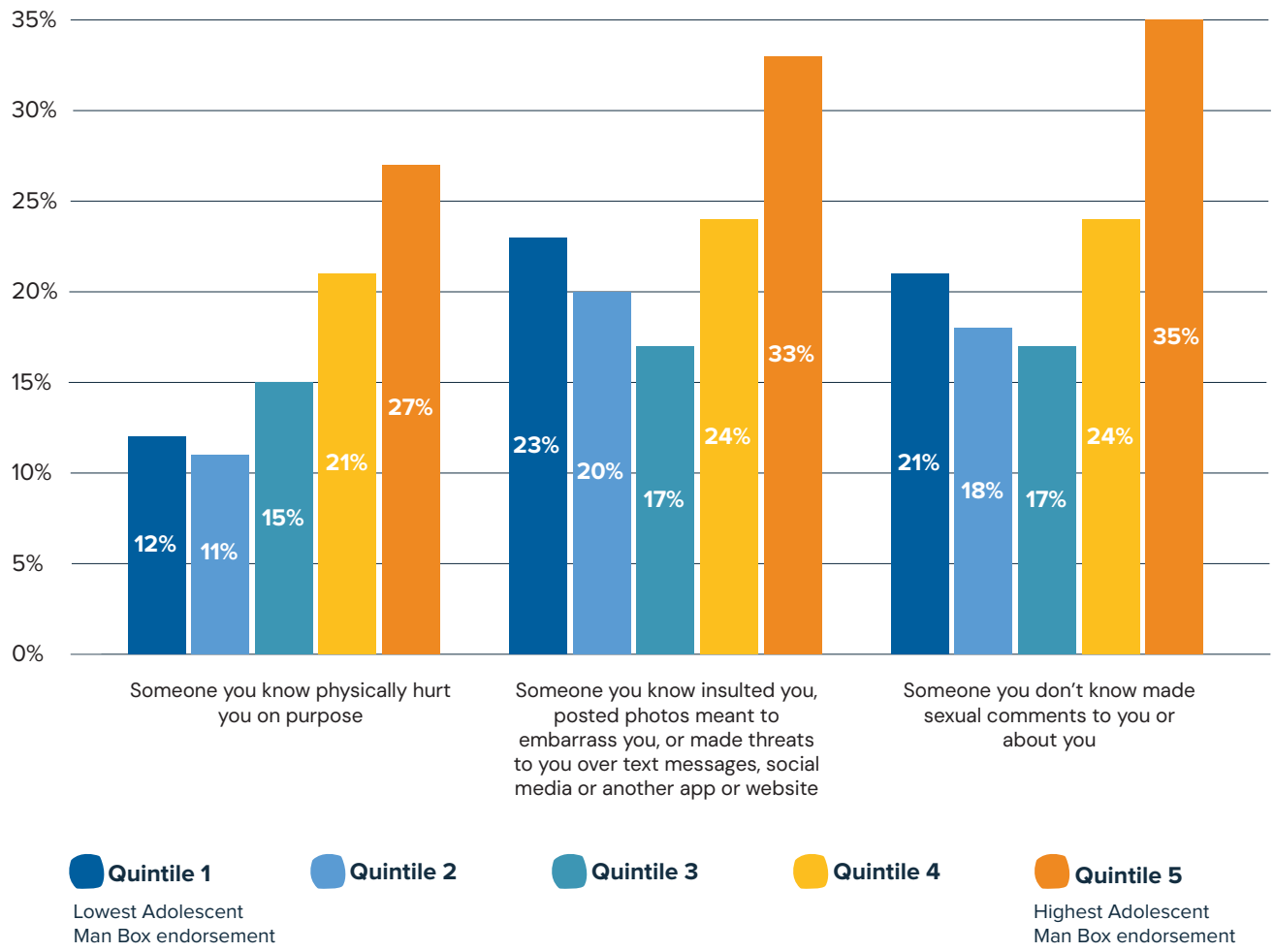
Two in five adolescents (41%) reported they had experienced victimisation (been physically hurt on purpose, insulted or threatened including online, or sexually harassed) in the past month, including 38% of boys and 45% of girls. The proportion of respondents of all genders who reported they had been *victimised* (41%) was higher than the proportion of respondents who reported they *had used* any of those aggressive acts (16%).

There was a clear relationship between the experience of victimisation and endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box, with boys who most strongly endorse rigid masculine norms also more likely to experience victimisation. For example, 27% of boys in quintile 5 had experienced being physically hurt on purpose in the past month compared with 12% of boys in quintile 1.

There was also a high degree of overlap between adolescents who use aggression and those who are victimised: of those respondents (of all genders) who reported they had used at least one of the forms of aggression in the past month, 83% reported they had been victimised in at least one of the specified ways in the past month. Of the adolescent boys who reported they had used aggression in the past month, 80% reported they had been victimised in the same period.

Figure 12: Proportion of boys who reported experiencing bullying, physical violence or sexual harassment behaviours, by quintile (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported experiencing each behaviour in the past month



Finding 9:

Most boys feel uncomfortable witnessing sexist comments or harassment, but the majority do not intervene. Nevertheless a significant minority do step up.

The vast majority of boys (95%) said they felt uncomfortable witnessing verbal or physical harassment of women and girls, and a third (33%) intervened. Around three quarters (78%) of boys were bothered when they witnessed harassment of a transgender person, and one in five (21%) intervened. Four in five boys (80%) who witnessed sexist comments towards women and girls indicated this left them feeling uncomfortable, and one in six (17%) intervened.

The research highlights an opportunity to help boys be active bystanders. It also highlights the need to address transphobia, since boys were far more likely to say they were not bothered to witness harassment of a transgender person (22% not bothered) compared to witnessing harassment of a girl or woman (5% not bothered). Whereas, girls were more consistently bothered by each of the scenarios.

Boys who most strongly endorse restrictive masculinity norms are less likely to intervene in all scenarios than those who least endorse masculine norms, and are also less likely to be bothered by such behaviours (for example, when witnessing sexist comments or jokes, 34% of boys in quintile 5 reported it didn't bother them, compared with 8% of boys in quintile 1).

Figure 13: Proportion of boys who responded in different ways to witnessing sexism and harassment

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported each bystander response the last time they were around teenage boys or men making sexist comments or jokes, or verbally or physically harassing others

	Not bothered	Bothered but did nothing	Bothered and did something
Sexist jokes or comments (n=419)	20%	61%	19%
Harassment of girl / woman (n=212)	5%	61%	34%
Harassment of transgender person (n=166)	22%	52%	26%

Figure 14: Proportion of girls who responded in different ways the last time they witnessed sexist jokes and harassment of others

Percentage of female respondents aged 14-18 who reported each bystander response the last time they were around teenage boys or men making sexist comments or jokes, or verbally or physically harassing others

	Not bothered	Bothered but did nothing	Bothered and did something
Sexist jokes or comments (n=559)	6%	65%	29%
Harassment of girl / woman (n=378)	1%	62%	38%
Harassment of transgender person (n=257)	5%	59%	36%

Pornography and image-based abuse

Finding 10:

A significant proportion of boys view pornography frequently, including aggressive and non-consensual acts – and this is even more likely for boys who most strongly endorse the Adolescent Man Box.

Nearly three in five (59%) adolescent boys have viewed pornography, and of these, around half view pornography once a month or more.

We also asked respondents who had viewed pornography if they had been exposed to a range of content which included someone being strangled (referred to commonly as being 'choked'), being treated aggressively (pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped or gagged), and being subjected to non-consensual acts.[3] Nearly two-thirds (63%) of those who had seen pornography said they had viewed one or more of these acts. We view these acts as harmful because of the risks associated with normalising aggression, lack of consent, and strangulation (which has significant health risks).

Boys with the strongest endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 5) were more likely to report viewing pornography frequently (70% who viewed pornography did so once per month or more). They were also more likely to have watched harmful acts in pornography. For example, 82% of boys in quintile 5 have watched any harmful act happening to a female, compared with 43% of boys in quintile 1, and 72% of boys in quintile 5 have seen something happening to someone without consent compared with 19% in quintile 1.

A note about sample size

In designing the survey, we made ethical decisions with participant wellbeing in mind to allow participants to opt-out of questions of a sensitive nature. This was important given respondents were as young as 14 years old. All respondents were asked an initial question – 'Have you ever seen pornography'. Respondents who indicated they had never seen pornography, were unsure if they'd seen pornography, or preferred not to say, were not asked further questions on this topic. This means we are only able to present data about frequency of use and nature of content for a smaller sample size. Quintile analysis involved yet smaller samples as this was only done for boys' data. For example, only 334 boys answered the question about pornography viewing frequency, and only 253 boys answered the question about viewing harmful acts in pornography. Therefore, it is best to focus on the relationship between the quintiles (ie the trend across the five quintiles) rather than focusing too heavily on any one quintile.

3 The survey included this explanation: *''Without consent' refers to something happening without the person's permission or against their will. This may include actions such as verbal pressuring, intimidation, physical force, tricking someone, using hidden cameras or upskirting, or when a person is asleep'*

Figure 15: Proportion of boys who had ever seen pornography and reported seeing specific harmful acts, by quintile (n=253)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported ever seeing pornography and reported seeing non-consensual acts, choking, or someone being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped or gagged in pornography

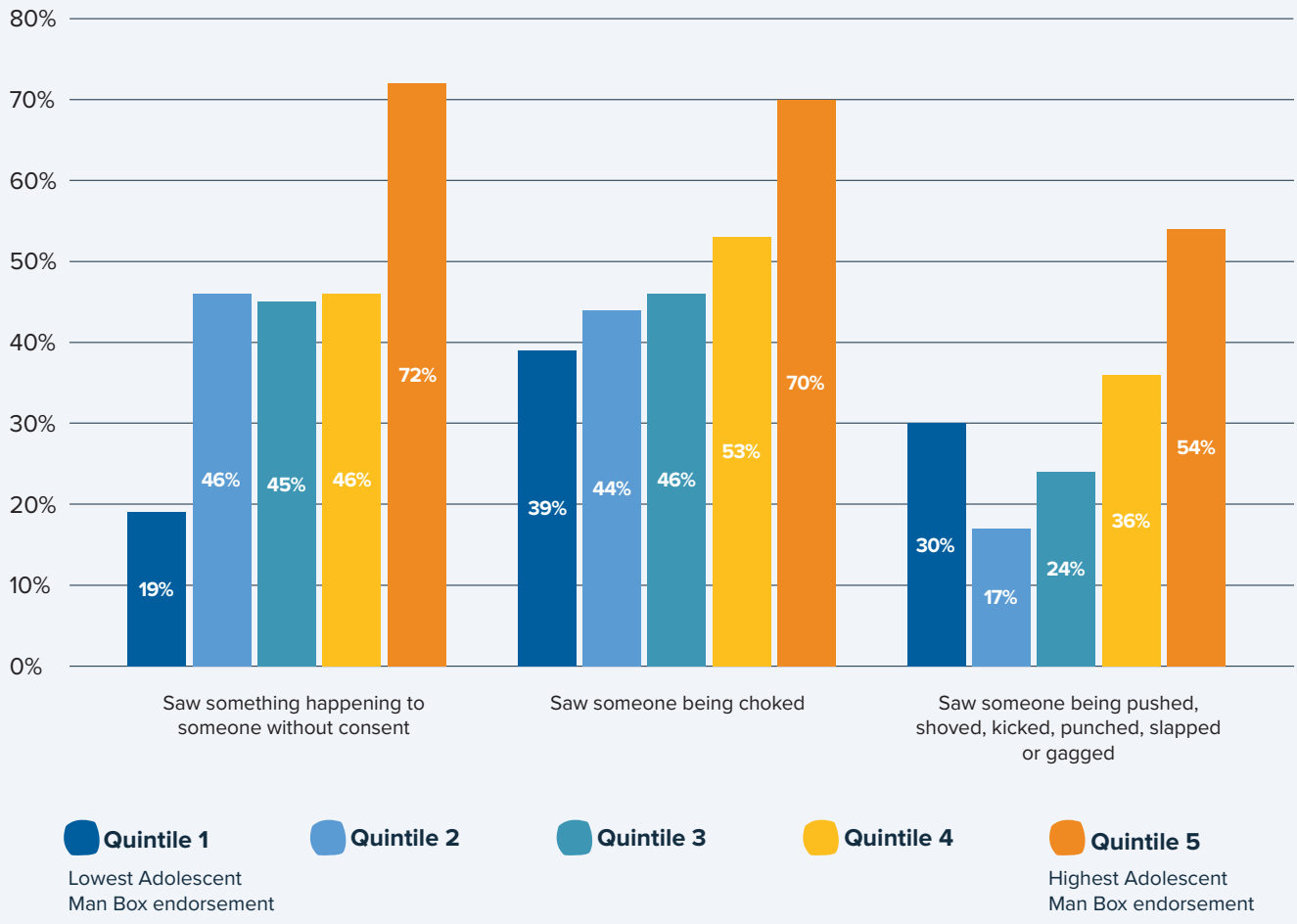
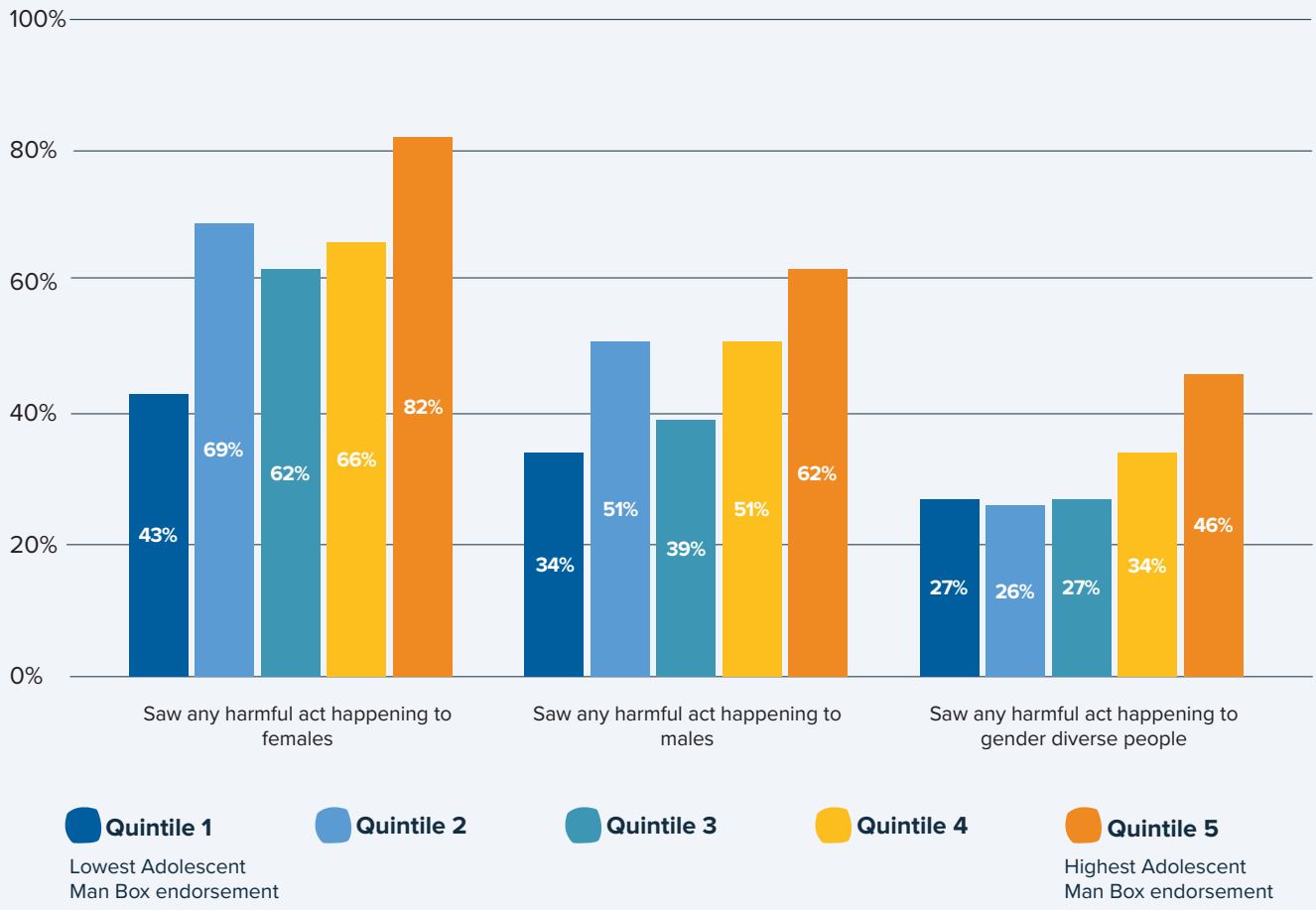


Figure 16: Proportion of boys who had ever seen pornography and reported seeing harmful acts happening to people of different genders, by quintile (n=253)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported ever seeing pornography and reported seeing non-consensual acts, choking, pushing, shoving, kicking, punching, slapping or gagging happening to each gender in pornography



Finding 11:

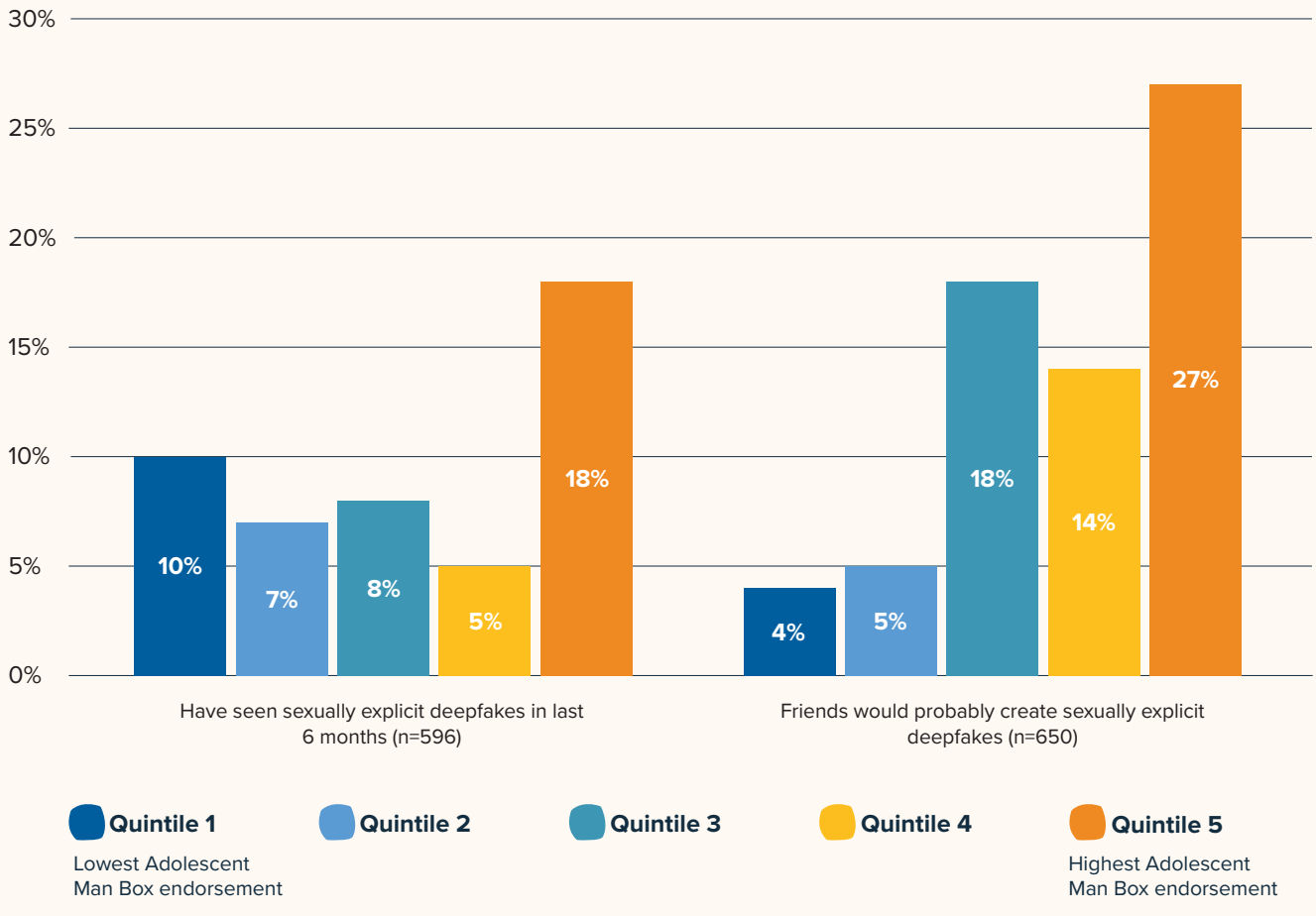
A tenth of adolescent boys have seen sexually explicit deepfakes of people they know and even more have friends who create this kind of image-based abuse material. Boys who most strongly endorse restrictive masculine norms are significantly more likely to have experience with this form of image-based abuse.

Exposure to image-based abuse is a real and growing aspect of adolescence in Australia. Almost 1 in 10 boys (9%) reported they had seen sexually explicit deepfakes of people they knew, and an even higher proportion of boys (13%) reported having friends who would create such material. We did not directly ask if boys had been involved themselves in creating sexually-explicit deepfakes (given a likely reluctance to admit to criminal behaviour) but association with friends involved in such activity provides a rough proxy for this, or at least an indication as to whether image-based abuse is part of their experience as an adolescent.

Those who strongly endorse rigid masculine norms were more likely to have experience with this form of image-based abuse. Boys in quintile 5 were more likely to report that they have seen deepfakes (18% compared with between 5% and 10% for the other quintiles). Boys in quintile 5 were also far more likely to agree that their friend would probably create fake nude images of people they know (27% compared with 4% of boys in quintile 1).

Figure 17: Proportion of boys who have seen image-based abuse material, or have friends who would create such material, by quintile

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported they have seen sexually explicit deepfake images of people they know in the last 6 months, and who agreed or strongly agreed that their friends would probably create sexually explicit deepfake images of people they know



Health and wellbeing

Finding 12:

Most adolescents appear to be experiencing mental health challenges – and boys seem particularly reluctant to seek help.

Adolescents in this study reported significant experience of poor mental health symptoms, consistent with a number of other studies focused on the mental health of young Australians. **Nearly four in five adolescents (78%) reported a poor mental health symptom over the past two weeks (73% of boys and 83% of girls)**. The most common symptom was little interest or pleasure in doing things, with 72% of the total sample reporting feeling this symptom in the past two weeks. More than three in five adolescents (62%) reported feeling down, depressed or hopeless over the last two weeks, and nearly one in five (17%) reported having thoughts of self-harm in that time.

While there is widespread experience of poor mental health symptoms across genders, and in fact girls reported a higher level of mental ill health, boys are significantly less likely than girls to seek help. More than one third of boys (36%) reported they had never sought help for an emotional or personal problem in the past six months, compared with 20% of girls.

Less than one third of boys (27%) reported seeking help more frequently than once per month compared with 50% of girls.

This gender difference in help-seeking may be partially explained by boys experiencing lower levels of poor mental health than girls, however it is worth noting that the question about help-seeking asks about a much longer period (6 months) than the question about mental health symptoms (2 weeks). It is also important to recognise that help-seeking is not limited to mental health problems. For example, it might include asking for advice about personal problems such as relationship issues, or questions about sex or pornography use.

Figure 18: Proportion of adolescents who sought support, by gender (n=1391)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who reported different frequencies of help seeking for an emotional or personal problem over the last 6 months

Help seeking	Boys	Girls
More frequent (once per month or more)	27%	50%
Less frequent (less than once per month)	37%	29%
Never	36%	20%

Finding 13:

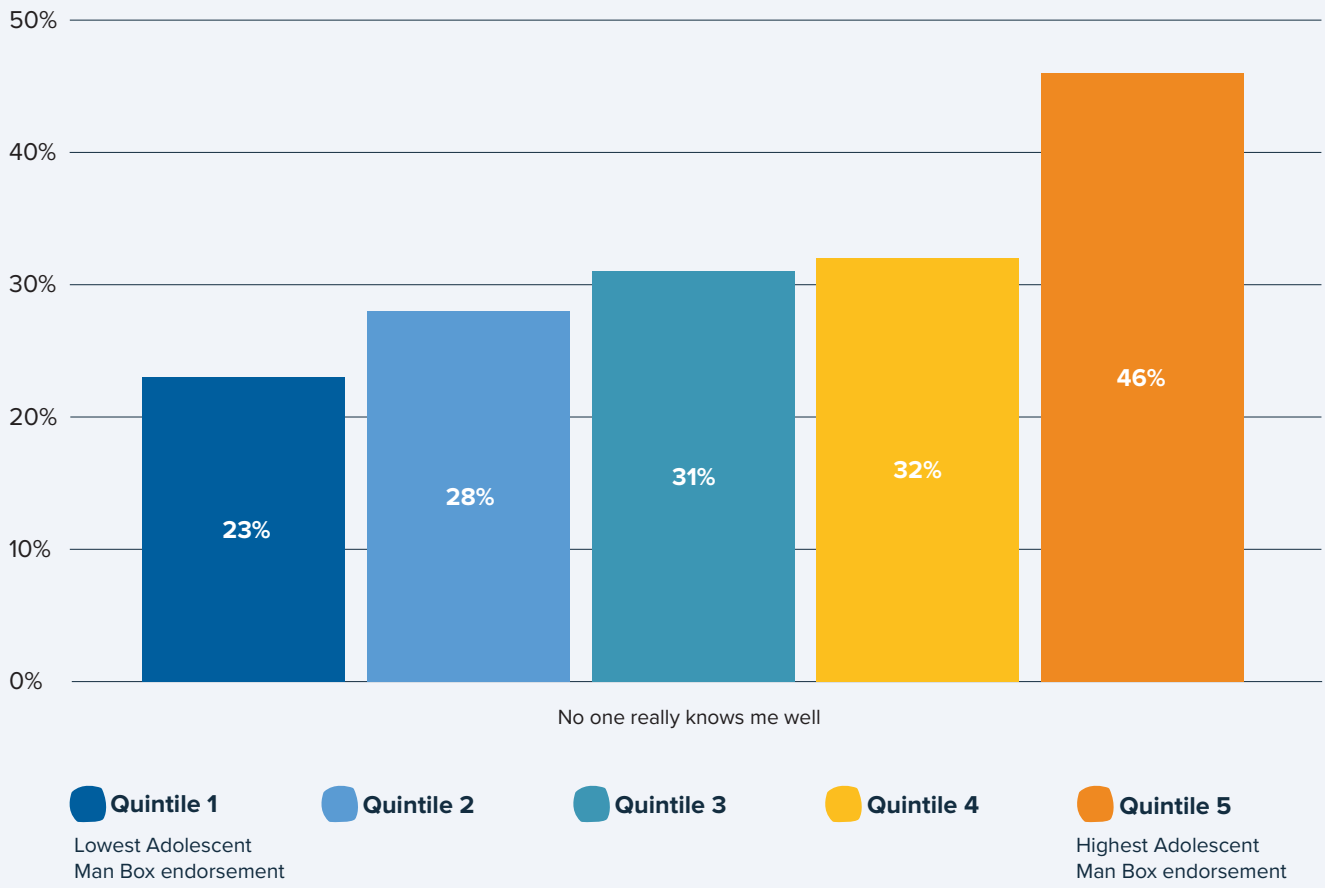
The more strongly adolescent boys hold rigid views about masculinity, the more likely they are to experience less positive outcomes themselves.

The more strongly boys endorsed the restrictive Adolescent Man Box rules, the more likely they were to have consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months (47% of boys in quintile 5 compared with 32% in quintile 1) and to have experienced gambling problems in the previous 12 months (31% of boys in quintile 5 have spent money on gambling compared with 8% of boys in quintile 1; and of these, 19% of boys in quintile 5 have experienced gambling problems in the last 12 months compared with 3% in quintile 1). Boys who most strongly endorse the Adolescent Man Box are also more likely to have been in a serious physical fight (33% of quintile 5 compared to 21% of quintile 1).

Endorsement of rigid masculine norms appears to have an association with poor mental health. Boys with the highest endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 5) were more likely than boys with the lowest endorsement to report any of the three poor mental health symptoms in the past two weeks (85% compared to 71%). They were also significantly less likely to agree they could be vulnerable with a friend (65% in quintile 5 compared to 89% in quintile 1), and twice as likely to agree that no one really knows them well (46% vs 23%). It is concerning that almost half the boys in quintile 5 agree that no one really knows them well.

Figure 19: Proportion of boys who feel no one really knows them well, by quintile (n=637)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'No one really knows me well'



Recommendations

Findings from this study highlight significant opportunities to improve the wellbeing of Australian adolescents and ensure they feel safe, connected, and hopeful about their future. Given the focus of The Men's Project at Jesuit Social Services, we place particular emphasis on preventing violence and promoting respectful behaviours among adolescent boys.

There are important opportunities to support adolescent boys to:

- recover and heal from experiences of violence and abuse;
- develop healthier responses to rejection and improve awareness of digital consent and surveillance;
- seek help for mental health concerns and troubling behaviours, such as harmful pornography use and gambling;
- reject all forms of violence and abuse, including image-based abuse, and feel confident intervening when witnessing sexist or abusive behaviour;
- normalise diverse, non-violent and inclusive expressions of masculinity; and
- build understanding of gender equality and respect for LGBTQIA+ peers.

To achieve these outcomes, we recommend the following actions:

1. **Strengthen violence prevention efforts** across schools and communities by ensuring programs reflect young people's real and contemporary experiences. This includes equipping practitioners to work with young people to address topics such as harmful pornography use, image-based abuse, digital surveillance, and transphobia, as well as to build key skills like emotional regulation, conflict resolution, bystander action and help-seeking.
2. **Scale up early intervention for boys at-risk of using harmful behaviours,** alongside investment in high-quality evaluation to inform the expansion of effective programs.
3. **Invest in healing and recovery services for children and young people impacted by violence or abuse,** ensuring these services are age-appropriate, accessible, and responsive across both physical and digital settings.
4. **Support parents and carers to talk with boys about sensitive and contemporary issues.** This includes creating practical tools, such as podcasts and conversation guides, on topics like rejection, consent, online behaviour, pornography, and masculinity.
5. **Make digital environments safer and more developmentally appropriate for adolescents,** by strengthening online safety regulation and increasing accountability for tech platforms that expose adolescents to harm.

The findings of this study taken together with related research and practice experience also highlight the need for broader system reforms. We recommend:

1. **Developing a five-year National Action Plan dedicated to children and young people who have experienced violence or abuse,** ensuring accountability to their voices and needs is central to the system's response.
2. **Strengthening the national evidence base by funding a mechanism to generate, share and apply high-quality evidence** that improves the impact and coordination of efforts to prevent and respond to boys' use of violence.

Introduction

Why this study - and why now?

Adolescents frequently appear in the news in Australia, often in troubling contexts. These include exposure to violent pornography, the creation of image-based abuse material involving peers ('deepfakes'), disrespectful treatment of female teachers, experiences of sexual assault, rising engagement with radical anti-feminist content, and concerning rates of poor mental health. While young people are often the subject of public discussion, their voices are less often heard directly. There is growing recognition of the importance of listening to children and adolescents, understanding their perspectives, and exploring the factors that shape their attitudes and behaviours.

In recent years, there has been growing recognition that rigid, traditional notions of masculinity contribute to harmful behaviours by some men and boys with devastating impacts on others – including violence against women and children, and targeted attacks on gay men and transgender people. At the same time, it is recognised that these rigid ideals can take a significant toll on men and boys themselves – contributing to poor mental health outcomes, emotional suppression and reduced help-seeking behaviour.

The Man Box research series by Jesuit Social Services (The Men's Project & Flood, 2018, 2024), has played a pivotal role in examining the ways social norms and personal expectations around being a "real man" in Australia correlate with concerning behaviours and outcomes including the use of violence.

The *Man Box* studies revealed that men who most strongly endorse "Man Box" beliefs are significantly more likely to use violence, experience poor mental health, and engage in risky behaviours such as problem gambling and excessive drinking. The research also established that adherence to Man Box beliefs had a stronger impact on these outcomes than other factors including their education levels, where they live or their cultural heritage. The research provides a compelling evidence base for policy, education and community action aimed at redefining what it means to be a man in healthier, more respectful and more equitable ways.

The *Adolescent Man Box* now turns our attention further upstream, to adolescents. Far less is known about what adolescent boys believe about what it means to be a man, what influences these beliefs, and how these beliefs are associated with a range of behaviours and life outcomes. There is also value in better understanding important issues impacting young Australians of all genders including intimate partner violence, bullying, mental health, social media and pornography. Early intervention with adolescents is key to reducing men's violence, improving mental health outcomes, and fostering more gender-equal communities. We must start by listening to what boys themselves are thinking, feeling and experiencing.

Adolescence – a critical period for intervention and prevention

Adolescence is a critical period of development during which attitudes, beliefs and behaviours take shape. It is a time marked by significant potential, with young people drawing on their strengths, identities and support systems to navigate challenges and shape their futures. At the same time, this period of rapid growth and self-discovery can bring increased vulnerability, particularly when young people are exposed to harmful environments, rigid social norms or messages that negatively impact their wellbeing and development.

Research shows that experiences during this time, including exposure to abuse, can affect brain development and have long-lasting effects on mental health, cognitive function and social outcomes in adulthood (Teicher & Samson, 2016). Attitudes that condone violence and reinforce rigid gender roles are often developed early in life and may persist into adulthood if not actively challenged during childhood and adolescence (AIHW, 2019).

Adolescence is not only a time of emotional and social change but also of increased curiosity and exploration. It is a key stage for identity formation (Rogers et al., 2021), during which young people become more aware of social norms, including gender roles and expectations. Boys begin to explore their place within peer groups, families and broader society, while developing an understanding of how they relate to others, including girls and women.

While adolescents are developing critical thinking skills and independence, they are also navigating complex social pressures and a greater exposure to risk. These can include risk-taking behaviours such as substance use and unsafe sexual behaviour (AIHW, 2021), and increasing mental health challenges, with suicide the leading cause of death among young Australians aged 15-24 (AIHW, 2025). These realities highlight the importance of early and sustained support that helps young people make informed, healthy choices and seek help when they need it.

In today's digital world, the influences shaping adolescent attitudes and behaviours are more diverse than ever. Social media and influencers, gaming communities and algorithm-driven content may be shaping minds as powerfully as schools or families (eSafety Commissioner, 2023). Online platforms expose boys to a wide range of content – including hypermasculine messaging and harmful gender stereotypes promoted by influencers in the 'manosphere' (eSafety Commissioner, 2023).[4] Some harmful content, such as misogynistic content and violent pornography, is easily accessible to adolescents.

However, social media also has the potential to promote benefits for adolescents through meaningful social connection, belonging and support in online communities (e-Safety Commissioner, 2024). Many adolescents use these platforms to access support, share their voices and engage in movements for social justice and equality. All of this highlights the opportunities and challenges facing teachers, parents and young people themselves to promote positive and healthy ways of relating.

At the same time, as a community, we are becoming more aware of the impact of violence by men and boys. Advocates and survivors have brought national attention to the lived experiences of many young women who have faced rape, sexual harassment and other forms of violence due to the actions of men and boys. These stories serve as urgent reminders of the need for systemic change and prevention work.

While efforts to engage adolescent boys in respectful relationships education, mental health support and violence prevention have expanded and there is growing evidence of their importance (Casey et al., 2022; Verbeek et al., 2023), such programs need to address the underlying causes of harmful behaviours to achieve their goals, including social norms that reward dominance or discourage emotional expression. Part of building our understanding of these underlying causes is seeking more information about what young people themselves believe and experience. The voices of young people must be central to any approach aiming to shift their attitudes and behaviours (VicHealth, 2017).

The *Adolescent Man Box* study seeks to contribute to addressing this gap – including by uncovering the perspectives of all genders. It provides new empirical insights into how boys aged 14-18 perceive masculinity, how much pressure they feel to conform to stereotypical masculine norms, and to what extent their beliefs about masculinity are associated with behaviours such as bullying, risk-taking and help seeking.

4 The *manosphere* is a network of online communities where boys and men discuss masculinity, gender roles, and men's issues. While some spaces focus on legitimate concerns about men's wellbeing, others spread misogynistic and anti-feminist views. The Australian eSafety Commissioner warns that parts of the manosphere are harmful, spreading anti-feminist and extremist content online that influences boys and young men.

Our Adolescent Man Box study acknowledges that gender is shaped by the society we all live in – and the norms related to masculinity are influenced and maintained over time not just by boys and men, but by all of us, often unconsciously. As decades of social science research have shown, gender is not simply biological, but rather it is a 'social construct' shaped by cultural, historical, and institutional forces. **Adolescents of all genders were therefore invited to participate in the survey.** While adolescent boys are the focus of the study and are subject to the deepest data analysis, it is important to understand community perceptions of masculinity, including the viewpoints of adolescent girls and non-binary individuals.

The Adolescent Man Box Study aims to:

- understand the level of personal endorsement by adolescents (boys, girls and non-binary individuals) of tightly defined and restrictive masculine norms (the 'Adolescent Man Box'),
- understand the social pressures that adolescents perceive related to the Adolescent Man Box,
- understand a diverse range of behaviours and life outcomes experienced by adolescents of all genders,
- and examine more deeply the links between endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box and a range of harmful attitudes, behaviours and life outcomes for adolescent boys.

In pursuing these aims, this research offers critical insights for practitioners, policymakers and educators to inform the design and delivery of programs and practices to promote respectful behaviours and wellbeing, address the use of violence, and contribute to broader national conversations about gender equality and the prevention of violence.

The findings of this study will have relevance for:

- school leaders and teachers;
- community sector organisations responsible for delivery of youth services and violence prevention initiatives;
- specialist domestic, family and sexual violence organisations;
- government departments responsible for policy and funding for education, youth services and violence prevention initiatives;
- parents and guardians (who could potentially be reached through touch points such as schools, libraries and community hubs);
- and other positive role models or mentors such as sports coaches.

We hope this study will serve as a catalyst for further exploration, investment and innovation in how Australia supports boys to grow into men who are emotionally healthy, respectful of others, and free to define masculinity in ways that suit them – not confine them.

About the Adolescent Man Box Study

What does the study examine?

Like the Man Box research (The Men's Project & Flood, 2024, 2018), the Adolescent Man Box study seeks to understand links between endorsement of rigid masculine norms and a range of outcomes and behaviours that can have negative impacts for individuals and those around them. Recognising the different age, stage of development and social context of adolescents, the Adolescent Man Box uses a different survey to the earlier adult research.

The survey tool developed specifically for the Adolescent Man Box study seeks to understand four key things:

1. ***The Adolescent Man Box:*** The survey collects information about adolescents' endorsement of an established set of 27 rules about adolescent masculinity, organised into 4 pillars, that together comprise 'the Adolescent Man Box'. The Adolescent Man Box uses a validated scale – the Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity scale – developed by researchers in the USA (Oransky & Fisher, 2009). In this report, we refer to this scale as 'the Adolescent Man Box' or 'Adolescent Man Box pillars and rules'. While we collected data for boys, girls and non-binary individuals related to their support for these rules, our deeper analysis focused on boys. The level of endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box was used to determine boys' position on a spectrum of endorsement – from quintile 1, representing the lowest endorsement to quintile 5, representing the highest endorsement. In addition to examining respondents' personal endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box, the survey also investigates the social pressure that adolescents of all genders perceive in relation to the Adolescent Man Box. *See Chapter 1.*
2. ***Self-reported behaviours and outcomes:*** The survey collects information about a range of self-reported behaviours related to violence, sexual harassment, risk-taking behaviours, and mental health. We collected information from all genders and have explored more deeply what this meant for adolescent boys. This deeper analysis for boys includes quintile analysis – to understand the relationship between adolescent boys' endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box rules (by quintile) and their self-reported behaviours and outcomes[5]. *See Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.*
3. ***Additional attitudes relevant to violence prevention:*** The survey also collects information on other attitudes of relevance to violence prevention. These were not included in the construction of the Adolescent Man Box in order to maintain the integrity of the validated scale used for that purpose. However, understanding these attitudes is an important part of the picture as we seek to understand opportunities to intervene earlier and prevent a range of concerning behaviours from occurring at the outset and/or from escalating. *See Chapter 2.*
4. ***Influences on attitudes:*** The survey also collects data that sheds light on how adolescents develop their attitudes around masculinity, and particularly understanding the rise of online forms of influence that were not as prevalent a decade ago. *See Chapter 3.*

For clarity, 'the Adolescent Man Box Study' refers to all four elements above, captured in the full survey. However, when we refer to 'the Adolescent Man Box', 'Adolescent Man Box rules', 'endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box' or 'Adolescent Man Box quintiles', we are referring only to the validated scale – that is, the Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale developed by Oransky and Fisher (2009, and described in point 1 above). We acknowledge the work of the researchers Matthew Oransky and Celia Fisher in developing the Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale. The term Adolescent Man Box is adopted in this report for simplicity and to align with our earlier adult Man Box research – it is not intended to undermine recognition of Oransky and Fisher as the authors of the scale.

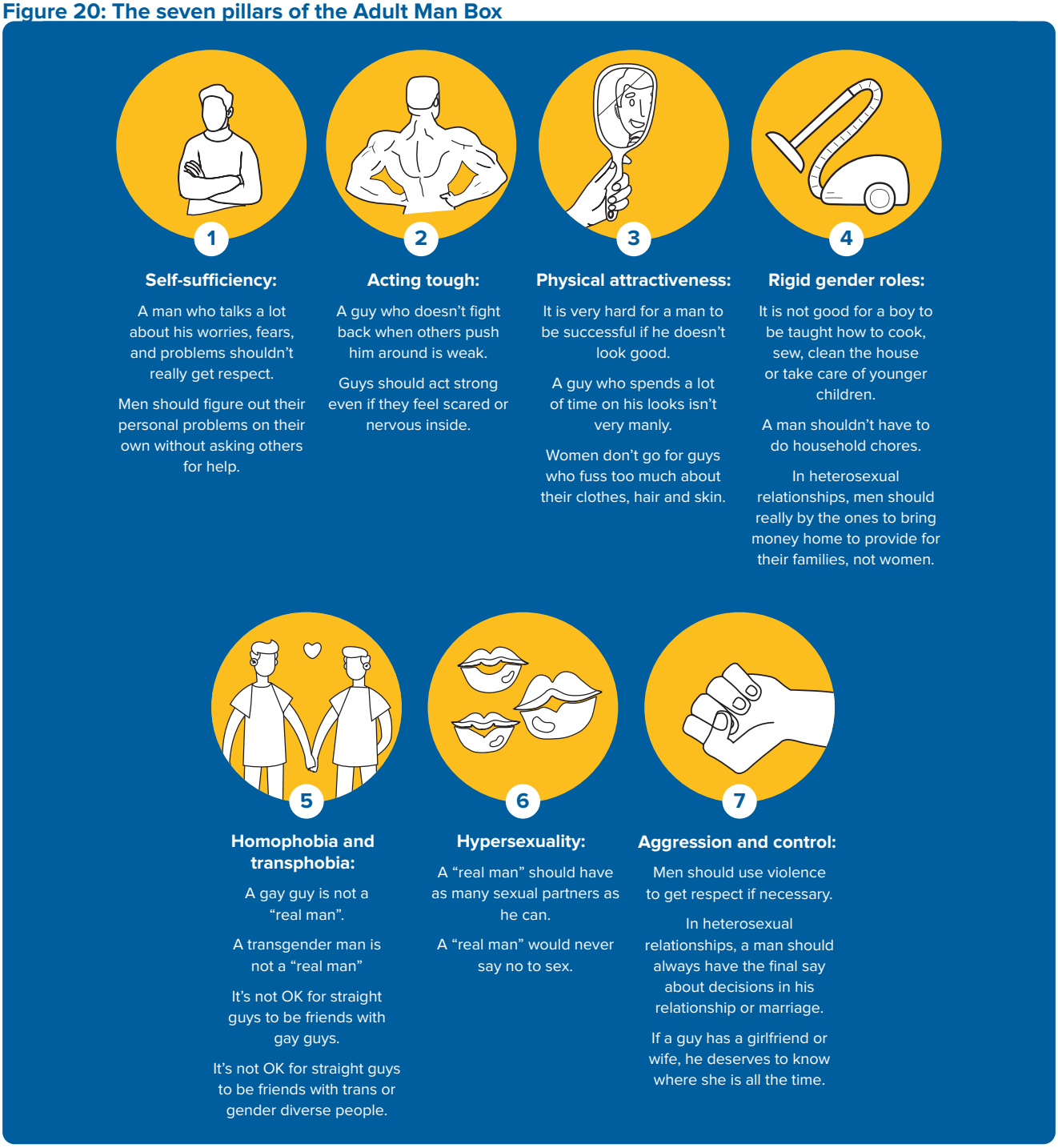
Defining the Adolescent Man Box

The Adolescent Man Box study builds on the Man Box research undertaken with adults, which was first developed by Promundo[6] (Heilman, Barker & Harrison 2017) and later undertaken in Australia by Jesuit Social Services' (The Men's Project & Flood, 2018, 2024). The Man Box studies, drawing on seven pillars of restrictive masculine norms (Fig. 20), have highlighted that rigid adherence to stereotypical forms of masculinity – such as being self-sufficient, acting tough and being hypersexual – is associated with a range of harmful behaviours and outcomes.

5 Please note, this shows association between these variables, not causation.

6 Now called Equimundo

Figure 20: The seven pillars of the Adult Man Box

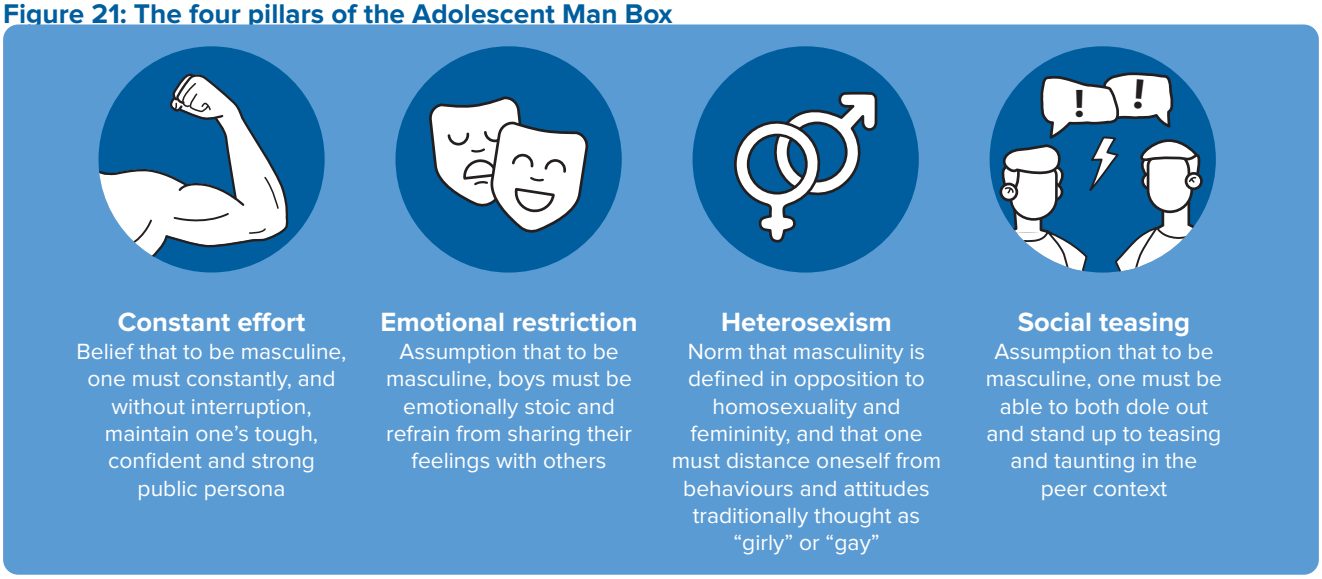


The Man Box research provides a useful starting point for undertaking similar work with adolescents. However, recognising the particular developmental stage of adolescent boys, Oransky and Fisher's scale was substituted in for the Promundo survey. This scale, which was developed with and for adolescents, elicits responses to 27 messages which are structured around four pillars (Fig. 21):

1. **Constant effort to be manly:** Boys must maintain a strong and confident persona to appear manly.
2. **Emotional restriction:** Masculinity involves hiding emotions and remaining emotionally invulnerable.
3. **Heterosexism:** Masculinity involves avoiding behaviours traditionally considered feminine or "gay".
4. **Social teasing:** Boys must be able to tease their friends and stand up to such teasing when it is directed at them in

order to be masculine.

Figure 21: The four pillars of the Adolescent Man Box



Responses to 27 rules under these four pillars were used to calculate Adolescent Man Box scores, illustrating the extent to which adolescents endorsed rigid masculine norms.

Using a validated scale like the one developed by Oransky and Fisher (2009) ensures that the elements being measured are conceptually sound and empirically tested. This enhances the robustness of the study, building on established theoretical foundations and allowing for consistent measurement across participants and contexts. Adopting the validated scale in full is important to preserve its integrity and to avoid introducing bias. For this reason, we have kept the validated scale intact (apart from some minor changes to wording), and have examined other attitudes (such as attitudes about violence) separately.

Implementing the survey

The survey was completed anonymously online by 1401 respondents aged 14-18 years, over a five-week period from 6 March to 8 April 2025.

The sample includes 655 boys, 736 girls, and 10 non-binary respondents. No respondents identified as transgender. Respondents were recruited by online panel providers either directly (n=681, all 16-18-year-olds) or via their parents/guardians (n=370 14-15-year-olds; n=350 16-18-year-olds).

Adolescent Man Box Scores and Quintiles

As with the adult Man Box series, an 'Adolescent Man Box score' was calculated for each of the 655 male respondents. These scores are composite scores reflecting the level of endorsement of the 27 rules comprising the Adolescent Man Box (strongly disagree received one point, disagree received two points, agree received three points, and strongly agree received four points). The composite score for each respondent was calculated by adding the scores for each question and dividing by 27 (27 being the number of contributing questions). The Adolescent Man Box scores therefore have a minimum value of 1.0 and a maximum value of 4.0. The higher the Adolescent Man Box score, the higher the personal endorsement of Adolescent Man Box rules.

Once we established Adolescent Man Box scores, we could then divide respondents into five 'quintiles', with the lowest-scoring 20% in quintile 1 (those with weakest endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box) and the highest-scoring 20% in quintile 5 (those with strongest Adolescent Man Box endorsement).[7] These quintiles allowed us to understand more clearly how endorsement of stereotypical masculine norms was associated with different behaviours and outcomes[8]. While there are alternative approaches to understand these relationships - such as regression analyses[9] - for the purposes of addressing our research questions the use of quintile analysis lends itself to results that are easy to interpret.

7 Each quintile represents a fifth of the range of Adolescent Man Box scores, not a fifth of respondents. In other words, the first quintile represents the lowest fifth of the range of Man Box scores, the second quintile represents the second fifth of the range, and so on. Respondents with identical scores were placed in the same quintile (rather than arbitrarily separating them into two different quintiles), which is why the quintiles do not have an identical number of survey respondents. Each quintile had approximately 130 respondents (ranging from 114 to 139).

8 Please note, quintile analysis shows association between variables, not causation.

9 Regression analysis was undertaken with survey data from the Man Box 2018 study. See Unpacking the Man Box report (The Men's Project & Flood, 2020).

Study limitations

Sample size and representation – While the overall sample is 1401 adolescents, subgroup sizes, particularly when broken down by gender and quintile, are smaller and may limit generalisability of some findings. Quintile analysis was undertaken for the 655 boys, meaning each quintile was approximately 130 respondents (ranging from 114 to 139). However, quintile counts were lower if boys opted out of questions - such as the pornography questions. The survey used a non-probability, opt-in online panel method, which can limit representation of certain groups (e.g. non-English speakers). To enhance diversity, participants were drawn from multiple panel providers. The final sample broadly aligns with key population demographics such as age and gender.

Response accuracy – As with all online surveys, there is a possibility of inaccurate, inattentive or biased responses. The study included screening, checks for unusual response patterns (such as completing the survey too quickly or providing the same answer to scale questions), and data cleaning (e.g. removing duplicate or low-quality responses). Some respondents would have completed the survey on a parent's device, which may have influenced responses to more sensitive questions. Social desirability bias was managed through use of an anonymous and online format, repeated reminders about anonymity, and using descriptive and non-judgmental words for sensitive topics.

Validity of survey questions – The survey included questions from validated tools as well as new items that had not been formally validated. In some instances, shorter or adapted versions of established measures were used to manage survey length and avoid burden for adolescent respondents. Care was taken to pre-test the survey with young people to ensure the questions were sensitively and clearly worded.

Association, not causation – The report highlights relationships between endorsement of Adolescent Man Box rules and other variables, including behaviours and wellbeing. While some of these relationships are cause for concern, these findings reflect associations only and should not be interpreted as evidence of causality.

Lack of intersectional analysis – It was beyond the scope of the study to comprehensively consider the role of intersectional forms of privilege and oppression. We did not analyse individual characteristics such as race, sexuality or ability. We see this as an important area for future research, including through qualitative methods.

Further information is provided in the appendices:

- Detailed demographic characteristics of the survey sample are included in Appendix B
- Further detail about the study methodology is contained in Appendix C
- Survey questions and their sources are included in Appendix D
- Key findings are presented throughout the body of this report, and more granular data appears in the data tables in Appendix E

Our understanding of what drives behaviour

This research is grounded in a commitment to preventing harmful behaviours by boys and men that can cause serious harm to others and lead to poor outcomes for the individuals themselves. We acknowledge that behaviour change is complex, non-linear, and shaped by a range of intersecting influences.

Our work at The Men's Project is informed by behaviour change theories, which suggest that behaviour is shaped by several key factors: **motivation** (influenced by attitudes, beliefs, values, and personal experiences), **capability** (such as knowledge and skills), and **opportunity** (including social norms and broader environmental or institutional contexts). These theories have been widely used to understand and influence behaviours in areas like smoking, alcohol use, and sexual health. We apply the same principles to explore how attitudes, social pressures, personal experiences, and capabilities influence the behaviour of boys and men.

While attitudes are important, and can influence actions, we recognise that the relationship between attitudes and behaviour is not straightforward. Sometimes attitudes have a strong influence on behaviours, but changes in attitudes do not always result in behavioural changes. Furthermore, behaviour change does not always begin with attitude change; in fact, sometimes behaviour change comes first. For example, consistently engaging in respectful behaviour, particularly when supported by peers or role models, can lead to shifts in underlying beliefs over time. Understanding and leveraging these dynamics is central to our approach to the prevention of harmful behaviour.

We acknowledge the role that personal experiences of trauma (including past or ongoing experiences of abuse and neglect) can play in the shaping of motivations, capabilities and behaviours. We believe that to effectively prevent the use of harmful behaviours, and to promote the use of healthier ones, we must consider a range of factors including personal experiences and the broader social norms and attitudes that shape behaviour.

In this report, we distinguish between attitudes and social pressure. While these can overlap – especially when the attitudes themselves are about what certain groups of people should or should not do – we treat them as conceptually distinct.

Attitudes refer to individuals' personal beliefs or views, including the extent to which they personally endorse certain ideas. To explore these, we ask respondents to rate their agreement with statements that begin with *'In my opinion'*. For example: *'In my opinion, teenage boys should try to appear manly in almost all situations'.*

Social pressure refers to perceptions of what most people believe or expect. We explore this by asking respondents to rate their agreement with statements beginning with *'Most people in Australia believe'*. For example: *'Most people in Australia believe teenage boys should try to appear manly in almost all situations'.*

Notes about language

- When referring to adolescents who identify as **boys**, we use the terms 'adolescent boys', 'teenage boys', 'boys', or 'male respondents'. This includes cis boys and transgender boys.
- When referring to adolescents who identify as **girls**, we use the terms 'adolescent girls', 'teenage girls', 'girls', or 'female respondents'. This includes cis girls and transgender girls.
- When referring to adolescents who identify as **non-binary**, we use the terms 'non-binary adolescents', 'non-binary individuals', or 'non-binary respondents'.
- When referring to people who identify as girls or women, of unknown age, we use the term **'female'**.
- When referring to people who identify as boys or men, of unknown age, we use the term **'male'**.

Attitudes

Chapter 1 – The Adolescent Man Box: attitudes about adolescent masculinity

Introduction

The Adolescent Man Box highlights the extent to which adolescents (with particular attention to adolescent boys) endorse restrictive and stereotypical norms of masculinity across four thematic pillars: constant effort to be manly, emotional restriction, heterosexism, and social teasing.

We asked respondents how much they personally agreed with the each of the 27 rules making up Oransky and Fisher's (2009) validated scale. Each of the messages was introduced with the words *"In my opinion"*, and respondents were asked to indicate whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed.

We also asked respondents about the level of social pressure they perceived on teenage boys around adherence to rigid masculine norms, by presenting statements introduced with the words *"Most people in Australia believe"*.

The questions were posed to all respondents – boys, girls and non-binary – but, in light of our focus as part of our work at The Men's Project, our analysis largely focuses on what this means for adolescent boys.

Key findings

Personal endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box

Figure 1.1 shows the level of personal endorsement with each of the rules – for the total sample (including non-binary respondents), for boys and for girls. Figure 1.2 presents the five rules that were most strongly endorsed by adolescents and the five rules that were least strongly endorsed by adolescents.

Figure 1.1: Proportion of adolescents who personally endorsed Adolescent Man Box rules, by gender (n=1401)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed that 'In my opinion'

Adolescent Man Box rules	Boys	Girls	Total*
Pillar 1: Constant effort to be manly			
A teenage boy should always seem as manly as other boys that he knows	37%	11%	25%
A teenage boy should never back down from a challenge in public	25%	10%	18%
Acting manly should be the most important goal for teenage boys	26%	8%	17%
A teenage boy must always appear confident even if he isn't	44%	15%	30%
No matter what happens, a teenage boy should seem strong to others	43%	13%	29%
Getting made fun of helps teenage boys become tough	32%	15%	24%
Teenage boys should try to appear manly in almost all situations	38%	14%	27%
Pillar 2: Emotional restriction			
It's weird for a teenage boy to talk about his feelings with other teenage boys	34%	14%	24%
When a teenage boy has a fear, he should keep it to himself	22%	5%	14%
It's hard to respect a teenage boy who shows his feelings	14%	5%	10%
If a teenage boy has hurt feelings he should hold it in	23%	5%	15%
It is not a teenage boy's job to comfort a friend who is upset	13%	6%	10%
It's not important for teenage boys to listen to each other's problems	7%	2%	4%
Teenage boys should not talk about their worries with each other	12%	2%	7%
Pillar 3: Heterosexism			
A teenage boy who wears nail polish is hard to take seriously	53%	24%	40%
It's embarrassing to have a lot of gay friends	33%	12%	23%
Being thought of as gay makes a teenage boy seem like less of a man	48%	26%	38%
It would be embarrassing for a teenage boy to say that he is interested in being a hairdresser	25%	12%	19%
A good way to seem manly is to not act gay	47%	30%	39%
A teenage boy should be embarrassed if someone says he "runs like a girl"	40%	16%	29%
There is something wrong if a teenage boy wants to do activities usually done by girls	27%	12%	20%
Teenage boys should never act like a girl	47%	24%	36%
Pillar 4: Social teasing			
A teenage boy should be able to take teasing from his friends, even if it's mean or degrading	33%	10%	22%
There's nothing wrong with a teenage boy who picks on his friends, even if they get upset	15%	6%	11%
It's normal for teenage boys to make fun of their friends	62%	54%	58%
In order to fit in, teenage boys must be able to tease other teenage boys	24%	13%	19%
Teenage boys do not pick on each other to be mean	54%	35%	45%

**includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Figure 1.2: Adolescent Man Box rules with the highest and lowest personal endorsement

The five Adolescent Man Box rules with the highest proportion of endorsement, and the five rules with the lowest proportion of endorsement, by respondents aged 14-18

Highest personal endorsement	Lowest personal endorsement
It's normal for teenage boys to make fun of their friends (58% agreed/strongly agreed)	It's not important for teenage boys to listen to each other's problems (4% agreed/strongly agreed)
Teenage boys do not pick on each other to be mean (45% agreed/strongly agreed)	Teenage boys should not talk about their worries with each other (7% agreed/strongly agreed)
A teenage boy who wears nail polish is hard to take seriously (40% agreed/strongly agreed)	It's hard to respect a teenage boy who shows his feelings (10% agreed/strongly agreed)
A good way to seem manly is to not act gay (39% agreed/strongly agreed)	It is not a teenage boy's job to comfort a friend who is upset (10% agreed/strongly agreed)
Being thought of as gay makes a teenage boy seem like less of a man (38% agreed/strongly agreed)	There's nothing wrong with a teenage boy who picks on his friends, even if they get upset (11% agreed/strongly agreed)

We found that **71% of boys, and 35% of girls, agreed (that is, agreed or strongly agreed) with at least half of the 27 Adolescent Man Box rules**. Broken down for each pillar, we found:

- For pillar 1 – Constant effort to be manly: 73% of boys, and 36% of girls, agreed with at least half of these rules
- For pillar 2 – Emotional restriction: 57% of boys, and 26% of girls, agreed with at least half of these rules
- For pillar 3 – Heterosexism: 74% of boys, and 43% of girls, agreed with at least half of these rules
- For pillar 4 – Social teasing: 75% of boys, and 52% of girls, agreed with at least half of these rules

The findings suggest that while many boys do not feel bound by traditional norms, a significant proportion do still feel pressure to conform, especially in ways that maintain toughness and reject "feminine" characteristics (Fig. 1.1).

Adolescent boys most strongly rejected traditional masculinity norms related to emotional restriction:

- Only 7% of boys agreed that it is unimportant for them to listen to each other's problems; and
- just 13% agreed that it is not their role to comfort a friend who is upset.

In good news, these findings suggest most boys recognise the value of emotional connection and empathy.

However, this rejection of emotional restriction stands in contrast to the high levels of endorsement for rules in other domains - especially those related to heterosexism and social teasing:

- Nearly half of boys surveyed (48%) believed that being thought of as gay makes them seem like less of a man, and 47% agreed they should never act like a girl.
- Social teasing appears to be a way of life for the majority of boys, with 62% agreeing it's normal for boys to make fun of their friends, and 54% denying that teasing is meant to be mean. Boys may consider teasing to be a normal form of 'banter'.

Adolescent boys also revealed a strong internalised pressure to constantly act manly, with a significant proportion endorsing the need to project confidence, strength, and toughness. Notably:

- 43% of boys believed they must appear strong no matter what.
- 44% said they should always appear confident even if they're not.
- 38% felt boys should try to appear manly in almost all situations.

Importantly, girls overwhelmingly rejected the Adolescent Man Box rules (Fig. 1.1):

- For every Adolescent Man Box statement, a significantly higher proportion of boys agreed with the statement than girls, suggesting a gender divide in perceptions of what adolescent masculinity should look like.
- This was particularly so in relation to the importance of being manly. Girls' agreement with statements in this pillar ranged from 8-15%, whereas boys' level of agreement with these statements was over two times higher, ranging from 25-44%.
- Of the 27 Adolescent Man Box statements, there were only six statements where girls' agreement exceeded 15% - like boys, girls were more willing to accept that social teasing amongst boys was not intended to be mean (35%) and that it was normal for teenage boys to make fun of their friends (54%). Other higher-scoring responses from girls came under the heterosexism pillar, particularly around acting gay or like a girl, affecting manliness. For example, 30% of girls agreed that a good way to seem manly is to not act gay, 26% agreed that being thought of as gay makes a teenage boy seem like less of a man, and 24% agreed that teenage boys should never act like a girl.

When we analysed the results for boys of different ages, we found variation between younger and older boys (Fig. 1.3):

- Normalisation of social teasing amongst boys appeared to increase with age: agreement by older adolescent boys was higher than younger peers for four of the five statements in the social teasing pillar. The biggest difference was for the statement that 'A teenage boy should be able to take teasing from his friends, even if it's mean or degrading', with 38% of older boys agreeing, compared with 27% of younger boys.
- For all other pillars, however, endorsement was notably lower for the older group. There were particularly stark differences for the statements, 'A teenage boy should always seem as manly as other boys that he knows' (46% of younger boys agreed compared to 31% of older boys) and 'Teenage boys should never act like a girl' (56% of younger boys agreed compared to 39% of older boys). This may suggest that some views soften with maturity and social experience – and may highlight a window of critical vulnerability in the early teenage years when identity pressures peak.
- The only rule outside the social teasing pillar that was more strongly endorsed by the older group in fact still relates to teasing: that getting made fun of helps teenage boys to become tough (35% of older boys agreed compared to 28% of younger boys).

Pressure to be strong all the time

"Boys put pressure on themselves to be physically and mentally strong all the time when this is not possible without harming mental health."

Reflection provided by an adolescent boy who participated in a workshop on masculinities run by The Men's Project between 2023-2025. This was not obtained as part of the Adolescent Man Box Study.

Figure 1.3: Proportion of boys who personally endorsed Adolescent Man Box rules, by age grouping (n=655)

Percentage of male survey respondents aged 14-15 and 16-18 who agreed or strongly agreed that 'In my opinion...'

Adolescent Man Box rules	Boys 14-15	Boys 16-18
Pillar 1: Constant effort to be manly		
A teenage boy should always seem as manly as other boys that he knows	46%	31%
A teenage boy should never back down from a challenge in public	29%	23%
Acting manly should be the most important goal for teenage boys	30%	23%
A teenage boy must always appear confident even if he isn't	49%	41%
No matter what happens, a teenage boy should seem strong to others	46%	41%
Getting made fun of helps teenage boys become tough	28%	35%
Teenage boys should try to appear manly in almost all situations	40%	36%
Pillar 2: Emotional restriction		
It's weird for a teenage boy to talk about his feelings with other teenage boys	39%	30%
When a teenage boy has a fear, he should keep it to himself	27%	18%
It's hard to respect a teenage boy who shows his feelings	15%	14%
If a teenage boy has hurt feelings he should hold it in	24%	23%
It is not a teenage boy's job to comfort a friend who is upset	15%	11%
It's not important for teenage boys to listen to each other's problems	10%	4%
Teenage boys should not talk about their worries with each other	13%	11%
Pillar 3: Heterosexism		
A teenage boy who wears nail polish is hard to take seriously	58%	50%
It's embarrassing to have a lot of gay friends	38%	30%
Being thought of as gay makes a teenage boy seem like less of a man	50%	46%
It would be embarrassing for a teenage boy to say that he is interested in being a hairdresser	32%	20%
A good way to seem manly is to not act gay	48%	46%
A teenage boy should be embarrassed if someone says he "runs like a girl"	45%	36%
There is something wrong if a teenage boy wants to do activities usually done by girls	34%	23%
Teenage boys should never act like a girl	56%	39%
Pillar 4: Social teasing		
A teenage boy should be able to take teasing from his friends, even if it's mean or degrading	27%	38%
There's nothing wrong with a teenage boy who picks on his friends, even if they get upset	16%	14%
It's normal for teenage boys to make fun of their friends	59%	64%
In order to fit in, teenage boys must be able to tease other teenage boys	23%	25%
Teenage boys do not pick on each other to be mean	50%	57%

**includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Social Pressure regarding Adolescent Man Box rules

As with the adult Man Box, we wanted to understand how respondents' personal endorsement of rules about restrictive masculinity compared with the level of *social pressure* they perceived related to adherence to those rules. The previous research with adults suggested that men's personal endorsement of rigid masculine norms was lower than their perception of societal expectations for these norms. We wanted to understand if this was also the case with adolescents.

Unlike the adult Man Box, we did not examine social pressure in relation to all of the pillars. We obtained feedback during initial testing of the Adolescent Man Box survey that asking about social pressure in relation to all 27 statements was repetitive and confusing for the adolescents who completed the first, longer version of the survey. To address this, we chose a subset of statements (the seven statements making up Pillar 1: Constant effort to be manly) to examine social pressure. We chose this pillar because we felt it was the best proxy for the Adolescent Man Box as a whole and it was assessed as having strong validity by Oransky and Fisher (2009).[10]

To understand adolescents' perception of what society expects, statements from the 'Constant effort to be manly' pillar were introduced with the words *'Most people in Australia believe that...'*. This was a slightly different approach to that taken in the adult Man Box studies, where the statements were presented with *'Society tells me that...'*. Adolescents involved in initial testing of the survey told us the language 'society tells me that' did not make sense to them, and they struggled to understand the difference between themselves and society. The changed language ('most people in Australia believe') aimed to make the statement clearer and more concrete for this age group. While this is less directly a measure of pressure compared to the language of 'society tells me', it still indicates adolescents' perception of the dominant expectations of teenage boys in Australia.

As with the adult Man Box research, there is a marked difference between what respondents personally believe, and what they perceive most other people believe. The research with adolescents regarding Pillar 1 (Constant effort to be manly) found:

- Around 60% of boys and girls believe that most people in Australia expect teenage boys to be manly, confident, and strong at all times, and more than half of both boys and girls agreed most people in Australian believe getting made fun of helps teenage boys become tough.
- For each of the seven rules, the perceived social pressure was greater than the level of personal endorsement.
- Although girls personally endorse restrictive forms of masculinity at much lower rates than boys, girls and boys were very similar in their perception of what others expect of teenage boys.
- The perceived social pressure across all statements was high – for most of the statements at least half of respondents perceived there was social pressure to comply.

The figures below highlight the difference between personal endorsement and perceived social pressure for boys (Fig 1.4) and girls (Fig 1.5). Given the adult Man Box findings, it is not a surprise to see a difference between the two. The Adolescent Man Box findings bring new insights by showing the difference between personal endorsement and perceived social pressure for *girls* – the data shows that even if girls do not agree with the rigid masculine norms themselves (and most do not), they agree with boys about the level of social pressure around these norms. Figure 1.6 shows the almost identical results for boys and girls in relation to the perception of social pressure on teenage boys to adhere to the Adolescent Man Box.

10 While Pillar 1 predominantly focuses on manliness and being tough, it also includes elements of other pillars. Emotional restriction is included through the statement about pressure to hide a lack of confidence; and social teasing is touched on with the statement that being made fun of helps build toughness.

Figure 1.4: Proportion of boys who personally endorsed Adolescent Man Box rules compared with those who perceived social pressure (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who personally endorsed Adolescent Man Box rules ('In my opinion...') compared with the percentage of male respondents who perceived social pressure ('Most people in Australia believe...')

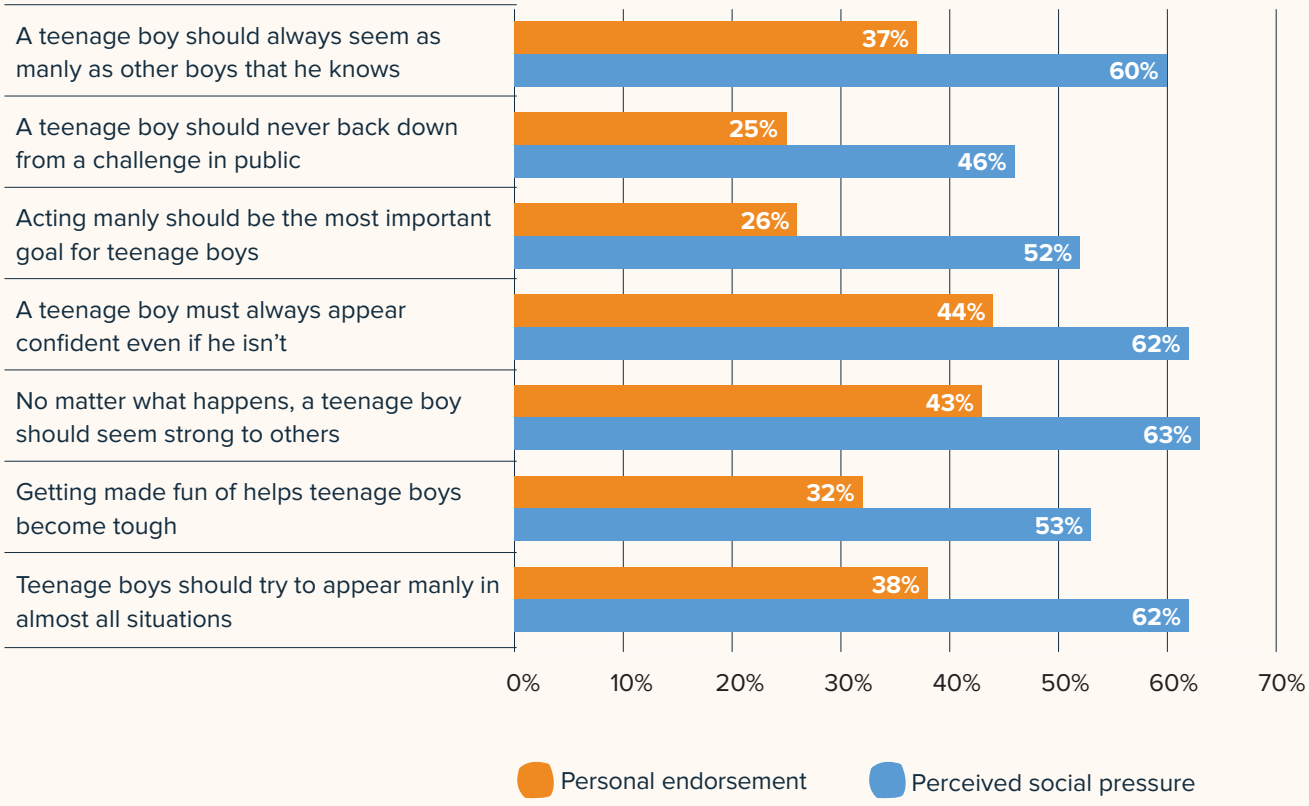


Figure 1.5: Proportion of girls who personally endorsed Adolescent Man Box rules compared with those who perceived social pressure (n=736)

Percentage of female respondents aged 14-18 who personally endorsed Adolescent Man Box rules ('In my opinion...') compared with the percentage of female respondents who perceived social pressure ('Most people in Australia believe...')

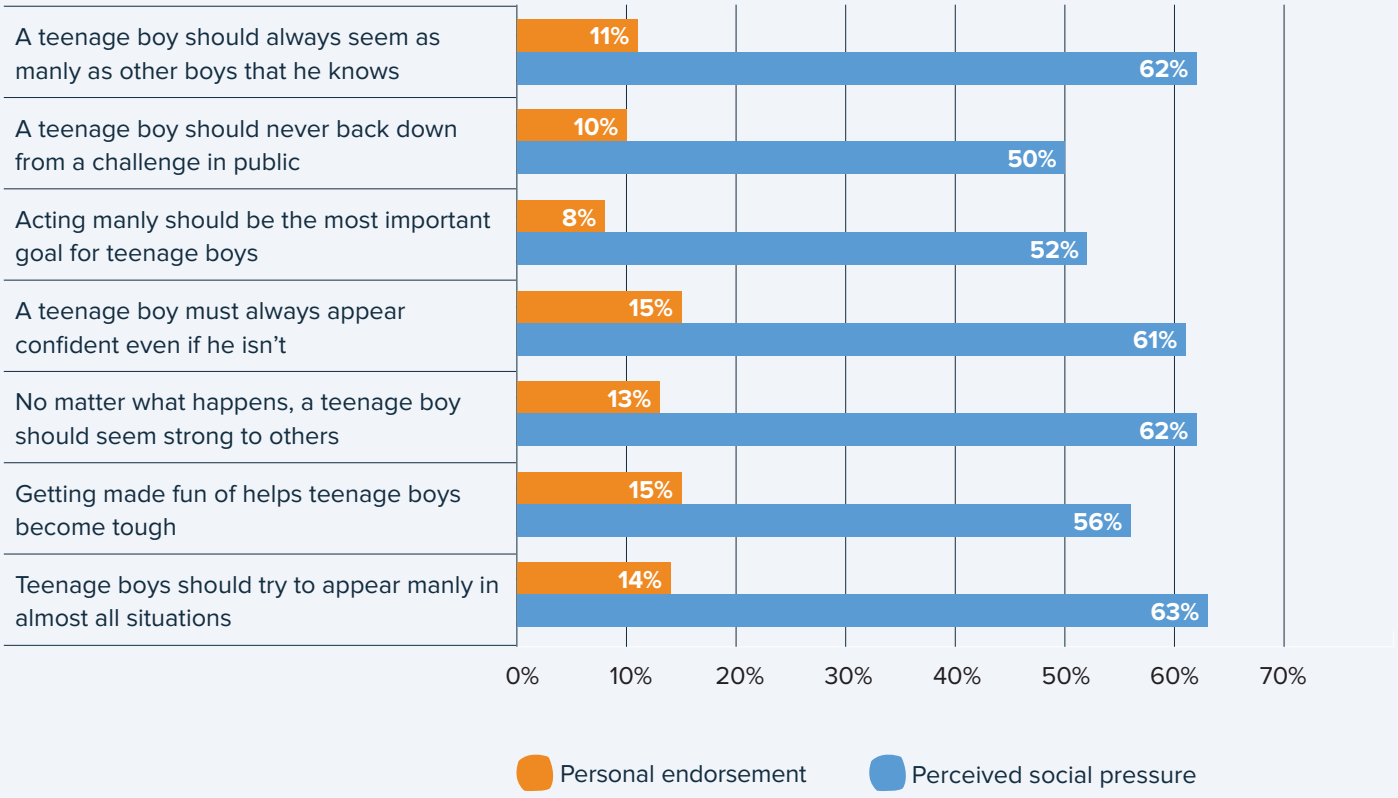


Figure 1.6: Perceived social expectation for teenage boys to adhere to Adolescent Man Box rules related to 'constant effort to be manly' (n=1391)

Percentage of male and female respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed that 'Most people in Australia believe...'

Adolescent Man Box pillar 1 - Constant effort to be manly	Boys	Girls
A teenage boy should always seem as manly as other boys that he knows	60%	62%
A teenage boy should never back down from a challenge in public	46%	50%
Acting manly should be the most important goal for teenage boys	52%	52%
A teenage boy must always appear confident even if he isn't	62%	61%
No matter what happens, a teenage boy should seem strong to others	63%	62%
Getting made fun of helps teenage boys become tough	53%	56%
Teenage boys should try to appear manly in almost all situations	62%	63%

Discussion

The disconnect between perceived expectations and personal endorsement of restrictive masculinity highlighted in this study provides important insights for programs seeking to address the use of harmful behaviours by adolescent boys.

Dispelling myths around what others actually believe, and highlighting the mismatch with perceived societal expectations, may relieve adolescent boys of the pressure to conform to harmful stereotypes and to use harmful behaviours that they may not personally subscribe to. This includes pointing to the disparity between what boys believe and what girls believe about what it means to be a man, and the shared experience of perceived expectations among the Australian community.

There is an opportunity for programs, codesigned with young people, to unpack perceived norms and encourage open, respectful conversations between young people about consent, relationships, and mutual expectations.

Supporting diverse ways to be a boy

"I'm feminine so... I think I can encourage my male friends, brother, and father to step outside the Man Box and support them if they do"

Reflection provided by an adolescent boy who participated in a workshop on masculinities run by The Men's Project between 2023-2025. This was not obtained as part of the Adolescent Man Box Study.

Chapter 2 – Other attitudes relevant to violence prevention

Introduction

This study was interested in a selection of other attitudes relevant to violence prevention that were not covered by the 27 rules comprising the Adolescent Man Box. These include aggression and control, gender equality, rigid gender roles, heterosexism and sexuality.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a range of statements, choosing between 'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree', 'Agree' and 'Strongly agree'.

Key findings

Violence-supportive attitudes

The Adolescent Man Box survey asked respondents about their level of agreement with violence-supportive attitudes – attitudes that condone, excuse or minimise violence. This includes attitudes about masculinity that are aggressive and controlling, including items from the adult Man Box 'Aggression and control' pillar. It also includes attitudes about abuse within relationships that are not specifically about masculinity (i.e. not specifically about what *boys or men* should be like).

We found:

- A small but significant cohort of adolescent boys endorsed these violence-supportive attitudes. For example: 10% of boys believe if a man is violent to his partner, it's probably because his partner did something to provoke or deserve it; 10% of boys agreed a teenage boy should use violence to get respect if necessary; 12% of boys agreed that if a teenage boy has a girlfriend, he should always know where she is; 8% of boys think sharing intimate photos of your partner after a breakup is not a big deal; and 6% of boys think it's okay to use a photo or video of someone and change it into something sexual.
- Overall, boys endorsed violence-supportive attitudes at higher rates than girls, and these differences were statistically significant (Fig 2.1). For example, 13% of boys believe if a teenage boy has sex with a teenage girl, he should decide what happens and what she does during sex, compared with 5% of girls who agree with this. And boys (10%) were twice as likely as girls (5%) to agree that when a man is violent to his partner, it's probably because his partner did something to provoke / deserve it.
- Both genders had almost identical endorsement of two attitudes about technology-facilitated surveillance: 18% of both boys and girls agreed that 'Continually checking who my partner is communicating with on social media is normal in a relationship', and almost a quarter of both boys and girls agreed that 'It's ok to send multiple texts, phone calls, social media messages when your partner isn't responding immediately, or when you are frustrated with them' (24% of boys, 23% of girls).

Figure 2.1: Proportion of adolescents who personally endorsed violence-supportive attitudes, by gender (n=1401)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed that 'In my opinion...'

Violence-supportive attitudes	Boys	Girls	Total*
Attitudes about masculinity as aggressive and controlling			
If a teenage boy has a girlfriend, he should know where she is all the time	12%	7%	10%
A teenage boy should use violence to get respect if necessary	10%	4%	7%
If a man is violent to his partner, it's probably because his partner did something to provoke / deserve it	10%	5%	8%
If a teenage boy has sex with a teenage girl, he should decide what happens and what she does during sex	13%	5%	9%
Attitudes about intimate partner abuse and technology-facilitated abuse			
It's ok to send multiple texts, phone calls, social media messages when your partner isn't responding immediately, or when you are frustrated with them	23%	24%	24%
It's okay to call your partner mean names when they disagree with you or your beliefs	8%	5%	7%
Continually checking who my partner is communicating with on social media is normal in a relationship	18%	18%	18%
It's okay to use a photo or video of someone and change it into something sexual	6%	2%	4%
Sharing intimate photos of your partner after a breakup is not a big deal	8%	4%	6%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Gender equality

The Man Box research observed that attitudes supporting gender inequality are associated with the use of harmful behaviours. Young people are growing up in an environment where equality of genders is discussed much more frequently than even a decade ago, and steps have been taken in politics and business to increase opportunities for women to participate and lead. We wanted to understand how today's adolescents feel about gender equality, both in theory and in practice.

Our survey responses showed:

- Only 4% of respondents believe it's not important for teenage boys to treat girls as equals. This means 96% of adolescents support the equal treatment of girls (Fig 2.2).
- However, the views held by boys and girls on equality in practice differ. A much higher proportion of boys than girls agreed with the statement, 'In Australia today, boys have it harder than girls' – with 42% of boys agreeing compared with 13% of girls.
- When we analysed data for boys of different ages, we found older boys aged 16-18 were more likely than younger boys aged 14-15 to believe that in Australia today, boys have it harder than girls (44% vs 38%).

Figure 2.2: Proportion of adolescents who personally endorsed attitudes about gender equality, by gender (n=1401)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed that 'In my opinion...'

Gender equality	Boys	Girls	Total*
In Australia today, boys have it harder than girls	42%	13%	29%
It's not important for teenage boys to treat girls and women as equals in all areas of life	4%	3%	4%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Rigid gender roles, heterosexism and sexuality

The Adolescent Man Box study included six additional questions that were not part of the Adolescent Man Box scale. While thematically some of these additional attitudes overlap with the 'heterosexism' pillar of the Adolescent Man Box, they provide new insights in relation to: gender norms in family and household contexts; perceptions of friendships with girls and transgender/gender diverse people (the Adolescent Man Box only incorporates responses about friendships with gay people); and expectations of hypersexuality for teenage boys. Four of these attitude statements were drawn from the adult Man Box 2024 study, and two were original statements created for the Adolescent Man Box study.[11]

Survey responses revealed that:

- Boys were significantly more likely to endorse these additional attitudes than girls. For example, 44% of boys agreed that men should be the main provider for their families, compared with 26% of girls (Fig 2.3).
- A very small percentage of boys (4%) agreed that it's not okay for teenage boys to be close friends with girls, while a significant minority (20%) agreed that it's not okay for teenage boys to be friends with transgender and gender diverse people.

Figure 2.3: Proportion of adolescents who personally endorsed attitudes about rigid gender roles, heterosexism and sexuality, by gender (n=1401)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed that 'In my opinion...'

Rigid gender roles, heterosexism and sexuality	Boys	Girls	Total*
In heterosexual (straight) relationships, men should be the main provider for their families	44%	26%	35%
A man shouldn't have to do household chores	9%	6%	8%
It matters if a teenage boy is gay, it's not the type of person he is that's important	15%	7%	11%
It's not okay for straight teenage boys to be friends with transgender and gender diverse people	20%	8%	14%
It's not okay for teenage boys to be close friends with teenage girls	4%	4%	4%
Teenage boys should always want to have sex	11%	4%	8%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

11 The attitude statements that were drawn/adapted from the adult Man Box 2024 are: A man shouldn't have to do household chores; In heterosexual (straight) relationships, men should be the main provider for their families; Teenage boys should always want to have sex; and It's not okay for straight teenage boys to be friends with transgender and gender diverse people.

Relationship with the Adolescent Man Box

Violence-supportive attitudes

Boys with higher levels of endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box rules were significantly more likely to agree with violence-supportive attitudes compared with boys with lower levels of endorsement of Adolescent Man Box rules.

We found:

- 35% of boys in quintile 5 agree that 'If a teenage boy has a girlfriend, he should know where she is all the time', compared with 4% of boys in quintile 1 (Fig 2.4).
- 20% of boys in quintile 5 agree that 'Sharing intimate photos of your partner after a breakup is not a big deal', compared with 0% of boys in quintile 1 (Fig 2.5).
- 42% of boys in quintile 5 agree that 'Continually checking who my partner is communicating with on social media is normal in a relationship', compared with 8% of boys in quintile 1.
- 52% of boys in quintile 5 agree that that 'It's ok to send multiple texts, phone calls, social media messages when your partner isn't responding immediately, or when you are frustrated with them', compared with 11% in quintile 1.

Figure 2.4: Proportion of boys who endorsed attitudes about masculinity as aggressive and controlling, by quintile (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement

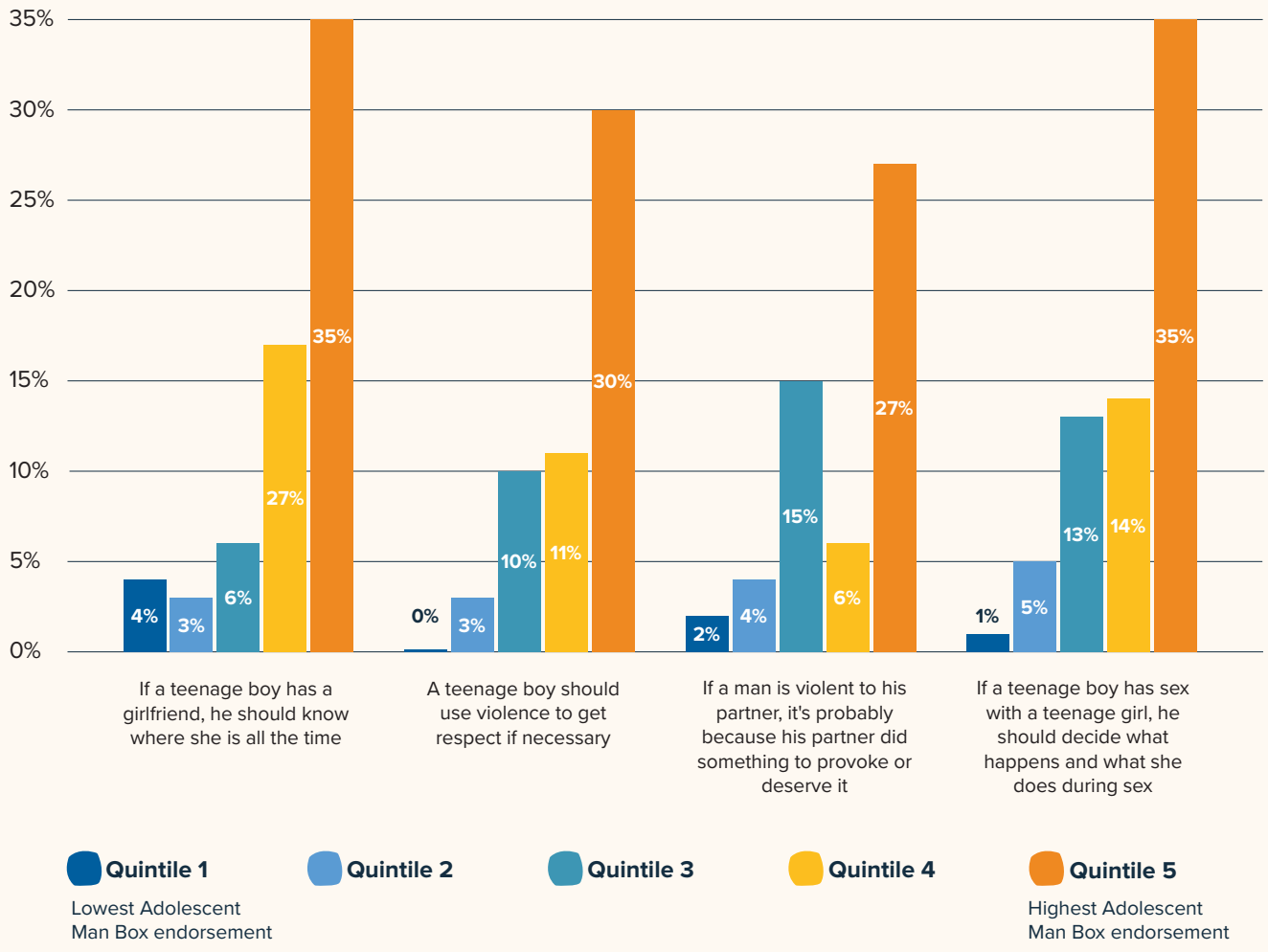
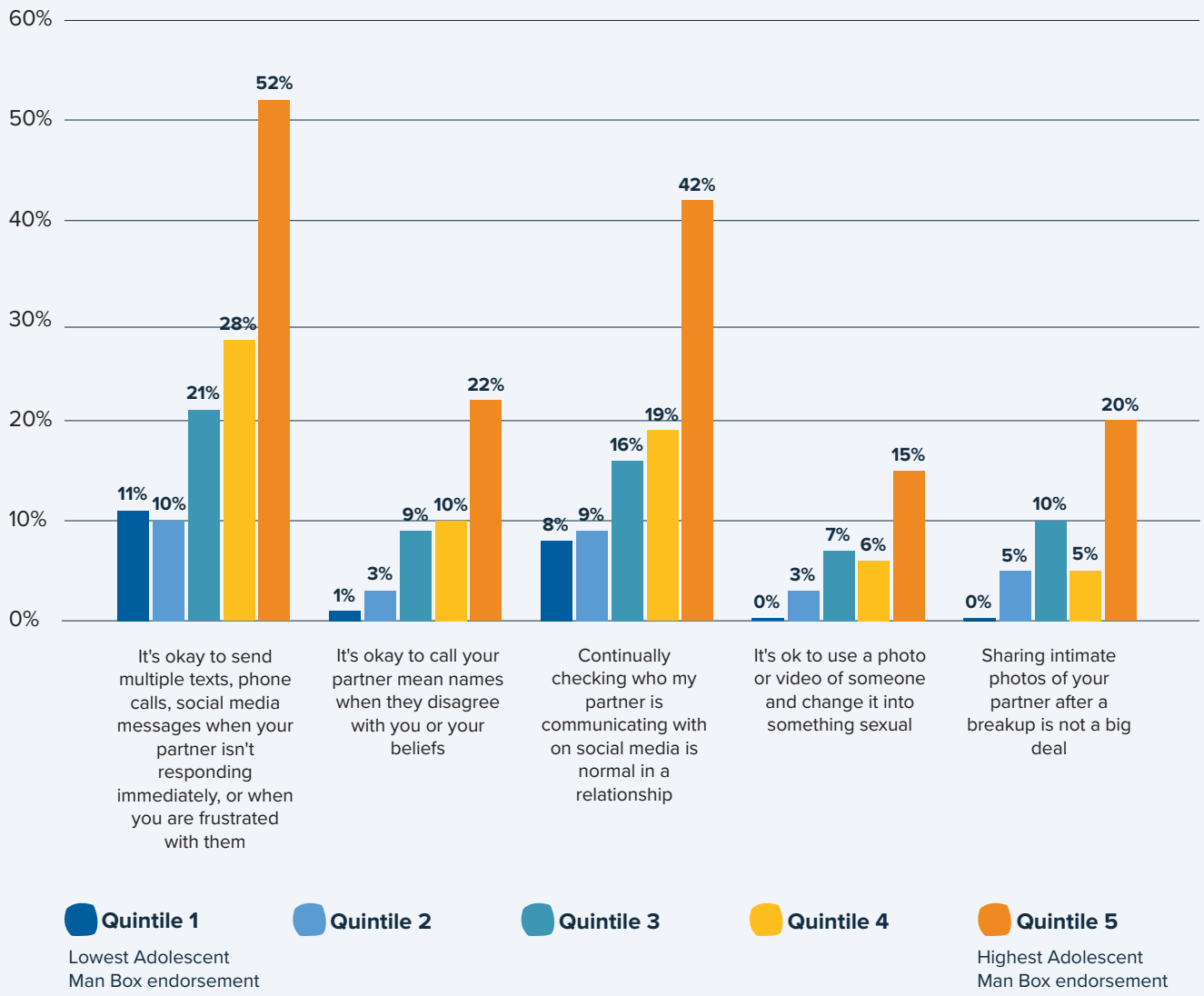


Figure 2.5: Proportion of boys who endorsed attitudes about intimate partner abuse, by quintile (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement



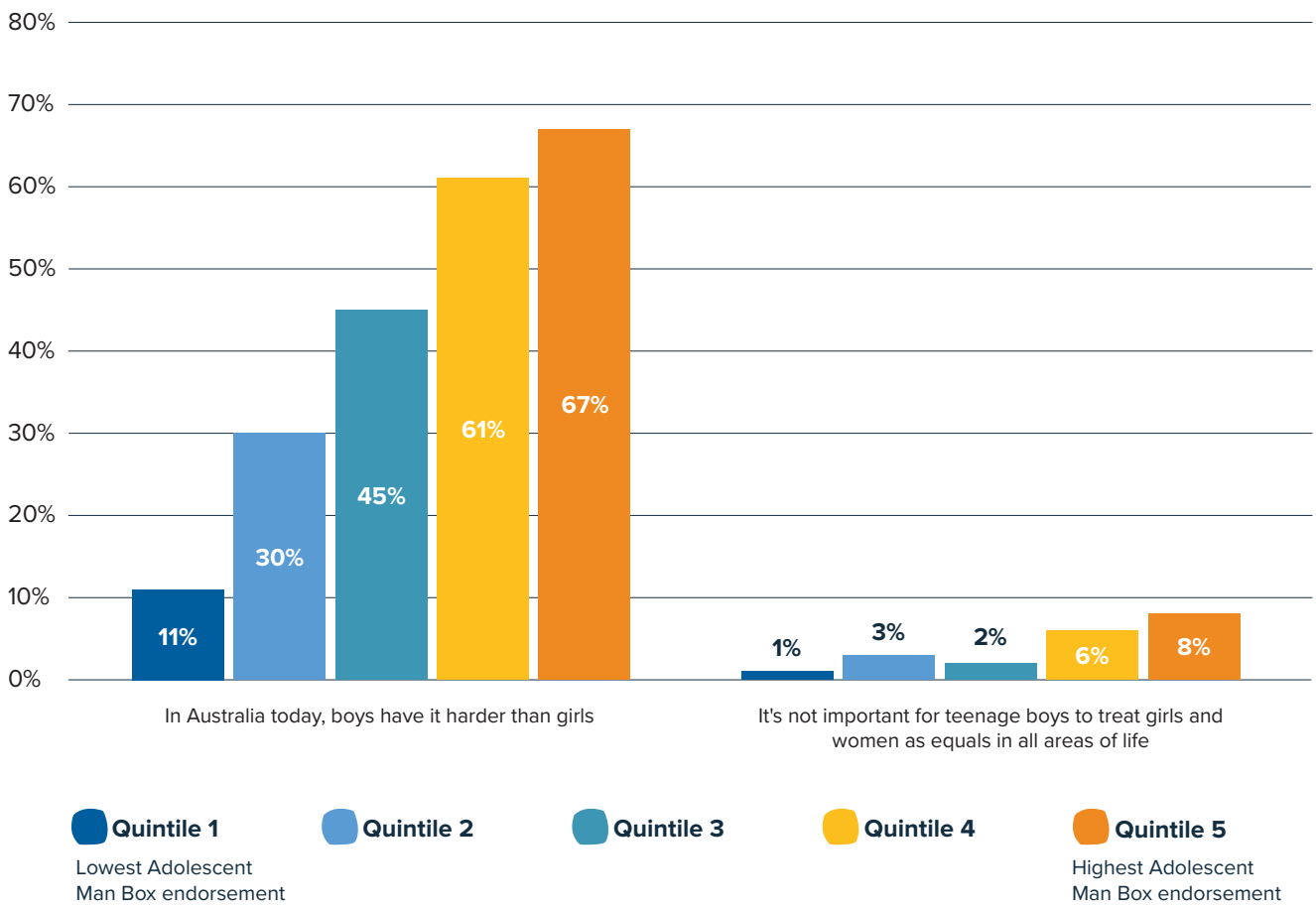
Gender equality

Results showed an association between attitudes towards masculinity and attitudes about gender equality:

- A very small percentage of boys believe it's not important to treat girls as equals (between 1% and 8% across the quintiles); the vast majority of boys across all quintiles believe gender equality is important (between 99% and 92%) (Fig 2.6).
- However, endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box did have a small but statistically significant effect: while only 8% of boys in quintile 5 supported unequal treatment of girls, this was higher than all other quintiles and 8 times the rate of those in quintile 1.
- Boys who most strongly endorse the Adolescent Man Box rules were also significantly more likely to agree that boys have it harder than girls: 67% of boys in quintile 5 agree that 'In Australia today, boys have it harder than girls', compared with 11% of boys in quintile 1. Support for this statement increased progressively across the quintiles in line with endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box.

Figure 2.6: Proportion of boys who endorsed attitudes about gender equality, by quintile (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement



Rigid gender roles, heterosexism and sexuality

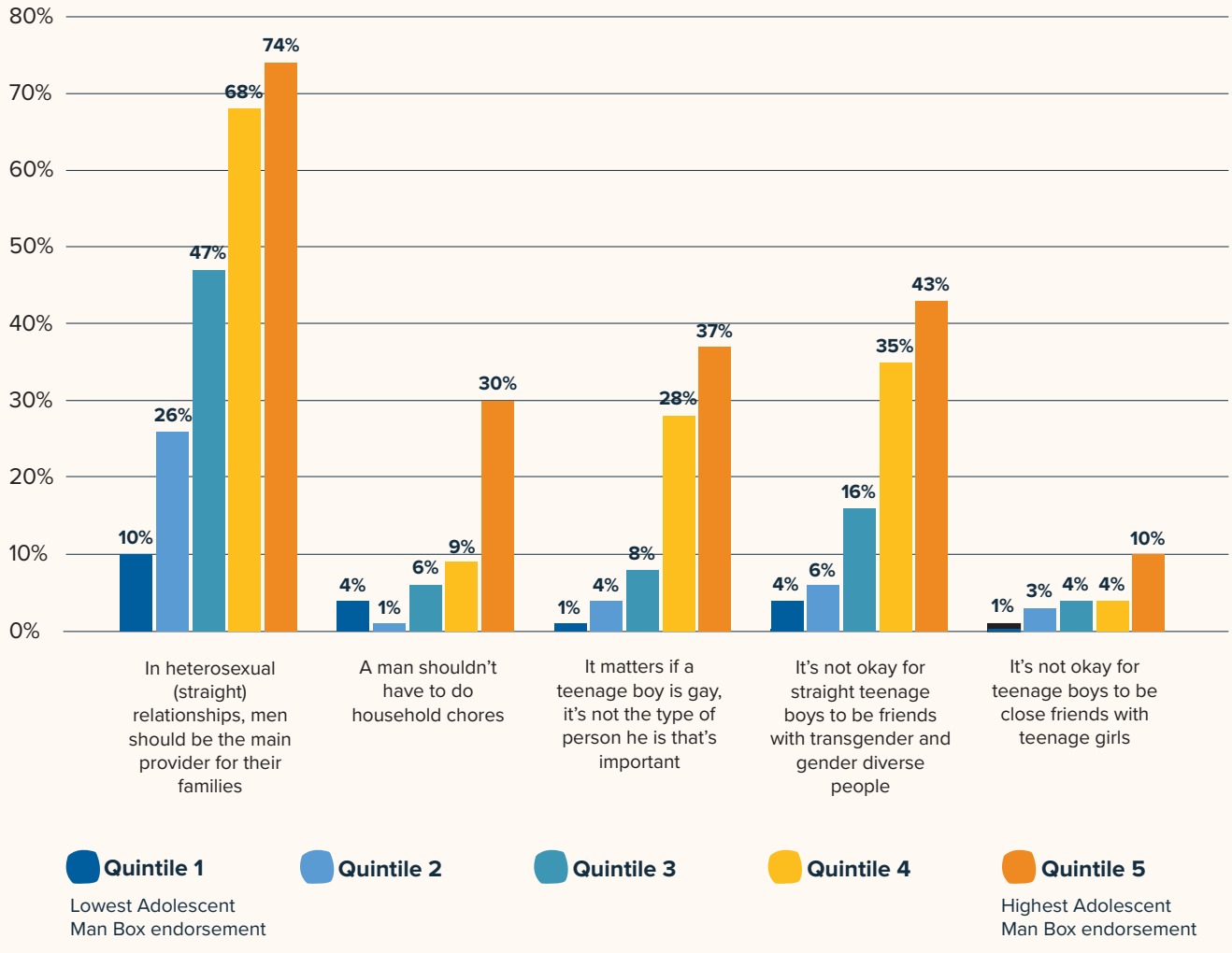
Boys who strongly endorse the Adolescent Man Box rules (ie the 4 pillars and 27 statements examined in the previous chapter) were much more likely to agree with the attitudes about rigid gender roles, heterosexism and sexuality presented in this chapter (Fig 2.7). This pattern is not surprising, given the thematic overlap between the heterosexism pillar of the Adolescent Man Box scale and some of the additional attitude statements presented in this chapter.

We found:

- 74% of boys in Adolescent Man Box quintile 5 (those showing strongest endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box) agree that 'men should be the main provider for their families', compared with 10% of boys in quintile 1 (those showing weakest endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box).
- There is a clear relationship between endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box and transphobia, with 43% of boys in quintile 5 agreeing that 'it's not okay for straight teenage boys to be friends with transgender and gender diverse people' compared with 4% in quintile 1.
- This finding relating to transphobia is particularly stark when contrasting the results for the very similar statement 'it's not okay for teenage boys to be close friends with girls' (only 10% of boys in quintile 5 agreed with this sentiment about friendship with girls, compared with 43% agreeing it's not okay to be friends with transgender/gender diverse people).

Figure 2.7: Proportion of boys who endorsed heterosexist attitudes, by quintile (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement



Discussion

While the vast majority of boys (96%) agreed that it is important for teenage boys to treat teenage girls as equals in all areas of life, a significant proportion of boys (42%) believe that boys have it harder than girls in Australia. This can be compared directly with the 53% of American men who believe that 'in America today, men have it harder than women' (Barker et al., 2023). An international survey by Movember with young men aged 16-25 years, which included Australian respondents, found that 62% of young men believed 'women have it easier than men' (Fisher et al., 2025). Plan International Australia's (2023) Gender Compass report found that 90% of Australians (aged 16 years and older) agree that gender equality is important, but approximately 60% believe that gender equality is nearly, or already, achieved. The evidence suggests the belief that gender equality has been achieved is ill-founded on many fronts. For example, Australia's Workplace Gender Equality Agency has found persistent inequality in the workplace (WGEA, 2025); women are significantly more likely than men to participate in household chores (ABS, 2020-21) and spend more time caring for their children (ABS, 2020-21); and women and girls experience disproportionately high levels of intimate partner violence (ABS, 2021-22a).[12] Clearly, it is possible to believe in the importance of gender equality while also denying that gender inequality exists, or indeed, believing that men have it harder than women.

Adolescent boys may have trouble seeing the barriers to gender equality faced by girls. In their lifetime, Australians elected their first female prime minister, and girls often perform at least as well academically. Notably, there are significantly higher proportions of younger women (aged 20-29 years) who hold a post-school qualification (degree, diploma, or certificate) than younger men from the same age group (ABS, 2024). Meanwhile adolescent boys may experience a range of challenges themselves. Anecdotal evidence from service organisations working with teenage boys suggests they face confusion about their identity and what's expected of them, a fear of saying the wrong thing and being 'cancelled', a sense of being held responsible for historical inequalities, and a feeling of not being welcome in certain spaces (feeling rejected offline but accepted online).

There is an opportunity to acknowledge and explore with boys the specific challenges they are facing and to encourage them to share their concerns and seek help when they need it – while also supporting boys to better appreciate the experience of women and girls who face inequality and poor outcomes in a range of significant ways. This can be framed constructively as a unifying rather than oppositional goal.

Most boys do not hold violence-supportive attitudes, however any proportion is concerning: between 10-13% of boys agree with attitudes about masculinity as aggressive and controlling, and a smaller percentage (6-8%) of boys believe image-based abuse is acceptable. The results also show that surveillance of intimate partners is normalised for a significant minority of adolescents, and boys who strongly endorse Adolescent Man Box rules are even more likely to hold these problematic views about surveillance.

Technology-enabled surveillance is often seen as a form of care and protection - such as parents tracking children or friends sharing locations for safety. However, it can also be a tool of coercive control, which may go unrecognised, particularly in intimate partner relationships (eSafety Commissioner, 2025a). Based on the 2025 NSW Coronial Inquest into the deaths of Lilie James and Paul Thijssen, the Australian media highlighted the risk of location sharing on devices being normalised among young people. In the lead up to Paul ending Lilie's life, their friendship group mistook Paul's repeated monitoring of Lilie's location as affectionate rather than a 'red flag' or indication of risk (Baker, 2025). While in no way are we implying this would have prevented Lilie's murder, this underscores the need to educate young people about how to use location-tracking features in safe and respectful ways, and how to identify and manage the risks of technology-facilitated abuse that can be associated with location-sharing.

Some adolescents believe monitoring and surveillance is a form of protection

"My job is to protect her, that's why I want to know where she is"

Reflection provided by an adolescent boy who participated in an early intervention program run by Jesuit Social Services between 2023-2025. This quote was not sought as part of the Adolescent Man Box Study.

12 However, since the age of 15, men are more likely than women (42% versus 31%) to experience physical violence (both assault and threat); and of physical assaults perpetrated by men, the victims are more likely to be other men (31%) than women (24%) (ABS, 2021-22b).

Comparing attitudes of adolescent boys and men

The previous two chapters have shown the extent to which adolescents endorse a range of attitudes about masculinity, intimate partner abuse and gender equality. Here, we consider how the results for adolescent boys compare to the findings for adult men.

Figure 2.8 below presents data for *the most similar items* from the Adolescent Man Box study in 2025 and the adult Man Box study in 2023 (The Men's Project & Flood, 2024). Some of these items have almost identical wording (the ones that are bolded in Figure 2.8), while other items are worded differently but cover the same themes.

These differences may be attributed to a mix of factors including generational difference, developmental stage, and variations in the wording of survey items.

The comparison suggests that the younger generation may be less tolerant of violence-supportive attitudes, and more accepting of boys expressing their feelings than the older generation. However, transphobic and homophobic attitudes appear to be persisting at similar (or higher) rates.

For the items that are most comparable, we found:

- Adolescent boys were about half as likely to agree with attitudes about **aggression and control** as men (10-12% of boys compared with 22-25% of men), including for an almost-identically worded item (10% of boys agreed 'A teenage boy should use violence to get respect if necessary', compared with 22% of men agreed 'Men should use violence to get respect if necessary').
- While it is harder to compare because the **emotional restriction** items were worded differently, for the items that were most similar, adolescent boys generally had lower levels of agreement than men (12-14% of boys compared with 23-28% of men) – apart from one item (34% of boys agreed that 'It's weird for a teenage boy to talk about his feelings with other teenage boys').
- Adolescent boys were half as likely as men to agree with the masculine stereotype of **hypersexuality**: 11% of boys agreed that 'Teenage boys should always want to have sex', while 23% of men agreed 'A 'real man' would never say no to sex'.
- In terms of **rigid gender roles**, adolescent boys were less likely than men to endorse the attitude that 'A man shouldn't have to do household chores' (9% of boys compared with 19% of men), but boys were more likely to endorse the attitude that a man should be the main provider for his family (44% of boys compared with 31% of men).
- While it is not possible to make a direct comparison due to different wording, boys and men had similar levels of endorsement of the attitudes that related to the theme of **constant effort to be manly** (25-43% of boys compared with 30-42% of men).
- In terms of **heterosexism**, adolescent boys and men had similar levels of agreement with the statement that it's not okay to be friends with transgender or gender diverse people (20% of boys compared with 22% of men). Adolescents were more likely than men to agree that it's not okay to be friends with gay people, although the statements were worded differently (33% of boys compared with 23% of men).
- Adolescent boys were slightly more likely than men to deny **gender inequality** (42% of boys compared with 39% of men).

Figure 2.8: Comparing results for Australian adolescents (14-18) and Australian young men (18-30) across a selection of the most similar items from the Adolescent Man Box study and the adult Man Box study

Attitudinal theme	Personal endorsement of attitudes by 14-18-year-old adolescents in Adolescent Man Box study undertaken in 2025	Personal endorsement of attitudes by 18-30-year-old men in Man Box study undertaken in 2023
Constant effort to be manly	• A teenage boy should never back down from a challenge in public: 25% • No matter what happens, a teenage boy should seem strong to others: 43%	• A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak: 30% • Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside: 42%
Emotional restriction	• It's hard to respect a teenage boy who shows his feelings: 14% • It's weird for a teenage boy to talk about his feelings with other teenage boys: 34% • Teenage boys should not talk about their worries with each other: 12%	• A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears and problems shouldn't really get respect: 23% • Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help: 28%
Rigid gender roles, heterosexism and sexuality	• **A man shouldn't have to do household chores: 9%** • **In heterosexual (straight) relationships, men should be the main provider for their families: 44%** • It's embarrassing to have a lot of gay friends: 33% • **It's not okay for straight teenage boys to be friends with transgender and gender diverse people: 20%** • Teenage boys should always want to have sex: 11%	• **A man shouldn't have to do household chores: 19%** • **In heterosexual relationships, men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women: 31%** • It's not okay for straight guys to be friends with gay guys: 23% • **It's not okay for straight guys to be friends with trans or gender diverse people: 22%** • A 'real man' would never say no to sex: 23%
Aggression and control	• **A teenage boy should use violence to get respect if necessary: 10%** • If a teenage boy has a girlfriend, he should know where she is all the time: 12% • If a man is violent to his partner, it's probably because his partner did something to provoke/deserve it: 10%	• **Men should use violence to get respect if necessary: 22%** • If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time: 22% • Sometimes a woman can make a man so angry that he hits her when he didn't mean to: 25%
Gender inequality	• In Australia today, boys have it harder than girls: 42%	• Many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia: 39%

Chapter 3 – Influences on adolescents' attitudes

Introduction

We know that attitudes about gender are learned through socialisation, which starts with families and shifts more to peers and other influences during adolescence (Rosen & Nofziger, 2019). Mindful of potential implications for practice and policy, as part of this study, we sought to explore where adolescents' ideas about masculinity come from and their relative influence. Researchers have noted that few studies have focused on social media's influence on gender norms amongst adolescent boys relative to 'offline' influences, but those that do show the importance of family, education, peers and community influences (Koester & Marcus, 2024).

Adolescents were asked about their perception of the impact of different people, groups and media on their ideas about masculinity. Given the significant and growing role of online spaces in adolescents' lives, the survey also asked about their online social life and the online content creators they follow.

Key findings

Perceived impacts on ideas about masculinity

Respondents were provided with a list of people, groups and media and asked how much impact each item has on their ideas about how teenage boys should act. For each item on the list, they could select whether it had a 'big impact', 'some impact' or 'no impact' on their ideas. There was no limit to how many items respondents could rate as having each level of impact. While we recognise this is not a reliable measure of what *actually influences* adolescents' ideas (since many influences are not consciously noticed), it does show their *perception* of what influences their ideas. It may also indicate where adolescents go for guidance or tips about how boys should behave.

We found that:

- For boys, the five elements most likely to be rated as having a 'big impact' (as opposed to having 'no impact' or 'some impact') on their ideas about how teenage boys should act are:
  - dad or male parental figure (59% of boys rated this as having a big impact, with the remaining proportion rating this as having some impact or no impact);
  - mum or female parental figure (48% rated this as having a big impact);
  - male friends (42% rated this as having a big impact);
  - family other than parents (29% rated this as having a big impact); and
  - romantic or sexual partners (23% rated this as having a big impact) (See Fig 3.1).
  - Girls had a very similar top five list, but were more likely than boys to rate social media and online influencers as having a big impact on their ideas about how teenage boys should act (32% of girls, compared with 22% of boys). While this question sought to understand respondents' views about what impacts their *own ideas* about how teenage boys should act, it is possible that some girls and non-binary respondents misunderstood the question and provided their views about what they think impacts *teenage boys' ideas* about how boys should act.
- The results for boys of different age groups (14-15 and 16-18 years) were similar across most items. However, older boys were significantly more likely than younger boys to rate male friends, romantic or sexual partners, social media and online influencers, and pornography as having a big impact on their ideas about how teenage boys should act (Fig 3.2), which likely reflects a typical shift that occurs during the course of adolescence towards peers and other influences (Rosen & Nofziger, 2019).

Figure 3.1: Proportion of adolescents who rated people, institutions and media as having a big impact on their ideas about masculinity (n=1401)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who rated each item as having a 'big impact' (as opposed to 'no impact' or 'some impact') on their own ideas about how teenage boys should act

People, institutions and media	Boys	Girls	Total*
Family			
Dad or male parental figure	59%	60%	60%
Mum or female parental figure	48%	45%	47%
Family members (other than parents)	29%	30%	29%
Any of the above	**68%**	**70%**	**69%**
Friends, peers and partners			
Male friends	42%	48%	45%
Female friends	19%	21%	20%
Romantic or sexual partners	23%	28%	25%
Gender diverse friends	9%	12%	11%
Peers who are not your main friends	6%	8%	7%
Any of the above	**56%**	**62%**	**59%**
Formal figures and institutions			
Sports clubs or sports people	21%	25%	23%
Teachers	20%	17%	19%
Coach or mentor	20%	20%	20%
Religion	18%	21%	19%
Any of the above	**48%**	**50%**	**49%**
Media			
Social media and online influencers	22%	32%	27%
Video games	15%	18%	17%
Movies and television	14%	26%	20%
Advertising	12%	17%	14%
Pornography	14%	22%	18%
Any of the above	**39%**	**52%**	**45%**

**includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Figure 3.2: Proportion of boys who rated people, institutions and media as having a big impact on their ideas about masculinity, by age (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-15 and 16-18 who rated each item as having a 'big impact' (as opposed to 'no impact' or 'some impact') on their own ideas about how teenage boys should act

People, institutions and media	Boys 14 to 15	Boys 16 to 18
Family		
Dad or male parental figure	56%	62%
Mum or female parental figure	48%	48%
Family members (other than parents)	25%	31%
Any of the above	**65%**	**69%**
Friends, peers and partners		
Male friends	34%	48%
Female friends	16%	21%
Romantic or sexual partners	15%	29%
Gender diverse friends	8%	10%
Peers who are not your main friends	6%	6%
Any of the above	**46%**	**63%**
Formal figures and institutions		
Sports clubs or sports people	21%	21%
Teachers	21%	20%
Coach or mentor	16%	23%
Religion	14%	20%
Any of the above	**45%**	**50%**
Media		
Social media and online influencers	14%	28%
Video games	14%	16%
Movies and television	13%	15%
Advertising	12%	12%
Pornography	8%	19%
Any of the above	**31%**	**44%**

Online life

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed that their online social life is more engaging and rewarding than their offline social life. This question was taken from the State of American Men Report (Barker et al., 2023), which found that nearly half (48%) of men perceived their online lives as more engaging and rewarding than their offline lives.

We found that:

- Approximately one third of all respondents agreed that their online social life is more engaging and rewarding than their offline social life; and
- this proportion was fairly consistent across age and gender (Fig. 3.3).

Figure 3.3: Proportion of adolescents who reported their online social life is more engaging and rewarding than their offline social life

Percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'My online social life is more engaging and rewarding than my offline social life'

Respondents	Proportion who agreed
All respondents*	32%
Boys 14-18	34%
Girls 14-18	29%
Boys 14-15	35%
Boys 16-18	34%

**includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

To gain a better understanding of the type of content adolescents are engaging with online, the survey asked respondents to **name an online influencer or content creator that they follow**. A total of 689 respondents answered the question.

We found:

- A staggering 438 unique online content creators were named, and the vast majority of these were mentioned by only one respondent (355 content creators were mentioned only once).
- Only 17 influencers were mentioned by five or more respondents (See Figure 3.1A in Appendix E). This illustrates the enormous breadth of online influences on young people and that adolescents' attitudes and beliefs are no longer being formed and shaped within a homogenous media landscape (Hill, 2025).
- The gender split of content creators was fairly equal.

There is also enormous breadth in the type of content offered by these creators. It was beyond the scope of this study to undertake detailed analysis of the 438 content creators, therefore we used artificial intelligence to categorise the content creators.[13] We identified the following topics covered by the creators, noting that in many cases an individual content creator covers multiple content categories:

Lifestyle	Politics	Music
Beauty and fashion	Pop culture and entertainment	Masculinity
Science	Gaming	Comedy
Sports	Motivational content	Dance
Family	Art, photography and crafts	Fitness
Health and wellness	Shopping	True crime
Story telling	Finance and investing	Cooking
Cosplay	Cultural awareness	Productivity
Travel and adventure	Pets and animals	Technology reviews
Trivia	Social commentary	Activism

In terms of the nature of the content:

- 13 content creators were identified as explicitly *'anti-feminist'*; 66 were identified as explicitly *'pro-feminist'*; and the vast majority (359) identified as *'neutral'* or *'unknown'*.
- While this is surface-level analysis with clear limitations (particularly when using AI to assess ideological content), it is likely that even 'neutral' content, such as health or fitness advice, may carry restrictive or harmful gender messages. Research on the 'manosphere' highlights how difficult it is to classify such content, as it often requires nuanced interpretation of cultural context, language, and intent (Ofcom, 2025). There is an opportunity for further analysis and research to better understand the ideological nature of content being viewed by young people in Australia.

13 We utilised artificial intelligence (ChatGPT) to analyse the list of 438 influencers and creators. The prompt was: 'Create a table of the following online content creators and answer the following questions for each: (1) What is their gender; (2) What type of content do they create (e.g. lifestyle, health, fitness); and (3) Rate their content as 'pro feminist', 'anti feminist', or 'neutral', ensuring that 'pro feminist' includes positive attitudes and behaviours towards women and girls and does not include anyone who has abused women or girls'. ChatGPT drew on a combination of information available in its training data up to its knowledge cut-off (June 2024), including: public descriptions (e.g. bios, video descriptions); widely viewed or discussed content (e.g. video titles, interviews, headlines, podcast appearances); public reporting or media coverage; general online reputation or summaries of their views and behaviour. It did not 'scan' real-time content, and it did not access private content.

Relationship with the Adolescent Man Box

When asked about where their ideas about adolescent masculinity come from, an interesting pattern appeared in terms of quintiles. Boys who most strongly endorse the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 5) were more likely than the boys in other quintiles to be forming their ideas about masculinity in an online media context:

- Almost half (47%) of the boys in quintile 5 believe their online social life is more rewarding than their offline interactions (compared with 32% for quintile 1) (Fig 3.4)
- Over half (52%) of quintile 5 believe that media has a big influence on their ideas about how to be a boy in the world (compared with 34-37% for other quintiles) (Fig. 3.5).
- Boys in quintile 5 are significantly less likely than boys in other quintiles to report their mum or female parental figure as having a big impact (34% for quintile 5 vs 42-66% for other quintiles).

In contrast, boys with the lowest endorsement of Adolescent Man Box rules (quintile 1) were significantly more likely than boys in other quintiles to report family members as having a big impact (80% for quintile 1 vs 61-69% for other quintiles), female friends as having a big impact (34% for quintile 1 vs 12-17% for other quintiles), and gender diverse friends as having a big impact (18% for quintile 1 vs 4-10% for other quintiles).

Figure 3.4: Proportion of boys who reported their online social life is more engaging and rewarding than their offline social life, by quintile (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'My online social life is more engaging and rewarding than my offline social life'

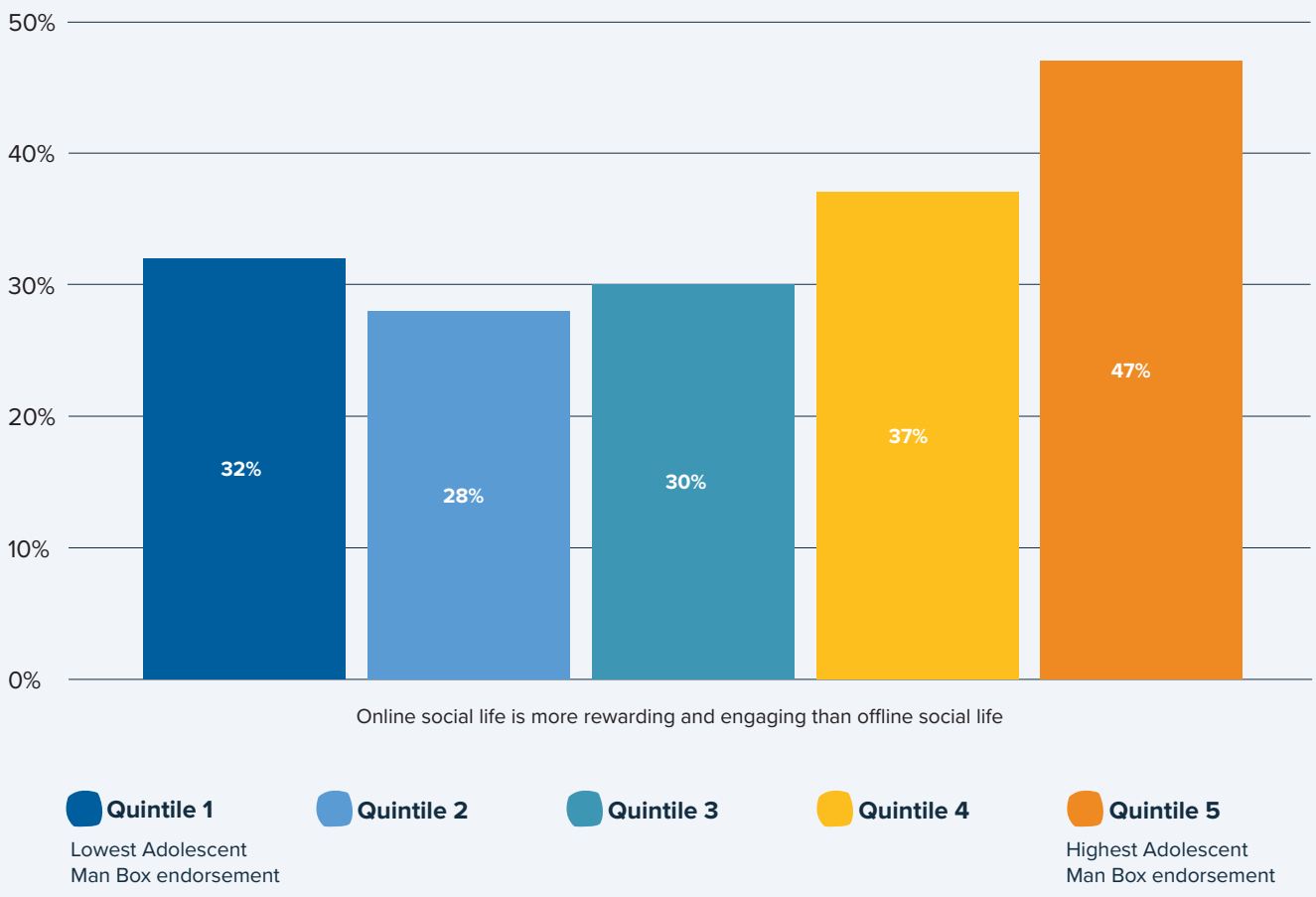


Figure 3.5: Proportion of boys who rated people, institutions and media as having a big impact on their ideas about masculinity, by quintile (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who rated each item as having a 'big impact' (as opposed to 'no impact' or 'some impact') on their own ideas about how teenage boys should act

	Quintile 1 Lowest endorsement of Adolescent Man Box	**Quintile 2**	**Quintile 3**	**Quintile 4**	**Quintile 5** Highest endorsement of Adolescent Man Box
Family members					
Dad or male parental figure	69%	60%	54%	60%	51%
Mum or female parental figure	66%	51%	45%	42%	34%
Family members (other than parents)	40%	30%	27%	21%	25%
Any of the above	**80%**	**69%**	**62%**	**62%**	**61%**
Friends, peers and partners					
Male friends	43%	37%	44%	43%	44%
Romantic or sexual partners	25%	20%	22%	24%	25%
Female friends	34%	12%	15%	15%	17%
Gender diverse friends	18%	6%	5%	10%	4%
Peers who are not your main friends	5%	3%	8%	4%	11%
Any of the above	**60%**	**47%**	**55%**	**57%**	**62%**
Formal figures and institutions					
Sports clubs or sports people	20%	16%	18%	22%	28%
Teachers	29%	16%	19%	15%	22%
Coach or mentor	22%	23%	14%	20%	20%
Religion	15%	18%	15%	17%	24%
Any of the above	**54%**	**43%**	**39%**	**45%**	**59%**
Media					
Social media and online influencers	24%	21%	22%	22%	23%
Video games	14%	11%	11%	19%	22%
Movies and television	15%	13%	13%	13%	18%
Advertising	11%	11%	12%	10%	16%
Pornography	14%	11%	11%	15%	21%
Any of the above	**35%**	**34%**	**36%**	**37%**	**52%**

Discussion

Around a third of adolescents (32%) in our study reported that their online social life is more rewarding and engaging than their offline social life – and this increases to almost half (47%) for boys who most strongly endorse the Adolescent Man Box rules. Broader research shows that online communication is central to young people's lives – helping them build social connections, especially those at risk of exclusion, while also exposing them to risks like cyberbullying and poor mental health (Rioseco & Vassallo, 2021; eSafety Commissioner, 2025b). Online media can also reinforce harmful gender norms and in extreme cases, contribute to radicalisation. Recently released research by Movember found that most young Australian men (63%) seek advice from online 'men and masculinity influencers', and those who do are more likely to endorse rigid gender roles (Fisher et al., 2025). However, the lack of a comprehensive evidence base on misogynistic online influencers and their impact on gender norms amongst adolescent boys means that research findings should be interpreted with caution. In our study, social media was not perceived by adolescents to be a main influence shaping ideas about how teenage boys should behave. There were also no significant differences in the proportions of boys stating that social media had a big influence on their ideas of adolescent masculinity across all quintiles (ranging from 21% to 24%).

Our results show that real-life relationships are perceived by adolescents to be more influential: 59% of boys said their father, and 48% said their mother, had a big impact (as opposed to some impact or no impact) on their views about how teenage boys should act - compared to just 22% who said the same about social media and online influencers. This finding aligns with Koester and Marcus' (2024) conclusions based on a review of existing studies examining the relative importance of online and offline influencers in adolescent boys' lives, and their impact on gender norms. The authors also observed that adolescents' online and offline experiences tend to merge, with online lives reflecting offline interests and attitudes (Koester & Marcus, 2024).

Our findings highlight the potential influence of parents, which is supported by Kågesten et al's (2016) systematic review showing strong evidence of the key role parents play in the gender socialisation of their adolescent children through both direct and indirect communication. Other studies have emphasised the importance of fathers specifically. For example, Perales et al. (2023) found young men are more likely to adopt traditional masculine norms if their fathers do, and longitudinal research by the Australian Institute of Family Studies emphasised the importance of fathers in influencing attitudes and behaviour of boys and found that affection and social support from fathers protects against the future use of intimate partner violence (O'Donnell et al., 2025). Our study complements these findings by highlighting the potential influence of mothers and female caregivers in supporting less restrictive forms of adolescent masculinity. Boys who reject the Adolescent Man Box rules (quintile 1) were twice as likely to say their mother has a big impact on their views about how teenage boys should act, compared to boys who strongly endorse the Adolescent Man Box rules (quintile 5).

Overall, our study findings underscore the need for interventions that address both parental and online influences, especially considering the introduction of minimum age restrictions for social media use in Australia.

Behaviours

Chapter 4 – Aggressive behaviour

Introduction

All children and young people in Australia have the right to live their lives free from abuse and harm (DSS, 2021). Yet many continue to face violence and harm (including family violence), and some are involved in causing harm to others. While conflict with peers is a typical part of social development in adolescence, the use of aggressive behaviours such as bullying, physical violence and sexual harassment can cause significant harm to others. Without appropriate interventions and support, there is also a risk of violent behaviours continuing into adulthood (Boxall et al., 2021).

The study sought to understand the proportion of adolescents who use and experience different forms of aggression and the relationship between this and endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box. Aggression is normally defined as any behaviour directed toward another individual that is carried out with the intent to cause harm, however we acknowledge that some of the behaviour captured in these survey results may not come from a desire to harm others, but rather from deep emotional pain or trauma (for example, related to prior or ongoing experiences of family violence).

The survey questions asked respondents about three aspects related to aggression:

- Their own use of aggression – including bullying, sexual harassment and physical violence, and retaliation when rejected
- Their experience of being victimised – including bullying, sexual harassment and physical violence
- How they responded the last time they witnessed sexist or abusive behaviour

This chapter presents findings for all adolescents who completed the survey, and particularly examines the results for boys, since our primary interest as it relates to this research and our practice is men and boys.

A note on gender-based abuse

The questions about the young person's own use of aggression do not specify the *recipient* of those acts. Likewise, the questions about the experience of being victimised do not specify the person *using* those acts. The results are likely to include gender-based abuse, where the harmful act is directed at an individual based on their gender presentation and rooted in power imbalances – this includes abuse of girls, non-binary people, or boys who do not conform to dominant forms of masculinity or sexuality. Research has found the use of bullying and aggression by boys is often an attempt to affirm their manliness and heterosexuality, and victims are frequently singled out due to their gender presentation and/or perceived sexuality (Rosen & Nofziger, 2019). Boys who bully others are at an elevated risk of using sexual violence, sexual harassment and dating violence later in adolescence (Espelage et al., 2022; Espelage et al., 2014; Foshee et al., 2014).

The results are also likely to include forms of aggression that do not fit the usual definition of gender-based abuse – such as the use of defensive force or resistance in a family violence context. When adolescents are experiencing family violence, they may feel overwhelmed, unsafe, or powerless. Without safe ways to process these experiences, some may express their distress through aggressive behaviours. This can be a way of externalising (or acting out) their fear, anger, sadness, or confusion, especially if they haven't learned other ways to cope or communicate how they feel.

Key findings

Use of aggression

Respondents were asked how often they had engaged in any of the following acts during the past month: 'Insulted, posted photos meant to embarrass, or made threats to someone over text messages, social media or another app or website' (categorised here as bullying); 'Physically hurt someone on purpose' (categorised here as physical violence); and 'Made sexual comments to someone you didn't know, in person or online' (categorised here as sexual harassment).

The survey found:

- Overall, 18% of boys reported that they had engaged in some form of bullying, physical violence or sexual harassment in the past month.
- More specifically, 10% of boys reported bullying, 9% of boys reported using physical violence, and 13% of boys reported using sexual harassment.
- Older boys aged 16-18 were more likely to report that they had used any of these acts during the past month compared with younger boys aged 14-15 (20% vs 16%).
- Boys were more likely to have used any of these acts during the past month (18%) compared with girls (13%) and the total sample (16%).

Respondents were also asked about the likelihood that they would retaliate if rejected, by indicating whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'If someone rejects me, I usually try to get back at them'. Research has found that feelings of rejection can be strongly correlated with retaliation and aggression in teenage boys (Yue & Zhang 2023).

We found that:

- Overall, 16% of boys agreed that if someone rejects them, they usually try to get back at them. This was slightly higher than the results for girls (14%) and for the full sample of adolescents (15%).
- Younger boys aged 14-15 years were more likely to report they agreed that they would retaliate when rejected than older boys aged 16-18 years (19% vs 14%).

Victimisation

It is understood that adolescents who use aggressive behaviour can at the same time be experiencing victimisation in the home (in family violence contexts) or with peers. The survey asked respondents to indicate if they had experienced any of the following acts during the past month: 'Someone you know physically hurt you on purpose'; 'Someone you know insulted you, posted photos meant to embarrass you, or made threats to you over text messages, social media or another app or website'; or 'Someone you don't know made sexual comments to you or about you'.

We found:

- Over a third of boys (38%) reported they had experienced any of these acts in the past month. This is lower than the percentage for girls (45%) and the full sample (41%).
- The proportion of respondents who reported they had been victimised was higher than the proportion of respondents who reported they had used aggressive acts (38% compared with 18% for boys, and 45% compared with 13% for girls).
- In terms of the specific acts, 23% of boys reported they had been on the receiving end of bullying (same percentage as girls); 17% of boys reported they had experienced physical violence (compared with 12% of girls, and 15% of the total sample); and 23% reported they had experienced sexual comments (compared with 33% of girls, and 28% of the full sample).
- When we analysed the results for boys of different ages, we found younger boys aged 14-15 years were less likely to have experienced these acts in the past month than older boys aged 16-18 years (33% to 41%).
- Further analysis of the Adolescent Man Box survey data for all respondents found a high degree of overlap between adolescents who use aggression and those who are victimised: of those respondents who reported they had used at least one of the forms of aggression in the past month, 83% reported they had been victimised in at least one of those ways in the past month. Of the adolescent boys who reported they had used aggression in the past month, 80% reported they had been victimised in the same period.

Bystander behaviours: responding to sexist jokes and harassment

Mobilising 'active bystanders' to prevent and respond to violence is an established form of primary prevention of gender-based violence in Australia[14], and supported by a modest evidence base (Bruno, 2023; Finnie et al., 2022). An active bystander is someone who, upon witnessing or learning about offending or harmful behaviour, takes safe and appropriate action. This includes action to stop the harmful behaviour, prevent it from escalating, offer support, or strengthening the conditions that work against violence occurring (such as challenging the underlying attitudes or behaviours that help perpetuate violence, or advocating for policy change) (Powell, 2011).

The Adolescent Man Box study sought to understand adolescents' responses to witnessing sexist behaviour and harassment of girls and gender-diverse people. Survey participants were asked how they responded the last time they witnessed each of the following scenarios: 'teenage boys or men making sexist comments or jokes near or around you'; 'teenage boys or men verbally or physically harassing a woman or girl near or around you'; and 'teenage boys or men verbally or physically harassing a transgender or gender diverse person near or around you'.

We found:

- The majority of respondents had witnessed sexist comments or harassment: 69% of boys aged 14-18 years reported they had ever seen boys or men making sexist comments or jokes, or harassing women, girls or transgender or gender diverse people. This was lower than the percentage for girls (77%) and the total survey sample (73%).
- Of the three scenarios, sexist comments or jokes were the most commonly witnessed (69% of all respondents had seen this), followed by harassment of a woman or girl (40% had witnessed), and then harassment of a transgender or gender diverse person (29%).
- For adolescents who reported they had witnessed teenage boys or men making **sexist comments or jokes**:
    - The majority of boys (61%) reported they felt uncomfortable but didn't say or do anything (compared with 65% of girls); this figure includes 23% of boys who wanted to do something but didn't know what to do (compared with 30% of girls).
    - Nearly one in five boys (19%) reported they had said or done something to show they didn't approve (compared with 29% of girls, and 24% of the total sample).
    - One in five boys (20%) reported that witnessing sexist comments or jokes didn't bother them (compared with 6% of girls, and 13% of the full sample).
- For adolescents who reported they had witnessed teenage boys or men verbally or physically **harassing a woman or girl**:
    - The majority of boys (61%) reported they felt uncomfortable but didn't say or do anything (compared with 62% of girls); this figure includes 32% of boys who wanted to do something but didn't know what to do (compared with 39% of girls).
    - A third of boys (34%) reported they had said or done something to show they didn't approve (compared with 38% of girls, and 36% of the total sample).
    - Only a very small proportion of boys (5%) reported it didn't bother them to witness harassment of a woman or girl (although still higher than the 1% of girls who gave this response, and 2% of the total sample).
- For adolescents who reported they had witnessed teenage boys or men verbally or physically **harassing a transgender or gender diverse person**, boys responded in the following ways:
    - Around half of boys (52%) reported they felt uncomfortable but didn't say or do anything (compared with 59% of girls); this figure includes 29% of boys who wanted to do something but didn't know what to do (compared with 35% of girls).
    - Around a quarter of boys (26%) reported they said or did something to show they didn't approve (compared with 36% of girls, and 32% of the full sample).
    - A substantial minority of boys (22%) reported it didn't bother them to see harassment of a transgender or gender diverse person (compared with 5% of girls who gave this response, and 13% of the total sample).

14 Bystander interventions are included in The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.

When comparing results from the three scenarios (see Fig. 4.1 and 4.2):

- It is promising that in each scenario, a substantial minority of adolescents did something in response to the harmful behaviour (between 19% and 38% of respondents). However, it is also important to note that in each scenario, an even larger proportion of adolescents were bothered but did nothing (between 52% and 65%).
- Boys were far more likely to be bothered by witnessing harassment of a girl or woman, than by witnessing sexist jokes or harassment of transgender or gender diverse people. Whereas, girls were more consistently bothered by each of the scenarios.

Figure 4.1: Proportion of boys who responded in different ways to sexism and harassment

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported different responses to witnessing sexist jokes and comments, and harassment of others

	Not bothered	Bothered but did nothing	Bothered and did something
Sexist jokes and comments (n=419)	20%	61%	19%
Harassment of girl / woman (n=212)	5%	61%	34%
Harassment of transgender person (n=166)	22%	52%	26%

Figure 4.2: Proportion of girls who responded in different ways to sexism and harassment

Percentage of female respondents aged 14-18 who reported different responses to witnessing sexist jokes and comments, and harassment of others

	Not bothered	Bothered but did nothing	Bothered and did something
Sexist jokes and comments (n=559)	6%	65%	29%
Harassment of girl / woman (n=378)	1%	62%	38%
Harassment of transgender person (n=257)	5%	59%	36%

Relationship with the Adolescent Man Box

There was a clear relationship between endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box and the behaviours and experiences related to aggression discussed in this chapter.

Use of aggression and control

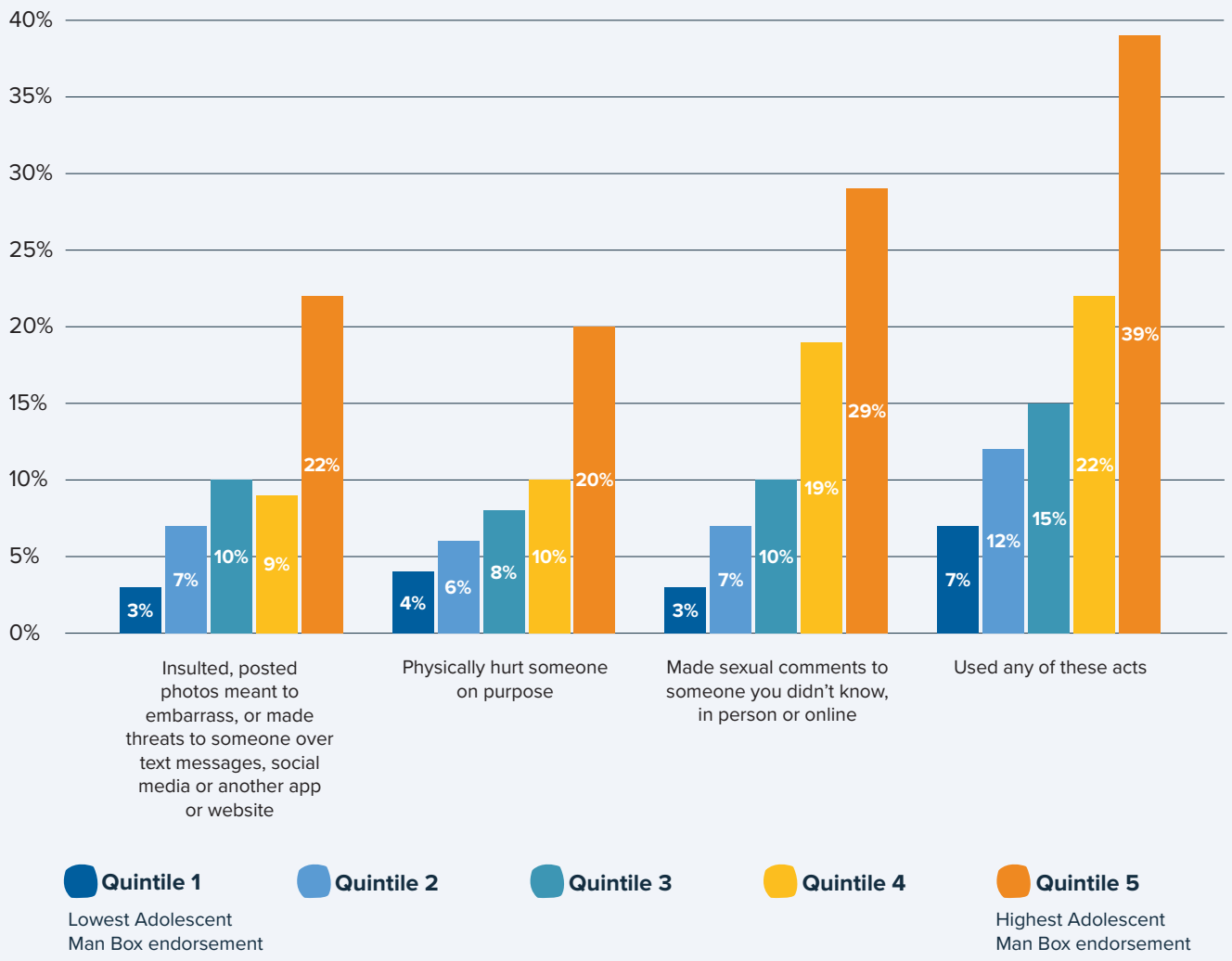
There was a strong relationship between respondents' use of abusive behaviours and their endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box. Boys who most endorsed the Adolescent Man Box rules were significantly more likely than boys who least endorsed Adolescent Man Box rules to report that in the past month they had bullied someone they knew, physically hurt someone they knew on purpose, or made sexual comments about someone they didn't know, and were significantly more likely to agree that they usually retaliate when rejected.

Specifically:

- Figure 4.3 shows that 39% of boys in quintile 5 reported that they had used bullying, physical violence or sexual harassment in the past month, compared with 7% of boys in quintile 1.
- More than a third of boys in quintile 5 (35%) agreed they usually retaliated when rejected compared with 11% of those in quintile 1 (Figure 11).
- Interestingly, for violent, bullying and sexual harassment behaviours, there is a steady, positive association between level of endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box and those behaviours. Whereas, for retaliation, the endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box makes a difference to levels of retaliation only at the highest levels of endorsement.

Figure 4.3: Proportion of boys who used physical violence, bullying or sexual harassment behaviours, by quintile (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported using each behaviour in the past month



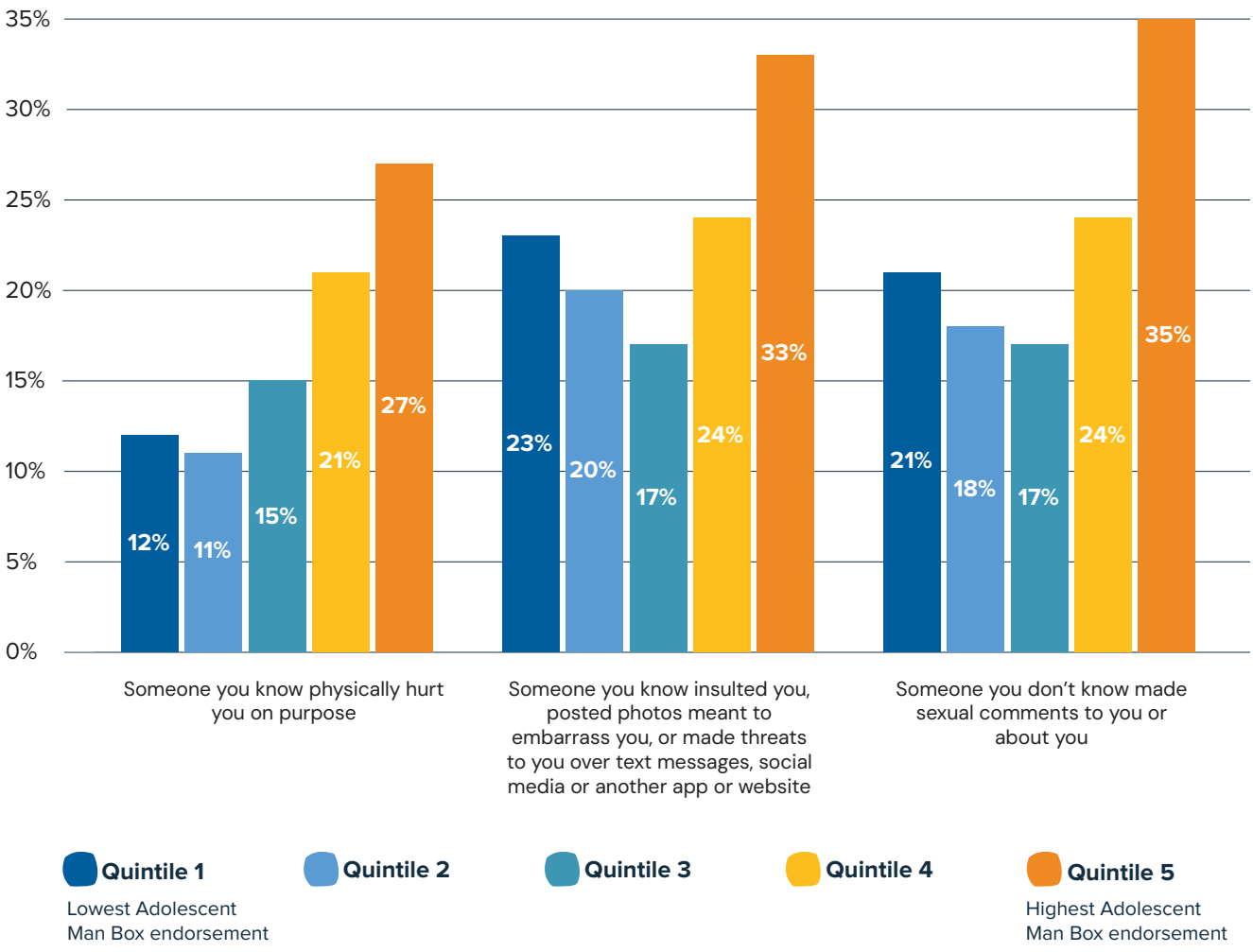
Victimisation

We found:

- There was a clear relationship between the experience of victimisation and endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box. Boys with the highest endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 5) were more likely to report they had experienced each of the acts compared with boys in other quintiles (Figure 4.4). For example, 27% of boys in quintile 5 had experienced being physically hurt on purpose in the past month compared with 12% of boys in quintile 1.

Figure 4.4: Proportion of boys who experienced physical violence, bullying or sexual harassment, by quintile (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported having experienced each behaviour in the past month



Bystander behaviours

There was also a clear relationship between bystander responses and endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box, noting that there were smaller sample sizes for these survey questions as indicated by 'n' numbers in the figures. We found:

- Boys who most endorsed the Adolescent Man Box were significantly more likely to say the behaviours didn't bother them compared with boys who had the lowest levels of endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box:
  - when witnessing **sexist comments or jokes**, 34% of boys in quintile 5 reported it didn't bother them, compared with 8% of boys in quintile 1 (See Fig. 4.5)
  - when witnessing **harassment of a woman or girl**, 13% of quintile 5 reported it didn't bother them, compared with 0% of boys in quintile 1 (See Fig. 4.6)
  - when witnessing **harassment of a transgender or gender diverse person**, 36% of boys in quintile 5 reported it didn't bother them, compared with 6% of boys in quintile 1 (See Fig. 4.7).
- Boys who had the lowest endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box were more likely to have said or done something in response to witnessing the harmful scenarios than boys with the highest endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box. This difference was particularly stark for the scenario involving harassment of a transgender or gender diverse person: 44% of boys in quintile 1 said or did something compared with 11% of boys in quintile 5. (See Fig. 4.7.)

Figure 4.5: Proportion of boys who responded in different ways when witnessing sexism, by quintile (n=419)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported each bystander response the last time they were around teenage boys or men making sexist comments or jokes

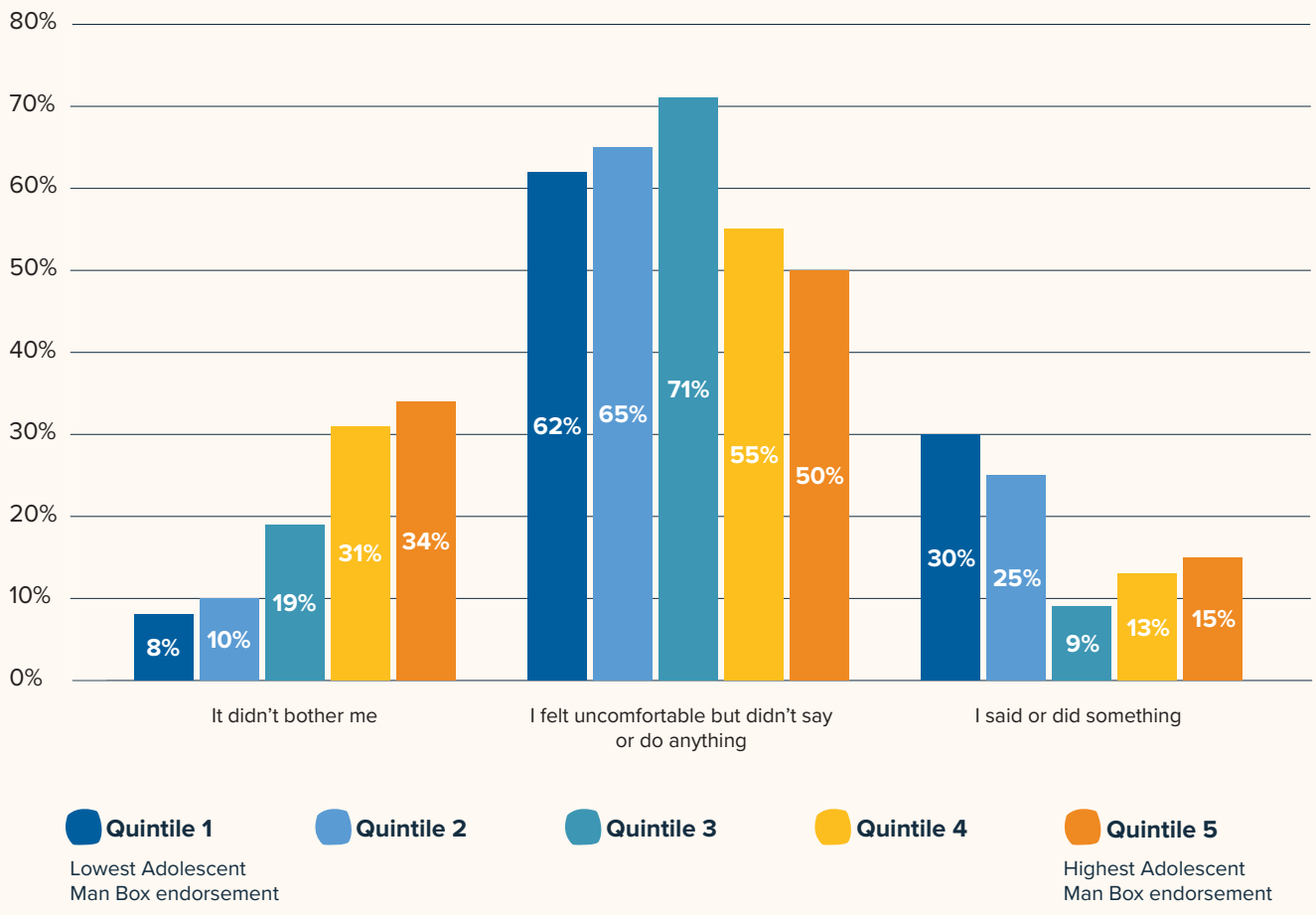


Figure 4.6: Proportion of boys who responded in different ways when witnessing harassment of a woman or girl, by quintile (n=212)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported each bystander response the last time they were around teenage boys or men who verbally or physically harassed a woman or girl

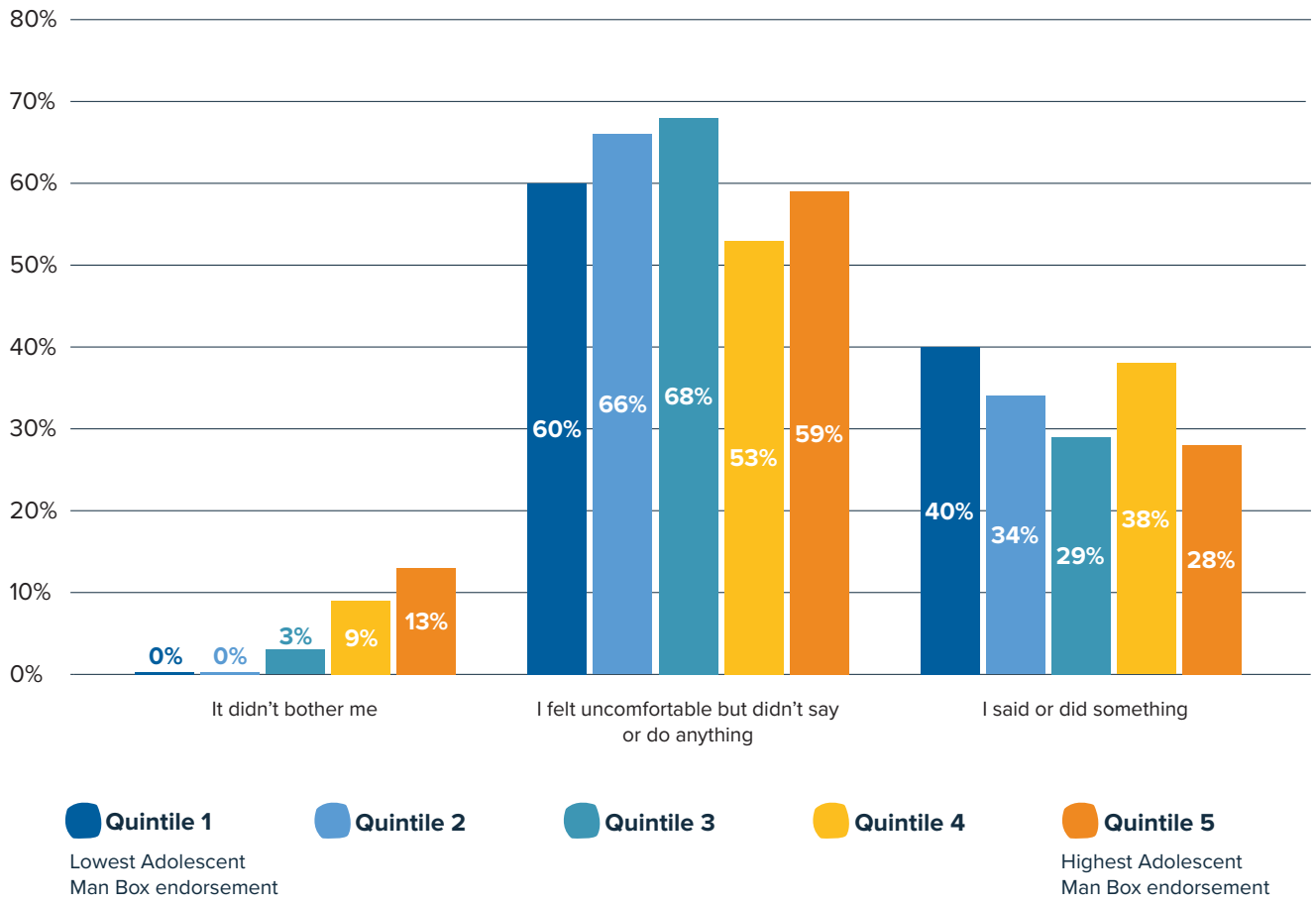
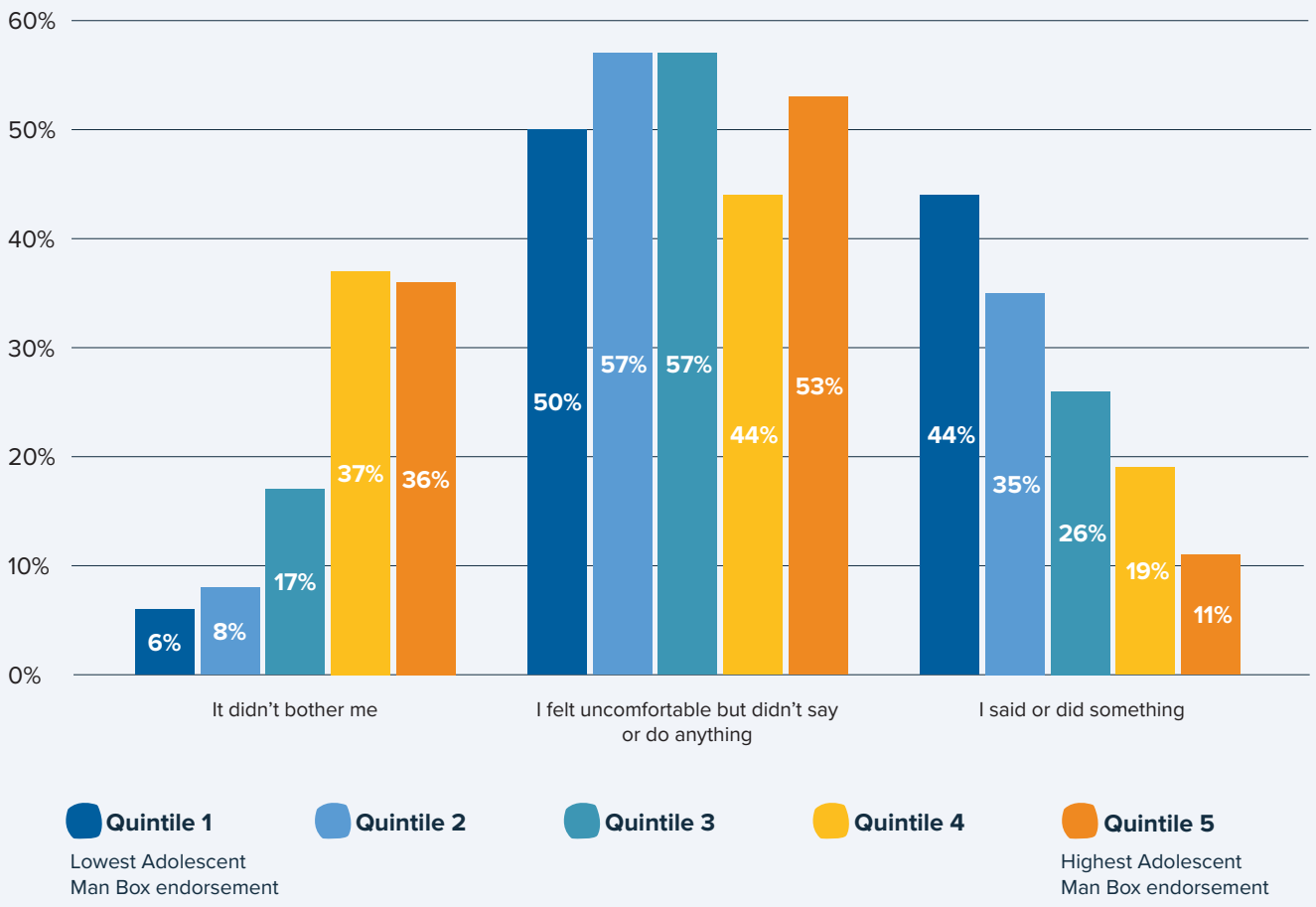


Figure 4.7: Proportion of boys who responded in different ways when witnessing harassment of a transgender or gender diverse person, by quintile (n=166)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported each bystander response the last time they were around teenage boys or men verbally or physically harassing a transgender or gender diverse person



Regression analysis to explore factors associated with boys' use of aggression

We wanted to further explore the relationship between attitudes, wellbeing, life experiences, and the use of aggressive behaviour (bullying, physical violence or sexual harassment) in the past month for boys aged 14 to 18. The established literature and practice knowledge suggested that self-reported aggressive behaviour may be associated with some aspects we explore in the Adolescent Man Box survey:

- Personal endorsement of restrictive masculine norms
- Violence-supportive attitudes
- Denial of gender inequality
- Experiences of victimisation
- Poor mental health, and lack of social support and help seeking
- Exposure to harmful pornography
- Viewing online social life as more rewarding and engaging than offline social life

Wallis Social Research statistically tested these relationships using a logistic regression model. Items with low sample endorsement were aggregated to form general construct predictor variables. The below items were associated with modest increases in the probability of self-reported aggressive behaviour :

- Experiencing sexual comments made to or about them by an unknown person
- Being physically hurt on purpose by someone known
- Average agreement with attitudes supportive of violence and control in relationships
- Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless in the last two weeks
- Average agreement with the items in the Social Teasing pillar of the Adolescent Man Box

This analysis was exploratory in nature and limited by a small sample size (649 boys). The effects reported above are modest, reflect only the individual contribution of the variable, and do not account for intercorrelations or interaction effects, and should not be interpreted as causal due to the cross-sectional research design. However, they may point to opportunities for further research.

Discussion

A concerning proportion of boys - particularly those who strongly agreed with Adolescent Man Box beliefs - reported using or experiencing aggression in the past month (nearly one in five boys reported they had used aggression and over a third of boys reported being victimised). This is likely an underestimation. Respondents may have under-reported their use of aggression, especially those who completed the survey on a parent's device. Our results showed that boys aged 16-18 who took the survey via their parent's device were less likely to report the use of aggression than those of the same age who completed the survey on their own device (see Appendix E).

Our study found that strong endorsement of restrictive adolescent masculinity was closely associated with a higher likelihood of using and experiencing violence and abuse. This pattern aligns with findings from the Australian Man Box studies (The Men's Project & Flood, 2024, 2018). Analysis of Adolescent Man Box survey results for all respondents found significant overlap between adolescents who use aggression and those who are victimised.

In such cases, the aggression reported may reflect defensive or retaliatory violence (such as in family violence contexts) or may stem from involvement in peer groups or environments where violence is more common and accepted (or even expected to demonstrate loyalty). The use of aggression by adolescents may also reflect reactions to earlier or current childhood trauma. Research shows a strong link between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) - traumatic events in a child's life before age 18 including various forms of abuse and neglect - and adolescents' use of violence (Fitz-Gibbon et al., 2022; Joshi & Truong, 2024). While not all adolescents with ACEs go on to use violence, these experiences do increase the risk. Australia's National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032 explicitly states a focus on children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right. This approach recognises that children experience violence uniquely and require tailored support.

The findings from the regression analysis, although modest, suggest a complex interplay between boys' experiences of victimisation, the adoption of harmful social attitudes, and emotional wellbeing, in shaping aggressive behaviour. This highlights the importance of addressing both the social and emotional aspects of boys' development, particularly focusing on interrupting cycles of victimisation, reshaping harmful norms, and supporting mental health and help seeking, as part of violence prevention strategies.

Importantly, adolescents' use of violence should not be viewed in the same way as adult perpetration. Firstly, adolescents are still undergoing cognitive, emotional and social development, which affects their impulse control, understanding of consequences and emotional regulation. Secondly, while boys and men of all ages can be deeply affected by previous experiences of aggression in childhood, adolescent boys are at much greater risk than men of being current victims of family violence. This means that adolescent boys are more likely than men to be experiencing and using aggression concurrently.

There is a valuable opportunity to work with adolescent boys – with a focus on support and accountability – to reduce aggressive behaviour during adolescence and prevent the use of future violence in adulthood. This includes helping boys to develop healthy ways to cope with the emotions associated with rejection, reducing the risk of violent retaliation both now and later in life. Research on intimate partner homicide and coercive control shows how these emotions can manifest in high-risk perpetrators. Australian media coverage of the 2025 NSW Coronial Inquest into the deaths of Lilie James and Paul Thijssen reported that experts believed Paul was motivated by a desire to punish Lilie for rejecting him. The reporting also highlighted a warning from Lilie's mother about the dangers of failing to teach boys to respect girls' choices and to accept rejection (Baker, 2025). Early intervention with boys and young men is a crucial strategy for long-term violence prevention.

Many adolescents report wanting to intervene when they witness harassment but feeling unsure about how to do so – for example one in three boys wanted to intervene when they witnessed harassment of a woman or girl but didn't know what to do. This presents a clear opportunity to build their skills and confidence in active bystander behaviours. This need aligns with findings from the Our Watch (2025) survey, which showed that while most men want to take action against violence towards women, many are uncertain about what steps they can take. This is also explored in Respect Victoria's report on how to support men's engagement in the prevention of violence against women and other forms of gender-based violence (Respect Victoria, 2024). While sample sizes for the scenarios were relatively small, it does appear that more needs to be done with adolescent boys to address transphobia; while only a very small proportion (5%) of boys were unbothered by witnessing harassment of women or girls, a much larger proportion (22%) of boys were unbothered by harassment of transgender or gender diverse people.

Evidence shows that well-designed, culturally appropriate interventions can reduce adolescents' involvement in bullying, sexual harassment, and violence. Research has found the most effective programs share some key characteristics: they address adolescents' knowledge, attitudes, and interpersonal skills (including practicing pro-social behaviours, such as active bystander behaviours, to build competence and reduce fear of 'getting it wrong'); and involve community leadership or engagement (Espelage et al., 2022). The results from the Adolescent Man Box survey reinforce the need for these types of interventions with adolescents in Australia.

Chapter 5 – Pornography and image-based abuse

Introduction

A significant body of research – including longitudinal and experimental studies – shows that pornography can shape young people's attitudes and beliefs about gender roles, relationships, and sex, including in harmful ways (Wright et al. 2015; Hald et al. 2013) and is directly influencing young people's sexual behaviour (OFLC 2018). Adolescence is a key period for the formation of these ideas and behaviours, and many young people are exposed to pornography early. An Australian survey in 2020 found that many young people are exposed to pornography early – by age 13 for nearly half (48%) of boys, and age 15 for the same proportion of girls, and that on average, boys are viewing pornography for the first time approximately three years before their first sexual relationships (Our Watch 2020). This early exposure can be deliberate or accidental, facilitated by the ease of access and anonymous use of technology such as mobile phones (Marshall & Miller 2019).

Content analyses have found that mainstream pornography frequently depicts male dominance, female submission, and acts of aggression - overwhelmingly toward women - and portrays women responding neutrally or positively to aggression in most cases (Fritz et al., 2020).[15] Greater pornography use is associated with less progressive attitudes about gender, including beliefs in rigid roles (Our Watch 2020), as well as a greater acceptance of rape myths and sexual aggression (Brown & L'Engle 2009; Peter & Valkenburg 2009).

This study is also interested in adolescents' exposure to 'deep fakes', a form of image-based abuse material which is increasing exponentially.[16] A deep fake is a video, image or audio made with artificial intelligence (AI) to make someone look or sound like they did something they did not – most often something sexual. This type of abuse disproportionately targets women and girls and is disproportionately perpetrated by men and boys.[17] It causes profound emotional and psychological harm. The Adolescent Man Box study seeks to contribute to the data on exposure to pornography and image-based abuse material by adolescents in Australia and to understand the relationship with endorsement of rigid masculine norms.

A note about scope

The inclusion of both pornography and image-based abuse material in this chapter is not to suggest they are the same thing. While there is a degree of overlap and thematic commonality, pornography is not inherently harmful (though a significant body of research identifies an association between pornography use and aggressive attitudes and behaviours, and other harms), whereas image-based abuse material is *always* harmful – whether it is used for sexual arousal, for bullying, control or retaliation, or any other purpose.

15 For example, a study found that women were the targets in 97% of acts of aggression and men were the perpetrators in 76% (Fritz et al. 2020).

16 Explicit deepfakes have increased on the internet as much as 550% year on year since 2019 (eSafety Commissioner Submission to the Deepfake Sexual Material Bill 2024).

17 A 2023 study found 99% of victims of deepfake pornography were female (Australian Human Rights Commission Submission to the Deepfake Sexual Material Bill 2024), meanwhile, 91% of offenders sentenced for these offences between 2015-2019 were male (Law Council of Australia Submission Deepfake Sexual Material Bill 2024). Research found that for children aged 10-15, a similar proportion of girls and boys had experienced image-based abuse (8% of girls, 7% of boys) (eSafety Commissioner 2025b).

Key findings

A note about sample size

In designing the survey, we made ethical decisions with participant wellbeing in mind to allow participants to opt-out of questions of a sensitive nature. This was important given respondents were as young as 14 years old. All respondents were asked an initial question – 'Have you ever seen pornography'. Respondents who indicated they had never seen pornography, were unsure if they'd seen pornography, or preferred not to say, were not asked further questions on this topic. This means we are only able to present data about frequency of use and nature of content for a smaller sample size. Quintile analysis involved yet smaller samples as this was only done for boys' data. For example, only 334 boys answered the question about pornography viewing frequency, and only 253 boys answered the question about viewing harmful acts in pornography. Therefore, it is best to focus on the relationship between the quintiles (ie the trend across the five quintiles) rather than focusing too heavily on any one quintile.

Viewing pornography

The survey asked respondents if they had ever seen pornography, providing the response options 'Yes', 'No', 'Not sure' and "Prefer not to say'.[18]

The data shows:

- Boys were more likely than girls to report viewing pornography: 59% of boys reported they had ever viewed pornography, compared to 43% of girls (and 52% of the full sample).
- Unsurprisingly, older boys were more likely than younger boys to report having ever viewed pornography: 70% of boys aged 16-18 reported having viewed pornography, compared with 43% of boys aged 14-15.

Frequency

The survey asked respondents (limited to those who had already indicated they had seen pornography) how often they had viewed pornography in the previous six months. Respondents could choose to respond with 'Daily or almost daily', 'Once or a few times a week, 'Once or a few times a month', 'A few times in the last 6 months' 'Once or twice', 'Never', or 'Prefer not to say'.

Of those adolescents who had ever seen pornography:

- Boys were more likely than girls to report frequent pornography viewing
  - 52% of boys viewed pornography once per month or more, compared with 27% of girls (and 43% of all respondents).
  - 11% of boys view pornography almost daily, daily or multiple times a day, compared with 2% of girls. When we analysed data for boys of different ages, we found older boys were more likely than younger boys to report viewing pornography more frequently: 58% of boys aged 16-18 reported they had viewed pornography once per month or more, compared with 38% of boys aged 14-15.
- When we examined the results for boys 16-18 years who were directly invited to do the survey (and most likely using their own device to do the survey) compared with boys of the same age who were invited via their parent (and most likely doing the survey on their parent's device), we found a significant difference in reported behaviour. The boys using their own device were much more likely to report frequent pornography use: 72% reported viewing pornography once per month or more, compared with 38% of boys who did the survey on their parent's device.

See Appendix E for full data tables regarding pornography use.

18 The survey included this explanation: *'For the purposes of this survey, pornography is defined as sexually explicit material, primarily intended to arouse the audience'.*

Harmful acts in pornography

The Adolescent Man Box survey asked respondents about the content of the pornography they had viewed, and particularly regarding inclusion of a number of acts we have categorised as 'harmful'. It is important to note that the word 'harmful' was not used in the survey itself. Rather, the language used in the survey for these harmful acts were:

- 'something happening to a [male / female / gender diverse person] without consent'[19];
- 'A [male / female / gender diverse person] being choked';
- A [male / female / gender diverse person] being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped or gagged'.

These are categorised as harmful in this report because of the harms and risks associated with normalising aggression, lack of consent, and choking (which has significant health risks).[20] For each act, respondents could choose from a range of frequencies: 'Always', 'Often', 'Sometimes, 'Rarely', 'Never', or 'Prefer not to say'.

We found:

- Girls were more likely than boys to report ever seeing each of the harmful acts, whether those acts were directed towards females, males or gender diverse people (See Fig 5.1). For example, 52% of girls reported seeing someone being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped or gagged, compared to 32% of boys.
- Adolescents (regardless of gender) generally reported higher levels of exposure to harmful acts towards females than towards males or gender diverse people. This is consistent with all research that has analysed the genders of the targets of aggression in pornography which has found it is overwhelmingly directed towards females (Fritz et al., 2020).
- Although all adolescents reported higher exposure to harmful acts towards females, there was a significant gap between what girls and boys reported seeing. For example, 70% of the girls reported seeing females being choked compared with 50% of boys reporting this, and 54% of girls in the sample reported seeing non-consensual acts towards females compared with 45% of the sample of boys reporting this. This may reflect a difference in what girls and boys consciously notice and remember, rather than (or as well as) a difference in the content that girls and boys are seeing.
- Older boys were more likely to report seeing each of the harmful acts described than younger boys. However, in most cases the older boys still reported less exposure to these harmful acts than reported by adolescent girls of all ages.

19 The survey included this explanation: *'Without consent' refers to something happening without the person's permission or against their will. This may include actions such as verbal pressuring, intimidation, physical force, tricking someone, using hidden cameras or upskirting, or when a person is asleep'.*

20 Early medical research found repeated strangulation (aka 'choking') causes brain changes that may lead to acute and chronic neurological consequences (Hou et al, 2023). Choking has been associated with memory loss (Huibregtse et al, 2022) and increased risk of mental health issues (Herbenick et al 2021). Further clinical investigation is needed to verify the neurological and mental health impacts of strangulation. Physical consequences can be significant and long lasting, developing weeks or months after the strangulation (Huibregtse et al., 2022).

Figure 5.1: Proportion of adolescents who see harmful acts when they look at pornography, by gender (n=419)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who had ever seen pornography and who reported seeing different acts when they look at pornography, including: 'Something happening to [someone] without consent' (defined as 'something happening without the person's permission or against their will. This may include actions such as verbal pressuring, intimidation, physical force, tricking someone, using hidden cameras or upskirting, or when a person is asleep'); '[Someone] being choked'; and '[Someone] being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped or gagged'

Harmful acts seen within pornography	Boys	Girls	Total*
Any non-consensual act happening to anyone	45%	53%	48%
Anyone being strangled ('choked')	50%	67%	56%
Anyone being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped, or gagged	32%	52%	39%
Any of these harmful acts happening to a female	63%	83%	70%
Any of these harmful acts happening to a male	47%	54%	50%
Any of these harmful acts happening to a gender diverse person	32%	44%	36%
Any of these acts happening to anyone	63%	81%	69%

**includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Image-based abuse

We also asked respondents about their experience with image-based abuse, specifically whether they had seen, in the previous six months, sexually explicit deepfake pictures or videos of real people they knew; or whether they had friends who would probably create such images.

We found:

- Almost 1 in 10 boys (9%) reported they had seen sexually explicit deepfakes of people they knew (compared with 5% of girls, and 8% of all respondents).
- An even higher proportion of boys (13%) of boys reported having friends who would create such material (compared with 7% of girls, and 10% of the full sample).
- Older boys were twice as likely to report seeing such material than younger boys (12% to 6%), but slightly less likely to report having friends who would probably create sexually explicit deepfakes of real people (12% to 14%).

Relationship with the Adolescent Man Box

Pornography viewing

- Endorsement of the rules in the Adolescent Man Box is not associated with the likelihood of ever seeing pornography. The results showed no clear relationship between the two, with percentages ranging from 57% to 62% (non-linear) across the quintiles (see Fig 5.2).
- However, boys in quintile 5 (strongest endorsement) were more likely to report viewing pornography frequently (70% did so once per month or more) than boys with lower endorsement of Adolescent Man Box rules (41% to 57% in other quintiles viewed pornography once per month or more) (Fig 5.3).
- Boys in quintile 5 were more likely than boys with lower endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box rules to report they have watched harmful acts in pornography:
  - 82% of boys in quintile 5 have watched any harmful act happening to a female, compared with 43% of boys in quintile 1 (Fig 5.4).
  - 72% of boys in quintile 5 have watched a non-consensual act happening to someone of any gender, compared with 19% of boys in quintile 1 (Fig 5.5).

Figure 5.2: Proportion of boys who had ever seen pornography, by quintile (n=589)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported they had ever seen pornography (defined as 'sexually explicit material, primarily intended to arouse the audience')

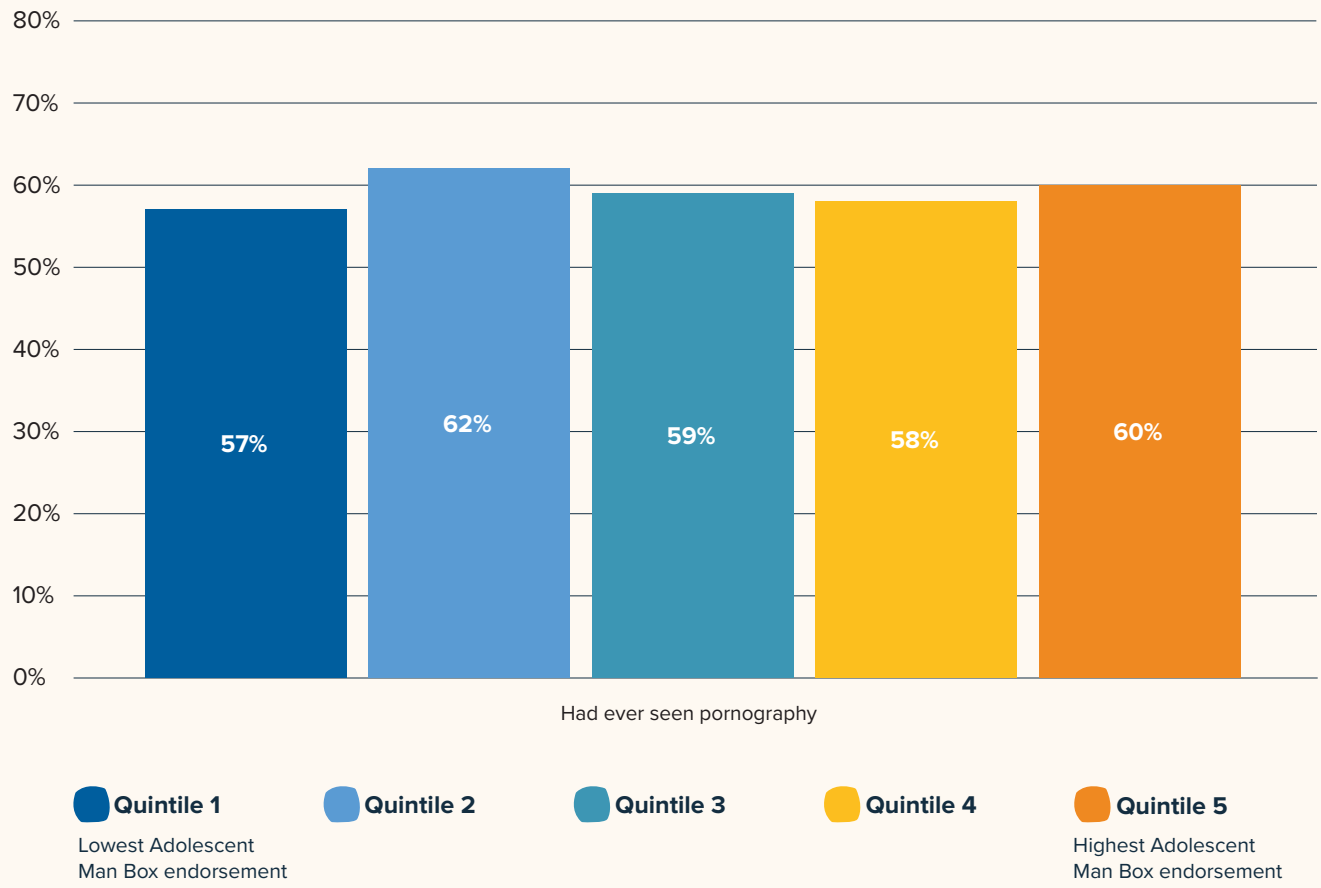


Figure 5.3: Proportion of boys who viewed pornography at different frequencies, by quintile (n=334)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported they had viewed pornography in the last 6 months, who reported different viewing frequencies (pornography was defined as 'sexually explicit material, primarily intended to arouse the audience')

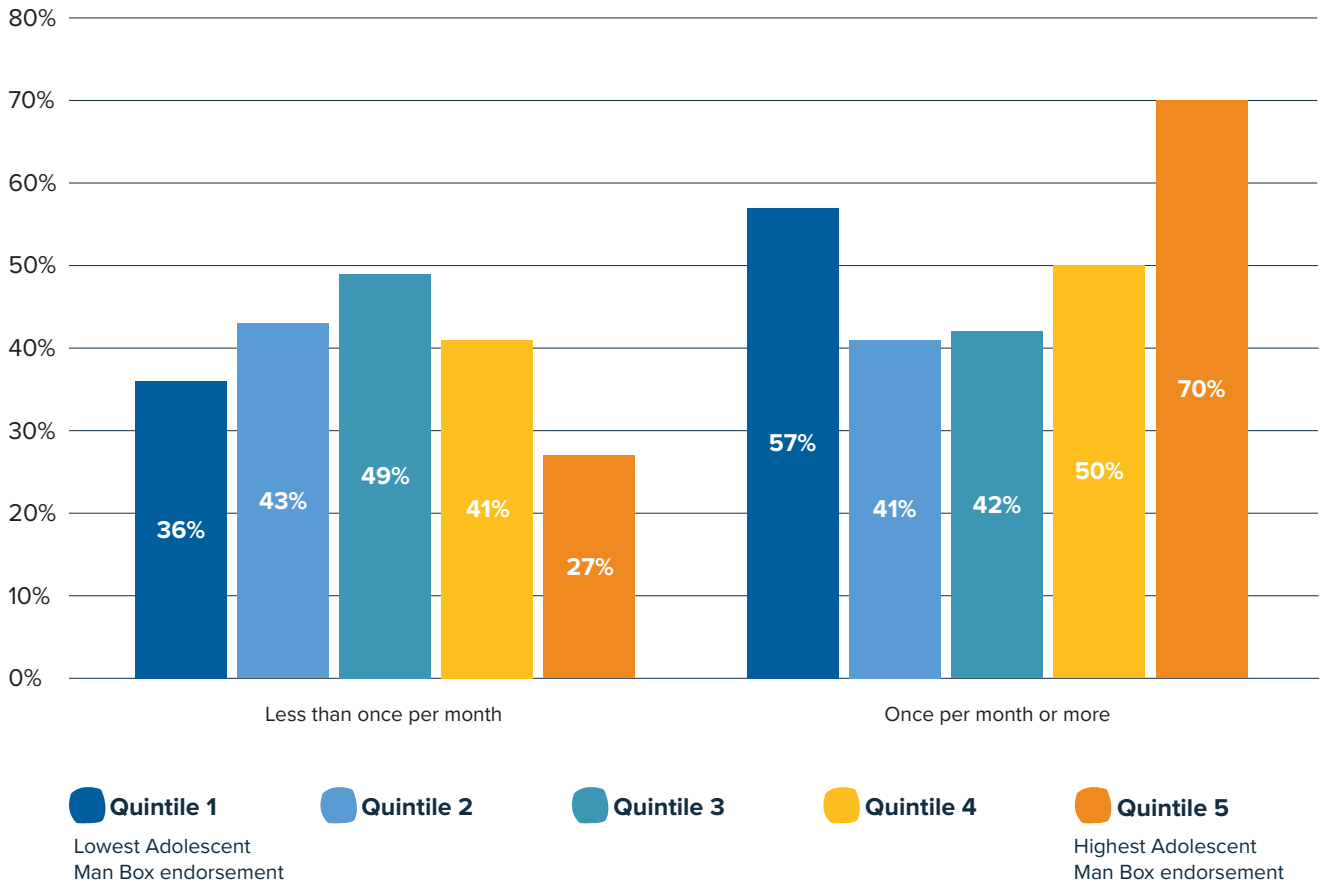


Figure 5.4: Proportion of boys who saw harmful acts happening to people of different genders in pornography, by quintile (n=253)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who had ever seen pornography and who see non-consensual acts, choking, pushing, shoving, kicking, punching, slapping or gagging ever happening to people of different genders in pornography

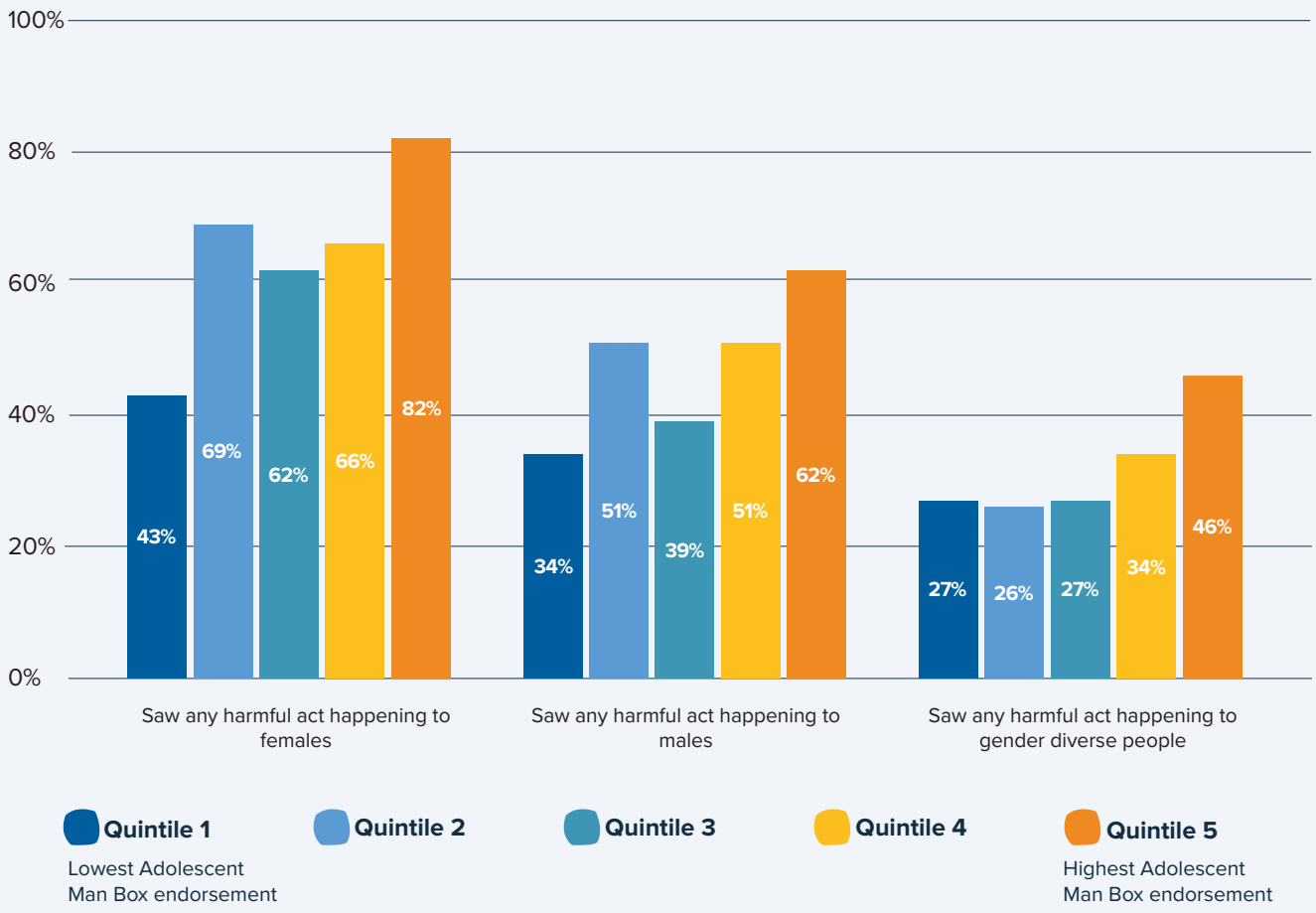


Figure 5.5: Proportion of boys who saw specific harmful acts happening to anyone in pornography, by quintile (n=253)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who had ever seen pornography and who see non-consensual acts, choking, pushing, shoving, kicking, punching, slapping or gagging ever happening to anyone in pornography

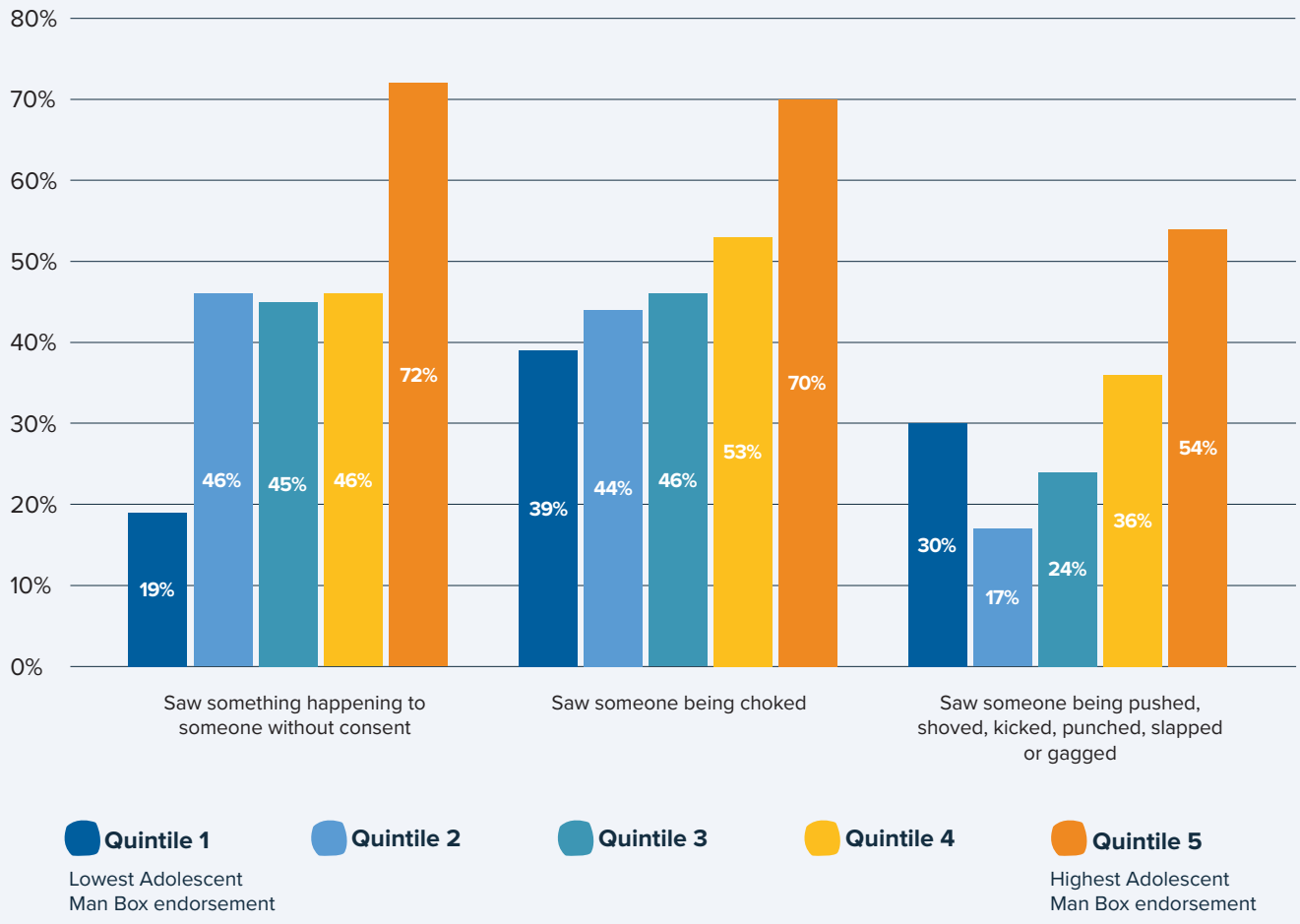
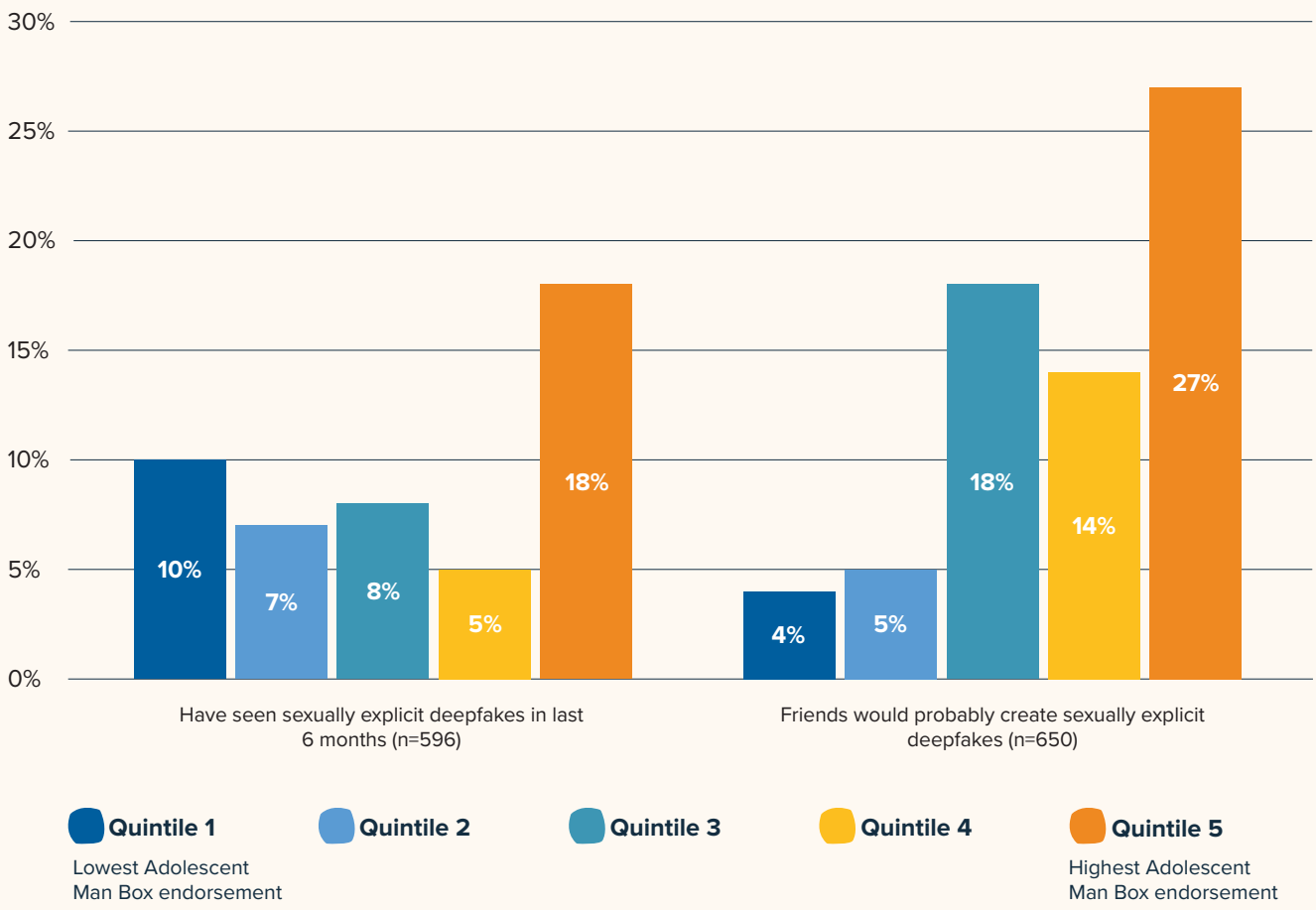


Image-based abuse

- Boys who most strongly endorsed the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 5) were more likely to report that they have seen sexually explicit deepfake pictures or videos of real people they know than boys in the other quintiles: 18% of boys in quintile 5 compared with between 5% and 10% for the other quintiles (Fig 5.6)
- Boys in quintile 5 were much more likely to agree that their friend would probably create sexually explicit deepfake images: 27% of boys in quintile 5 agree that their friends would probably use AI to create fake nude images of people they know, compared with 4% of boys in quintile 1 (Fig 5.6)

Figure 5.6: Proportion of boys who have seen image-based abuse material, or have friends who would create such material, by quintile

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported they have seen sexually explicit deepfake images of people they know in the last 6 months, and who agreed or strongly agreed that their friends would probably create sexually explicit deepfake images of people they know



Discussion

Our findings confirm that experience with pornography is commonplace for adolescents in Australia. Indeed, it is very likely that the reported rates of viewing pornography and being exposed to harmful content are under-reported in this study, with generally lower pornography use and exposure than found in other research (Crabbe et al., 2024). We anticipate that these findings are likely to under-report pornography use; we found that adolescent boys accessing the survey on their parents' devices consistently reported lower use of frequent pornography and harmful pornography compared to adolescents recruited directly and using their own devices.[21]

Pornography is likely a significant influence on young people's sexual attitudes and behaviours. This is particularly concerning given the high level of sexually violent content found on many mainstream platforms and the accessibility of this content. Our findings confirmed that many young people see such sexual imagery. Exposure of adolescent boys to harmful acts in pornography was especially high for boys who most strongly endorse the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 5), but was present across all quintiles.

While pornography is adult content not intended for children, we recognise that many young people are exposed to it online, often at a young age. While not every child or young person who sees pornography will experience significant harm, very frequent use or exposure to harmful content is worrying. Regular exposure increases the risk of young people absorbing unrealistic and harmful messages about sex, consent, and relationships. Research suggests that such exposure may affect adolescent brain development (Faisal et al., 2022) and it has been linked to harmful sexual behaviour in young people (McKibbin et al., 2024).[22] Frequent consumers of pornography, particularly young men, are more likely to engage in harmful or non-consensual sexual behaviours and to hold attitudes that justify or excuse violence and coercion (Our Watch, 2020). Research also shows that the use of strangulation (known as choking) during sex has become increasingly prevalent, and is being normalised through frequent depictions in pornography (Douglas et al., 2024).

Despite many young people reporting they do not believe pornography is a reliable source of education about sex, a significant number (60% of young men and 41% of young women) still turn to it as a key source of sexual information, more so than family or professionals (Our Watch, 2020). While some young people demonstrate critical awareness of pornography's limitations, the normalisation of its messages - such as assumptions about not needing consent and reinforcement of sexist stereotypes - raises concerns.

There is a need for early, honest, and critical conversations with young people about how pornography shapes understandings of gender, sex and relationships (Crabbe & Flood, 2021), especially since many children are exposed to it during formative years, often well before their first sexual experience with a partner, and usually without any prior discussion with parents or caregivers (OFLC, 2018). It is encouraging that pornography education is now included in the national curriculum, however schools across Australia are at different stages in their delivery of this content. There is opportunity to continue building momentum by supporting all schools to confidently and consistently deliver pornography education, and by supporting parents to understand these issues and to have conversations about pornography at home. Critically, regulatory reforms and safety-by-design approaches are needed to reduce the likelihood of children being exposed to harmful pornography on mainstream online platforms.

Our survey also revealed that a small but concerning proportion of boys were engaging with image-based abuse material: 9% of boys reported they had seen sexually explicit deepfakes of people they knew, and 13% reported their friends would probably create such material. Boys who most endorsed the Adolescent Man Box rules were significantly more likely to report these experiences. As more Australian states and territories move to criminalise image-based abuse such as the creation of sexually explicit deepfakes, there is a need to educate young people about the harms and legal consequences of these behaviours. This helps prevent both the behaviour itself and the risk of young people facing criminal charges.

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21 For example, 72% of 16-18 year olds recruited directly reported viewing pornography once per month or more, compared with 38% of 16-18 year olds recruited via their parents.

22 Pornography exposure is a recurring factor for young people who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour, and many indicate they don't know where to seek help (Jesuit Social Services, 2024).

Case study of a young adolescent boy watching illegal pornography content

Leo* is a young adolescent boy. He lives with his parents, goes to school and plays sports. Nobody knew he was hiding a dark secret. He started watching pornography when he was eight years old, and recently started watching illegal content – child sexual abuse material. After watching the material, he would be overcome with guilt and a sense of isolation, and felt he could not tell anybody. Whenever he heard sirens he worried he was going to be caught. He was not surprised when police officers walked into his bedroom one morning before school to arrest him.

**Leo (not his real name) is a real participant in a series of interviews conducted by Jesuit Social Services in 2023-2024 as part of research for the Worried About Sex And Pornography Project. This was not part of the Adolescent Man Box Study.*

Chapter 6 – Risk taking: alcohol, drugs, gambling, physical fights

Introduction

Risk taking is a normal and healthy part of human development. The typical trajectory for risk-taking behaviours over the life course is low risk taking in childhood, increasing during puberty and peaking during adolescence and decreasing during adulthood (Romer et al., 2017). Risk taking can be helpful in enabling adolescents to develop their own identities and build their confidence in decision making and problem solving. However, some risk-taking behaviours can be concerning due to their potential to cause harm to adolescents themselves and the people around them. The study sought to understand adolescents' harmful risk-taking behaviours, including in relation to alcohol and other drug consumption, gambling and getting into physical fights. Each of these has the potential to cause harm to self and others.

The adult Man Box study focused on attitudes to manhood and the behaviours of Australian men aged 18-45 and found a relationship between personal endorsement of rigid masculine norms and risky alcohol consumption and problem gambling, but not a linear relationship with illicit drug use (The Men's Project & Flood, 2024, 2018). This study examined the relationship between boys' personal endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box and these risk-taking behaviours. The study also sought to put these findings in perspective, and to support practice with boys, by understanding the behaviours and experiences of girls and non-binary respondents.

Key findings

Alcohol consumption

The survey asked respondents to indicate if they had ever drunk alcohol and then asked about the frequency of their drinking in the previous 12 months.

We found:

- Boys are less likely to have ever consumed alcohol compared to girls and compared to the total sample: 40% of boys reported that they had ever consumed alcohol, compared with 50% of girls (and 45% of the total sample).
- Boys are less likely to regularly consume alcohol compared to girls and the total sample: 13% of boys reported regular[23] consumption of alcohol, compared with 17% of girls (and 15% of the total sample).
- As would be expected, the likelihood of boys having ever consumed alcohol increases with age: boys aged 16-18 years were more likely to have ever had alcohol compared with boys aged 14-15 years (49% vs 29%).

Other drug use

Respondents were asked whether they had ever used marijuana or other drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco, or vapes), and if so, how often in the last 12 months.

We found:

- Overall, a small proportion of adolescents reported using marijuana and other drugs, and there were no significant differences between the rates for boys and girls.
- 10% of boys reported they had ever used marijuana, compared with 12% for girls (and 11% for all respondents).
- 4% of boys reported they had ever used other drugs (the same as for girls and the total sample).

23 Regular consumption of alcohol means at least once per month.

Use of gambling

Respondents were asked whether they had spent money on betting or gambling activities. Gambling response options included: 'online table games (eg: poker, blackjack, roulette)', 'online betting on horse or dog races', 'online betting on sports', 'lootboxes in online games', 'asking someone to place a bet for you in person', and 'other betting or gambling activities'. Respondents were then asked about the potential harm resulting from their gambling use with the statement: 'In the last year, how often have you?' The response options included: 'bet more than you could really afford to lose', 'been criticised for your betting or told that you had a gambling problem (regardless of whether or not you thought it was true)', 'felt guilty about the way you gamble or what happens when you gamble'.

We found:

- Boys are more likely than girls to have spent money on gambling: 16% of boys reported that they had ever spent money on gambling, compared with 7% of girls (and 12% of the total sample).
- Boys are more likely to have experienced gambling problems: 8% of boys reported experiencing gambling problems[24], compared to 3% of girls (and 6% of the total sample).

Getting into a physical fight

Respondents were also asked whether they had ever got into a physical fight and were then asked how many physical fights they had got into in the last year.

We found:

- While boys are more likely than girls to have got into a physical fight: 25% of boys, compared to 13% of girls (and 19% of the total sample), the majority of boys (75%) have *never* been in a physical fight (compared with 87% of girls, and 81% of the total sample).
- Older boys were slightly more likely than younger boys to report they had been in a physical fight: 26% of boys aged 16-18 years compared to 22% of boys aged 14-15 years reported getting into a physical fight.

Relationship with the Adolescent Man Box

There was a strong relationship between risk-taking behaviours and endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box.

We found:

- The more strongly boys endorsed the Adolescent Man Box rules, the more likely they were to have consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months: 47% of boys in quintile 5 had consumed alcohol, compared with 32% of boys in quintile 1. However, there was not a clear relationship between other drug use and the endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box.
- Stronger endorsement of Adolescent Man Box rules was associated with a significantly higher likelihood of gambling and gambling problems for adolescent boys. For example, 31% of boys in quintile 5 have spent money on gambling compared with 8% of boys in quintile 1. Of the smaller sample of boys who reported they had spent money on gambling and were willing to answer the question about gambling problems, those who strongly endorsed the Adolescent Man Box were more likely to have experienced gambling problems in the previous 12 months (19%), than boys with lower endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box (3%).
- Boys with stronger endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box were also more likely than other boys to have got into a serious physical fight (33% of quintile 5 vs 21% of quintile 1).

24 Gambling problem is determined by identifying the respondents who indicated they had bet more than they could afford to lose, been criticised for betting or been told they had a gambling problems, or felt guilty about the way they gambled or what happened when they gambled.

Figure 6.1: Proportion of boys who had consumed alcohol or drugs, by quintile (n=640)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported they had ever consumed alcohol or drugs

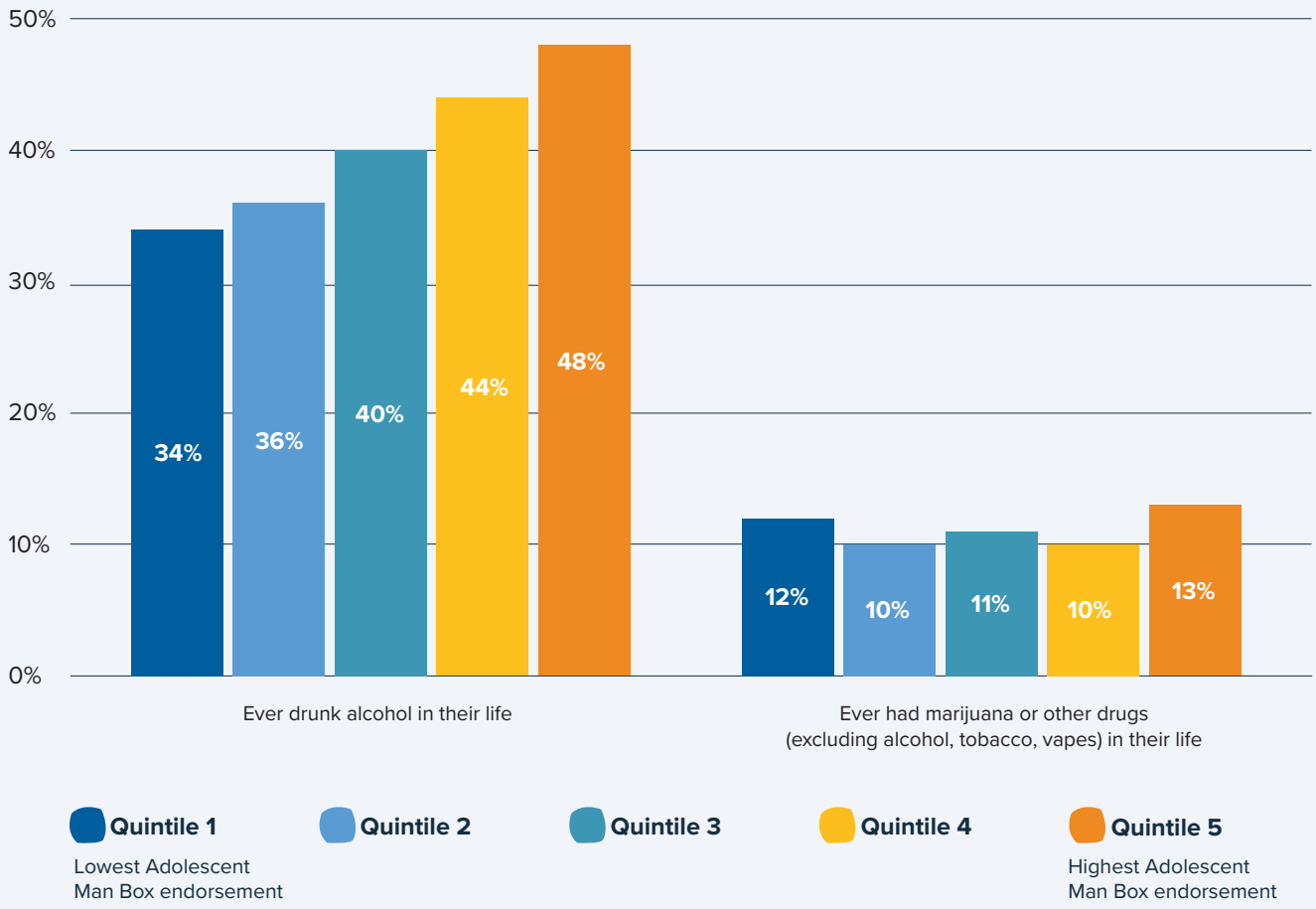


Figure 6.2: Proportion of boys who gambled or had gambling problems, by quintile

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported they had ever spent money on gambling activities in their life, and the percentage of those respondents who reported they had experienced a gambling problem in the last 12 months

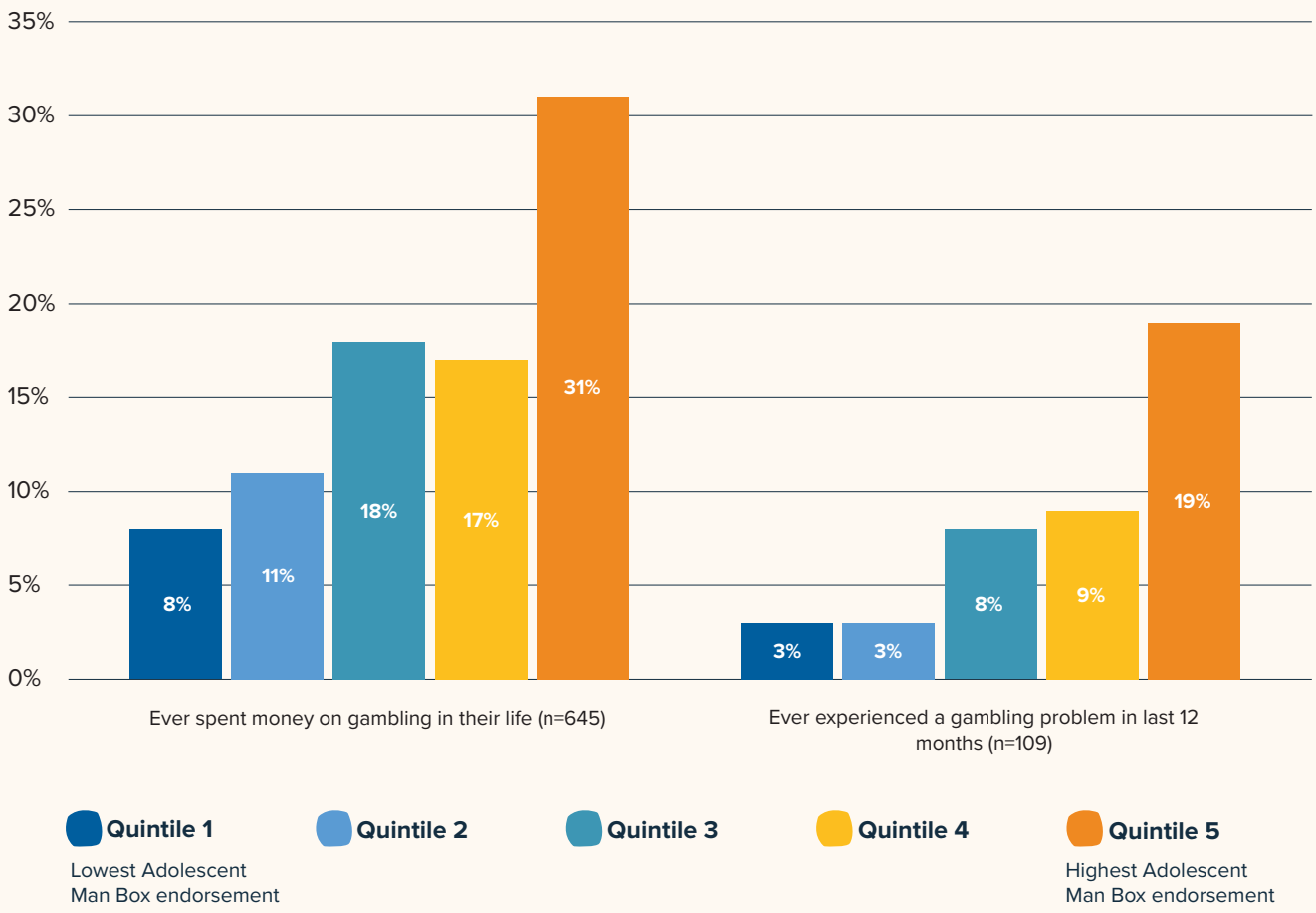
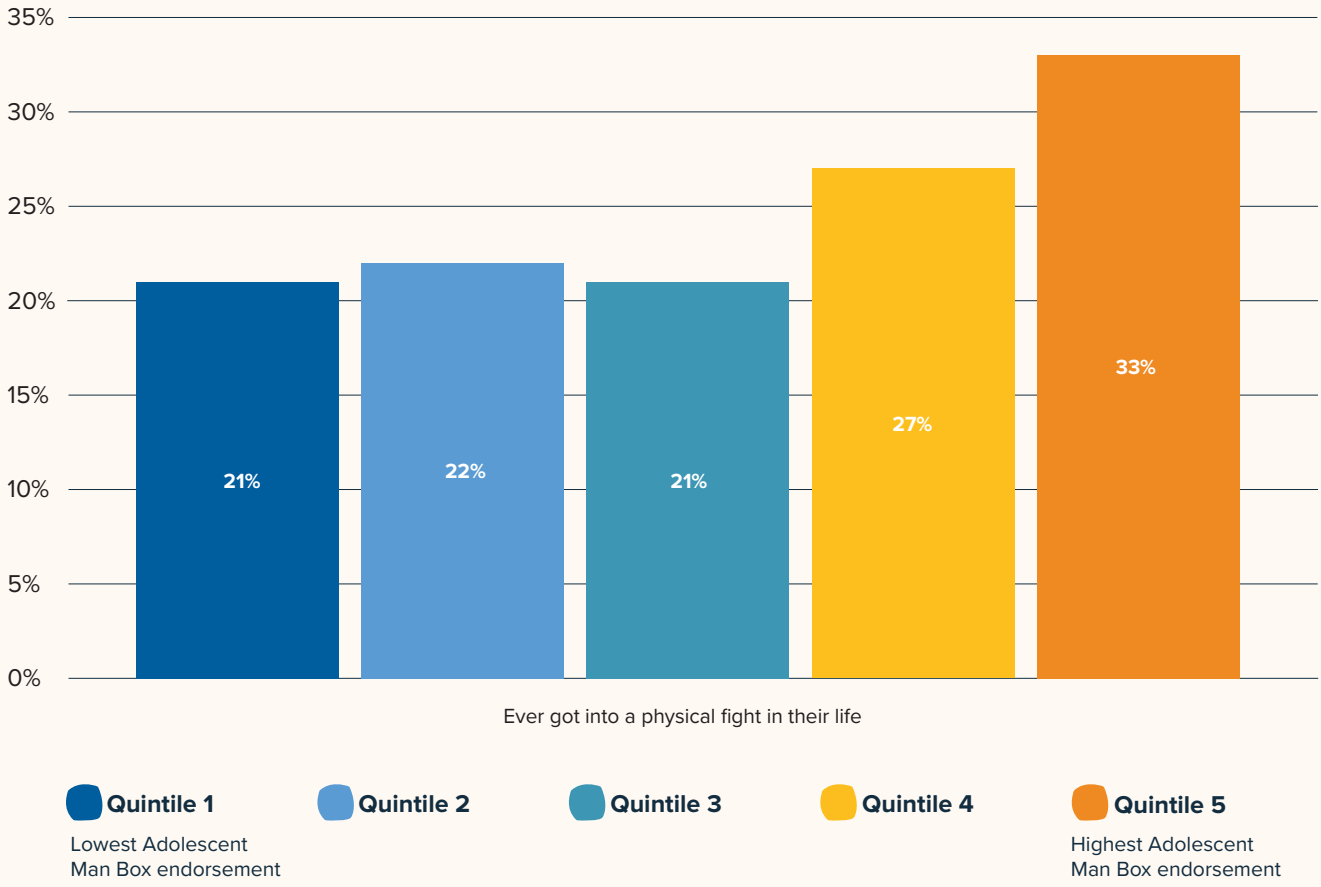


Figure 6.3: Proportion of boys who had been in a physical fight, by quintile (n=640)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported they had ever been in a physical fight that was serious and not for fun or play



Discussion

This study found alcohol to be the most common risk-taking behaviour - with 40% of boys and 50% of girls reporting they had ever consumed alcohol. This is lower than national figures, which indicate that 65% of secondary school students aged 12-17 years have ever consumed alcohol (Scully et al., 2023). While a greater proportion of girls than boys in our study reported they had drunk alcohol, other research has found adolescent boys are significantly heavier drinkers than girls (Callinan et al., 2023).

Gambling is increasingly recognised as a form of harmful risk-taking behaviour among young people, especially adolescent boys. Gambling was reported by 16% of boys in our study, aligning with Australian research showing that around one in five boys gamble (Warren & Yu, 2018). A recent Australian gambling study found that nearly 18% of younger adults aged 18-24 engage in high-risk gambling which is significantly higher compared to older adults (Tillman et al., 2025). Parental influence plays a major role: over half of student gamblers reported a parent had facilitated their gambling, with fathers most often cited (Freund et al., 2019).

Research has found links between the different risk factors and behaviours included in this study, pointing to a cluster of reinforcing risk factors for boys. For example, longitudinal research by the Australian Institute of Family Studies found that boys who were either a perpetrator or a victim of bullying at school were more likely to report having gambled (Dowling et al., 2023). Recent Australian research on gambling found that over two-thirds (68%) of high-risk gamblers (across all age groups) experienced cognitive, behavioural or mental health conditions (Tillman et al., 2025). Literature also links heavy drinking, mental ill-health, and trauma to the use of aggression in boys (Henriksen et al., 2021).

Our study found strong associations between adolescent boys' endorsement of the restrictive masculine norms in the Adolescent Man Box and their engagement in alcohol use, gambling and physical fights. This adds to the body of international research that has found traditional masculine norms are associated with risk-taking, aggression and limited self-care in men (The Men's Project & Flood, 2024, 2018; Ragonese et al., 2019; Iwamoto et al., 2011). There appear to be fewer studies about the connection between certain forms of masculinity and risk-taking behaviours by adolescent boys.

Risk taking is a normal and healthy part of adolescence. However, our study found that adolescent boys engage in risk-taking behaviours that can be harmful to themselves and to others. For example, alcohol is a well-established risk factor for the perpetration of violence (AIHW 2024), and gambling is a risk factor for intimate partner violence when other gendered drivers are also present (Hing et al., 2022). There is an opportunity to harness the appetite for risk taking for pro-social behavioural change. For example, within certain practice contexts, healthy behaviours such as emotional expression can be framed as a courageous challenge for boys that provides the reward of risk-taking without the harm of unsafe or antisocial behaviours.

Seeking help to change harmful behaviour

Jay* is a young adolescent boy who felt upset with his past behaviour and the reputation it had given him. He decided to seek help for the first time. In speaking to a trusted professional, he reflected on his upbringing, saying he was raised around 'fighters' and was raised to be a 'fighter' too. Jay didn't want to be this type of role model for his younger brother anymore. He was supported to reflect on his previous behaviours and to identify his values and goals for the future.

**Jay (not his real name) is an adolescent boy who participated in a Jesuit Social Services early intervention program between 2024-2025. This quote was not sought as part of the Adolescent Man Box study.*

Wellbeing

Chapter 7 – Mental health experiences and behaviours

Introduction

The study sought to understand the mental health experiences, social connections and help-seeking behaviours of Australian adolescents, including a focus on how these relate to endorsement of Adolescent Man Box norms for adolescent boys. Previous Man Box research in Australia has found a relationship between adherence to restrictive masculine norms and mental health experiences and behaviours in adult men (The Men's Project & Flood, 2024, 2018). Several studies using Australian Institute of Family Studies longitudinal Ten to Men data have also found a relationship between traditional forms of masculinity and poor mental health outcomes (Herreen et al., 2021; Van Doorn et al., 2021; Milner et al., 2018; King et al., 2020). A growing number of global studies show that the endorsement of, or adherence to, rigid masculine norms is a personal risk factor for the mental and physical wellbeing of teenage boys (Iwamoto & Smilier 2013; King et al., 2020; Exner-Cortens et al., 2021).

Key findings

Poor mental health symptoms

To understand respondents' mental health, the survey asked respondents to indicate, over the past two weeks, how often they had experienced any of the following: 'little interest or pleasure in doing things', 'feeling down, depressed, or hopeless', and 'having thoughts of self harm'.

Adolescents in this study reported significant experience of poor mental health symptoms.

We found:

- Nearly four in five adolescents (78%) reported a poor mental health symptom over the past two weeks (73% of boys and 83% of girls).
- The most common symptom was little interest or pleasure in doing things, with 72% of the total sample reporting feeling this symptom in the past two weeks.
- 62% of respondents reported feeling down, depressed or hopeless, and nearly one in five (17%) reported having thoughts of self-harm over the past two weeks.

While there is widespread experience of poor mental health symptoms among the respondents, boys are less likely than girls to report experiencing poor mental health symptoms.

We found:

- 68% of the boys reported feeling little interest and pleasure in doing things over the past two weeks, compared with 77% of the girls (and 72% of the total sample).
- Similarly, 57% of the boys reported feeling down, depressed or hopeless compared with 68% of the girls (and 62% of all respondents).

Younger boys (14-15) are less likely than older boys (16-18) to report experiencing poor mental health symptoms (64% vs 80%).

We found:

- 60% of younger boys reported little interest or pleasure in doing things, compared to 74% of older boys.
- Similarly, 44% of younger boys reported feeling down, depressed or hopeless, compared to 66% of older boys.
- Interestingly, boys aged 16-18 who were invited to do the survey directly (and would likely have been using their own device to do the survey) were more likely than those recruited via their parent (and would likely have been using their parent's device) to report poor mental health symptoms. This may suggest that boys recruited via their parent were less likely to be honest about their mental health.[25]

25 For example, 22% of boys recruited directly reported having thoughts of self-harm, compared with 6% of boys recruited via their parent.

Respondents were also asked about their optimism about the future. The State of American Men Report (Barker et al., 2023) found low optimism for the future using a 9-point scale, which was too long for the Adolescent Man Box survey, so we asked about their agreement with the statement, 'I feel mostly positive about my future'.

We found:

- Despite the prevalence of poor mental health symptoms, 84% of respondents agreed that 'I feel mostly positive about my future'.
- Consistent with their self-reporting of better mental health, boys were slightly more likely to report feeling positive about their future than girls (85% vs 82%).

Social connection

Respondents were also asked about their opportunities for authentic social connection. The survey asked respondents to indicate, on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, their response to the following statements: 'In my home it's acceptable to talk about my feelings and be vulnerable', 'I have a friend I can talk about my feelings and be vulnerable with', and 'No one really knows me well'.

Responses suggested mixed experiences with social connection:

- A high proportion of respondents agreed they can talk about their feelings and be vulnerable with a friend or in their home.
- Interestingly, boys were more likely than girls to agree that 'In my home it's acceptable to talk about my feelings' (85% vs 79%). However, when it came to friends, the trend was reversed. Boys were less likely than girls to report they have a friend they can talk about their feelings and be vulnerable with (80% vs 86%).
- Approximately one third of respondents agreed that 'No one really knows me well', with almost identical results for boys (32%) and girls (33%). This is lower than the results from the 2023 State of American Men Report, which found 65% of men aged 18-23 years agreed with the statement 'No one really knows me well' (Barker et al., 2023).

Help seeking

To understand the frequency of help seeking, respondents were asked: 'In the last six months, how often have you sought help from any person related to an emotional or personal problem?'. Response options included: 'daily', '2-3 times a week', 'once a week', '2-3 times a month', 'once a month', 'never'.

The data suggests boys are less likely to report seeking support for an emotional or personal problem than girls.

We found:

- Over a third of boys (36%) reported never seeking help for an emotional or personal problem in the last six months, compared with 20% of girls (and 29% of the full sample).
- Less than one third of boys (27%) reported help seeking more frequently than once per month[26] compared with 50% of girls (and 38% of the total sample).

This gender difference in help seeking may be partially explained by boys experiencing lower levels of poor mental health than girls, however it is worth noting that the question about help-seeking asks about a much longer period (6 months) than the question about mental health symptoms (2 weeks). In addition, help seeking is broader than mental health. For example, help seeking might include asking for advice about personal problems such as relationship issues, or questions about sex or pornography use, that are not directly or currently impacting mental health.

To understand sources of help for adolescents, respondents were asked: 'When you have a personal or emotional issue, which people or places would you seek help from first?', and asked to select up to three sources of support. Response options included: 'friend', 'parent or guardian', 'brother/sister', 'relative', 'pet' 'partner or significant other', 'internet', 'GP or health professional', 'teacher/coach', 'social media', 'school counsellor', 'spiritual/religious mentor', 'mobile apps', 'community service', 'other', and 'none of the above, I would keep the issue to myself'.

We found:

- Family was the most commonly-nominated source of help: 80% of total respondents indicated family as one of the first places they would seek support, followed by 73% of total respondents indicating friends and partners, and 27% of total respondents indicating a formal figure or service such as a teacher or a GP. Only 11% of total respondents indicated the internet as one of the first places they would seek support, and 9% of total respondents indicated a pet as one of the first places they would seek support.
- Overall, boys were slightly more likely to seek initial support from family compared with girls (81% vs 79%), and were less likely to seek help from friends and partners compared with girls (69% vs 77%).
- Older boys aged 16-18 were significantly more likely than younger boys aged 14-15 to seek initial support from a friend (72% vs 59%), and were also more likely to initially seek help from a partner or significant other than their younger peers (10% vs 2%).

26 More frequently than once a month is determined by identifying respondents who indicated help seeking daily, 2-3 times a week, once a week or 2-3 times a month.

Relationship with the Adolescent Man Box

Having established adolescents' experiences with mental health, social connection and seeking help, we then considered if there was a relationship between these experiences and their endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box for adolescent boys. Once again, our quintile analysis helped us see these relationships most clearly.

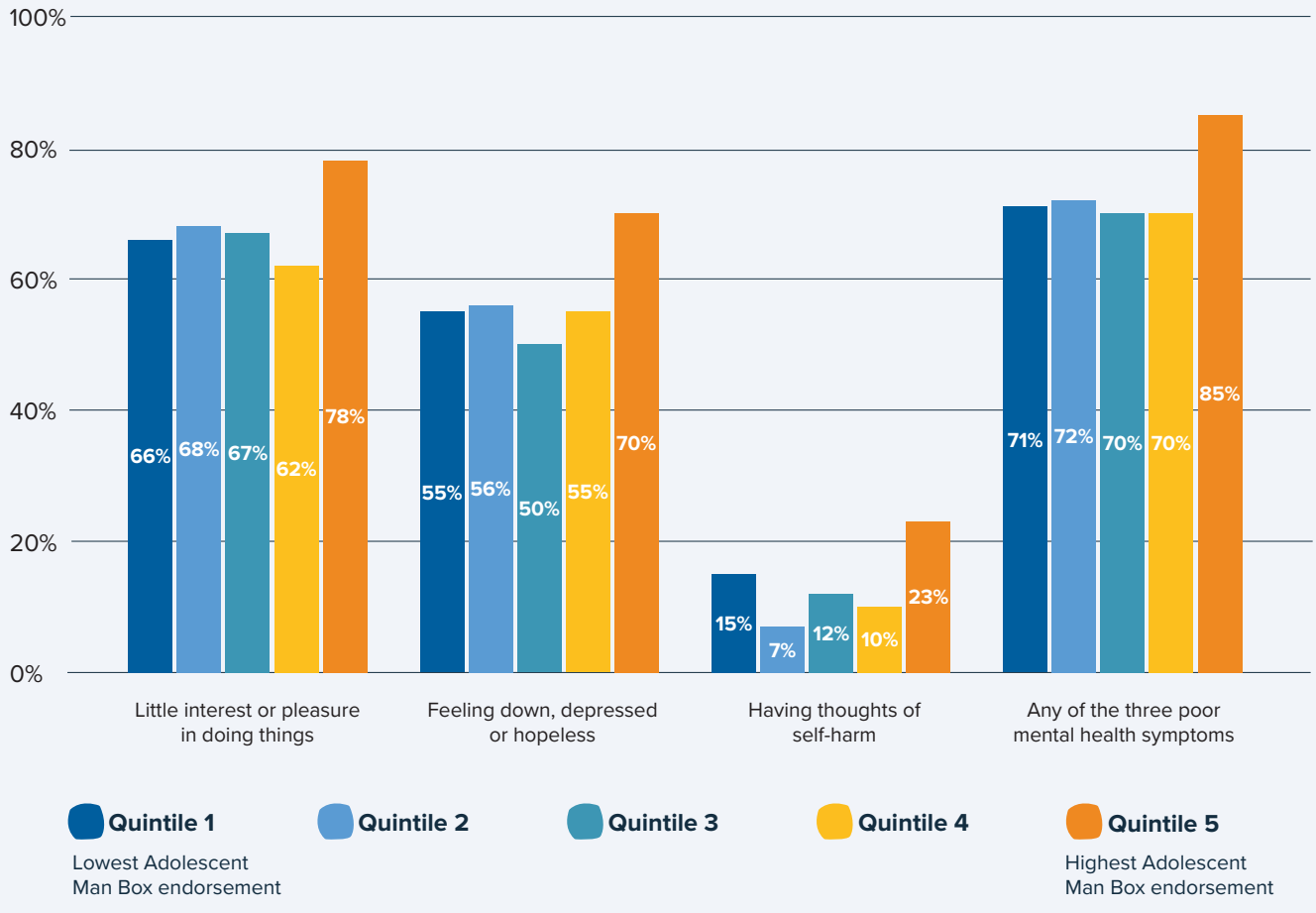
Mental health symptoms

Endorsement of rigid masculine norms appears to have an association with poor mental health. We found:

- Boys with the highest endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 5) were more likely than boys with the lowest endorsement (quintile 1) to report any of the three poor mental health symptoms in the past two weeks (85% vs 71%).
- Compared with boys with lowest endorsement (quintile 1), the boys with the highest endorsement (quintile 5) were more likely to report:
  - 'little interest or pleasure in doing things' (78% vs 66%).
  - 'feeling down, depressed or hopeless' (70% vs 55%).
  - 'having thoughts of self-harm' (23% vs 15%).
- Interestingly, the relationship between endorsement of restrictive masculine norms and poor mental health was not linear. While quintile 5 showed significantly lower wellbeing across all of the measures, the remaining quintiles were relatively similar to one another in self-reported wellbeing.

Figure 7.1: Proportion of boys who experienced poor mental health, by quintile (n=640)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported they had experienced each mental health symptom in the last two weeks



Social connection

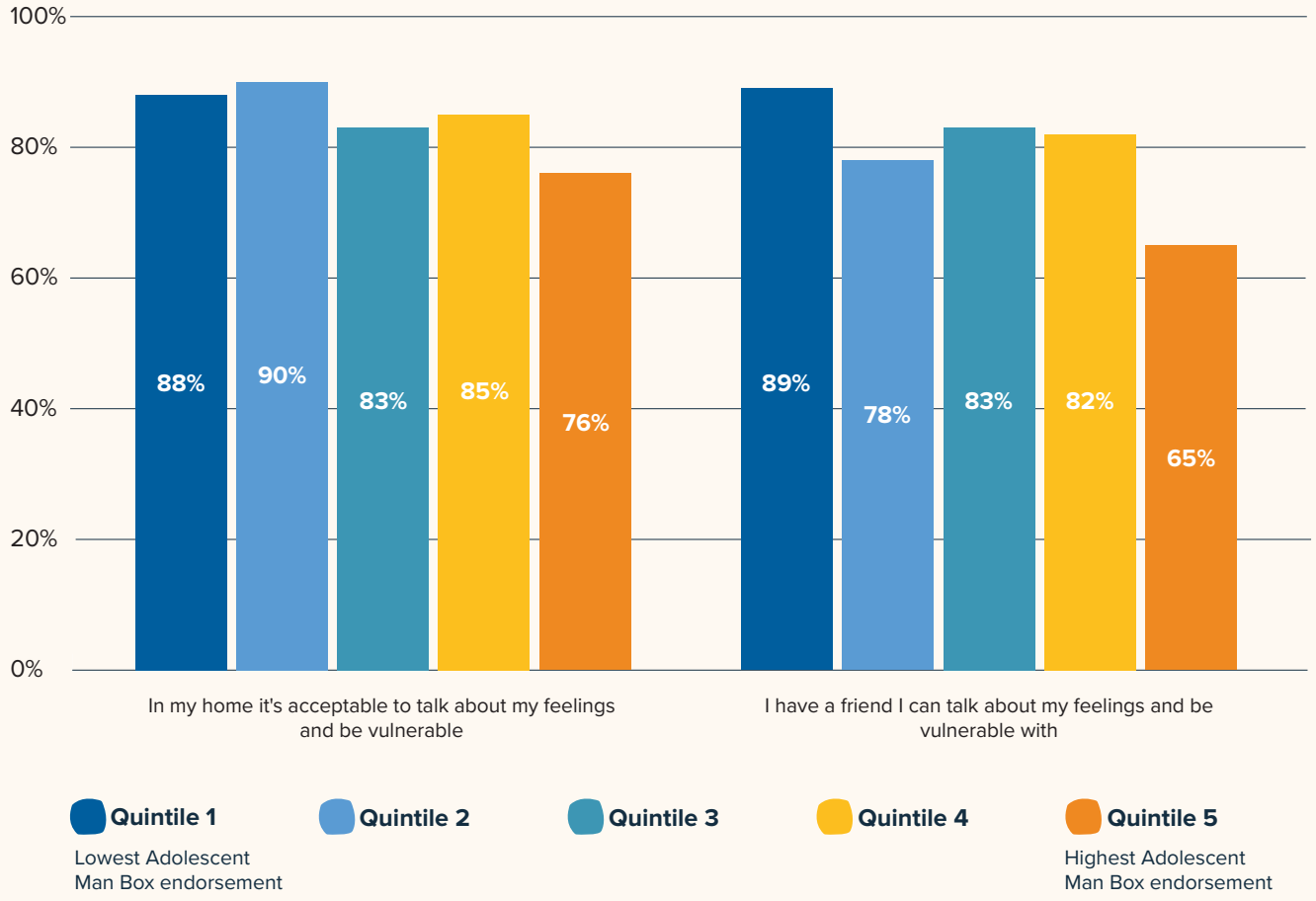
While the majority of boys agree that they can talk about their feelings and be vulnerable with a friend, there was a relationship between endorsing restrictive masculine rules and social connection.

We found:

- Boys who most strongly endorsed the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 5) were significantly less likely than boys with the lowest endorsement (quintile 1) to agree that they can be vulnerable with a friend (65% vs 89%).
- Boys who most endorse the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 5) were twice as likely as boys with the lowest endorsement (quintile 1) to agree or strongly agree that no one really knows them well (46% vs 23%). It is concerning that almost half the boys in quintile 5 agree that no one really knows them well.[27]

Figure 7.2: Proportion of boys who can talk about their feelings and be vulnerable, by quintile (n=632)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed that they can talk about their feelings and be vulnerable at home or with a friend



27 This is lower than the figure for adult men surveyed in The State of American Men study, which found 65% of men aged 18-23 years agreed with the statement 'No one really knows me well' (Barker et al., 2023).

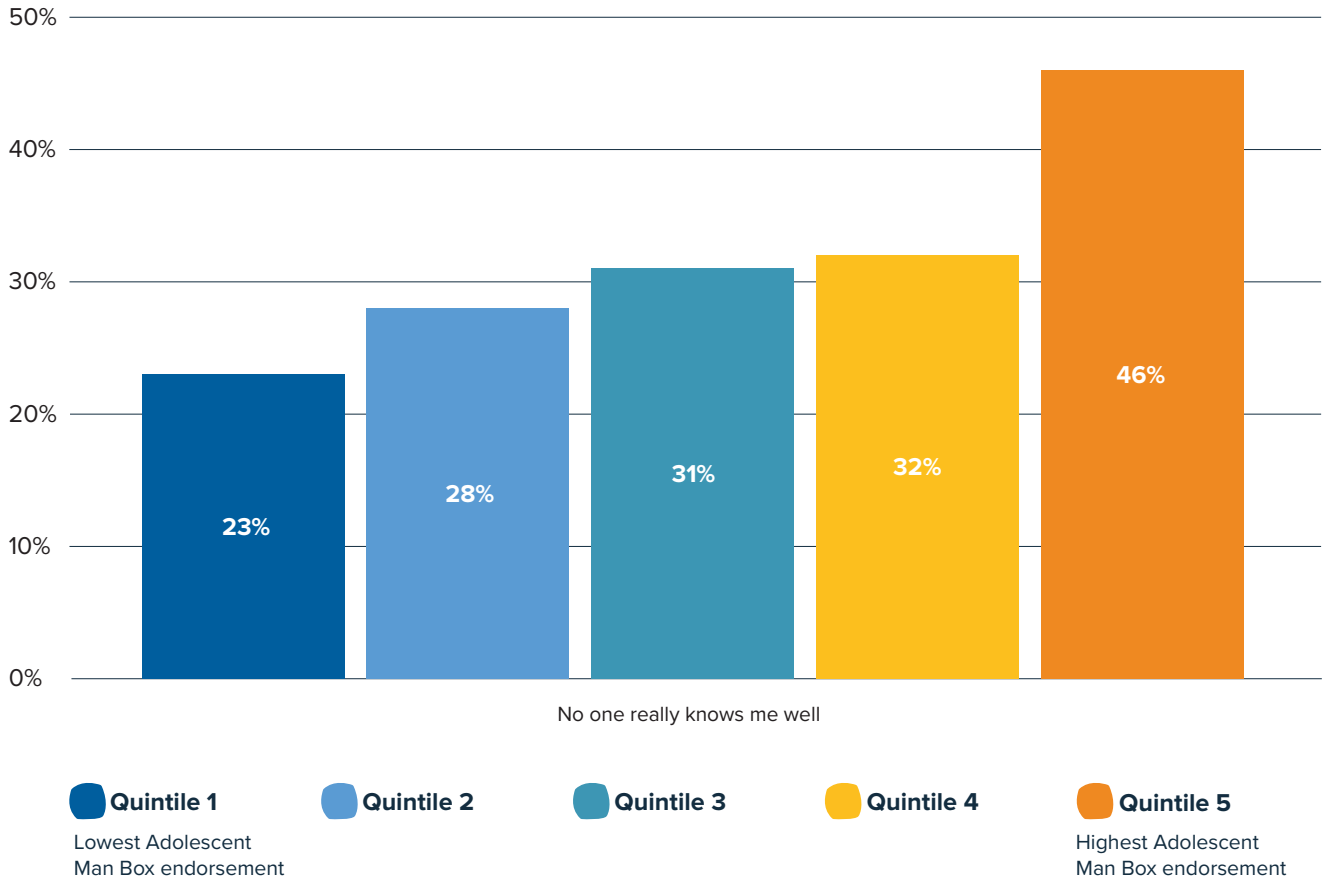
Not feeling understood

“No-one understands me, people just keep telling me what to do”

Reflection provided by an adolescent boy who participated in a Jesuit Social Services early intervention program between 2023-2025

Figure 7.3: Proportion of boys who feel no one really knows them well, by quintile (n=637)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'No one really knows me well'



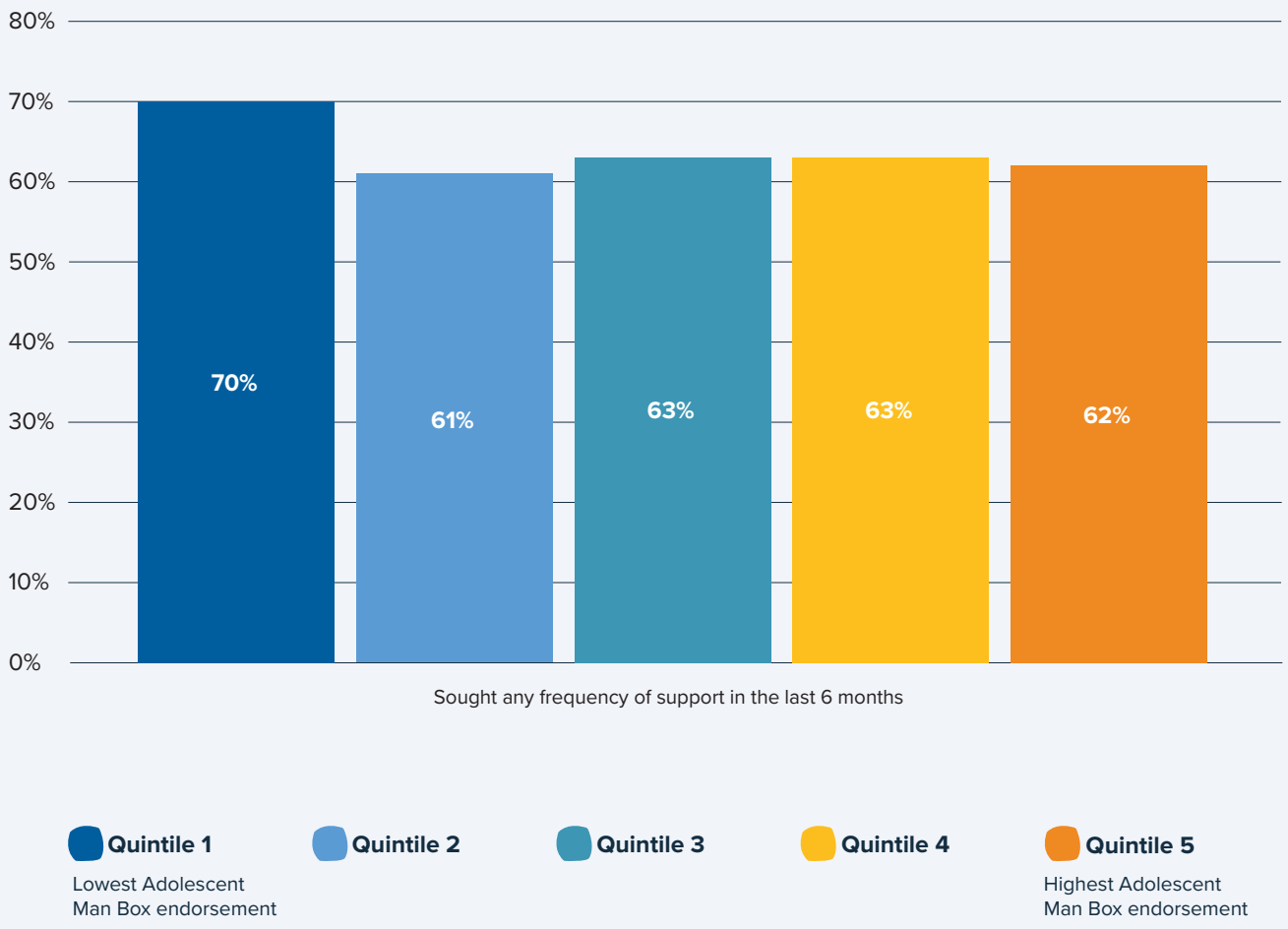
Help seeking

The majority of boys reported they had sought support for an emotional or personal problem in the last six months. However we found:

- Boys with the lowest endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 1) were more likely to report they had sought support than boys in other quintiles (70% in quintile 1 vs 61-63% for other quintiles).
- Boys with the highest endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 5) were less likely than boys with the lowest endorsement (quintile 1) to seek help from a parent or guardian (67% vs 81%), a brother or sister (24% vs 37%), or a friend (59% vs 71%). Similarly, boys with the highest endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box (quintile 5) were less likely than boys with the lowest endorsement (quintile 1) to seek help from a GP or health professional (4% vs 14%). However, they were more likely to seek help from a pet than boys in quintile 1 (13% vs 8%).

Figure 7.4: Proportion of boys who sought support, by quintile (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported they had sought support for an emotional or personal problem, at different frequencies, in the last six months



Discussion

A high proportion of adolescents in this study reported experiences of poor mental health symptoms, with nearly four in five reporting at least one of the poor mental health symptoms over the past two weeks. These results add to the existing literature that shows adolescence is a particularly difficult time in relation to mental health: the National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing found that young people are more likely to be diagnosed with a mental disorder than older Australians (ABS 2023).

Research has established a range of risk factors for poor mental health for adolescents. These include school transitions (such as moving from primary school to high school and finishing formal schooling); exams and academic pressure (Robson et al., 2025); conflict with family and friends (Crisp et al., 2025); exposure to domestic and family violence (ANROWS, 2022); identity and discrimination - for example, Indigenous, LGBTQI+, transgender and gender diverse people generally experience poorer mental health than the broader population (Smout et al., 2023); and lifestyle and health challenges such as inadequate sleep, a poor diet, inactivity, and substance abuse (Smout et al., 2023).

Concerns are often raised about the mental health consequences of social media use among adolescents. These concerns relate both to the type of content they may be exposed to (which may include bullying or harassment) and to the amount of time spent on social media (which may detract from healthy 'real life' interactions and activities).[28] Emerging research shows that social media's impact on mental health is complex. Two recent systematic reviews observe that there is scant research on the impact of social media on adolescent mental health and wellbeing for specific population groups and mediating factors such as demographic, psychological and social characteristics, kinds of use of social media, and the platforms' content and design (Khalaf et al., 2023; Sala et al., 2024).

Research is still in the early stages of exploring how online communities help adolescents build meaningful connections and support that benefit their mental health (eSafety Commissioner, 2024). This is important to understand, given that strong social ties are well-established protective factors that support wellbeing and help-seeking (WHO, 2025). There is a need to further consider how introducing minimum age restrictions for social media in Australia will impact the mental health of adolescents in both positive and negative ways. This consideration is especially important for young people who are marginalised, including those with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ identities.

The study found that strong endorsement of the Adolescent Man Box was associated with an increased likelihood of poor mental health symptoms and social disconnection. This adds additional Australian data (see King et al., 2020) to the growing number of international studies that have shown that adherence to rigid masculine norms can be a risk factor for poor health outcomes for adolescent boys (Iwamoto & Smilier 2013; Exner-Cortens et al., 2021).

The findings related to help-seeking provide valuable insights into how we might support improved wellbeing among adolescents. While a high proportion of adolescents experienced poor mental health symptoms in the *past two weeks* (73% of boys and 83% of girls), a significant minority of adolescents reported they had never sought support for an emotional or personal problem in the *last six months* (36% of boys and 20% of girls). There is an opportunity to encourage greater help seeking in adolescents, especially boys. While family was the most commonly-nominated source of initial help, the role of friends in providing initial support is also clear for adolescents – and apparent across all quintiles for adolescent boys. Consideration should be given to the resources and tools we could provide adolescents, for example at school or through sporting club programs, to support them to have conversations with each other in a way that promotes vulnerability and facilitates help-seeking.

A reluctance to seek help

"Can you help me to help myself on the inside? I won't ask for help – so help me do that"

Reflection provided by an adolescent boy who participated in a Jesuit Social Services early intervention program between 2023-2025. This was not obtained as part of the Adolescent Man Box Study.

28 Exposure to online harms is common among Australian children, including online hate, cyberbullying, sexual harassment and non-consensual tracking. This is most common on social media, but also on communication and gaming platforms (eSafety Commissioner, 2025b).

Our opportunities to intervene

Diversity within the Adolescent Man Box Study

The Adolescent Man Box reflects a dominant version of masculinity common in Western societies, including Australia – but not all boys or young men relate to it in the same way, or feel its pressures equally. It is important to remember that everyone experiences masculinity differently. Factors like race, culture, sexuality, gender identity, class, religion and ability all shape how someone sees themselves and how society treats them.

This study explores broad patterns in beliefs, experiences and behaviours among adolescents, without going into detail about how experiences may differ across specific communities. The report presents aggregated data from 1401 adolescents who completed the survey. However, there is significant diversity within the sample (see Appendix B).

It is beyond the scope of this study to undertake comprehensive analysis of different demographic groups. Further, many of the sub-group sizes are too small to report on separately because differences are not necessarily statistically significant, it is important to protect participant confidentiality and the framing of these results ought to be written in partnership with representatives from these communities to ensure meaningful analysis and to avoid potential stigmatisation.

We have outlined some high-level observations of differences within the sample below. These are provided as a reminder of the diversity of experiences within the sample, rather than to offer any conclusions about different groups.

- Respondents with a disability or long-term health condition or injury (n=222), and respondents who identify as 'not heterosexual' (n=195), were less likely to endorse the restrictive masculine norms of the Adolescent Man Box than other respondents.
- Respondents living in non-metropolitan areas (n=236) were more likely than those living in metropolitan areas to report they had witnessed harassment of girls and transgender people.
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander respondents (n=58) were more likely to report they had experienced bullying than other respondents, and that their online social life is more engaging and rewarding than their offline social life.
- Respondents who were born in another country or speak a language other than English at home (n=416) were less likely to report they had consumed alcohol than other respondents.
- Respondents who perceived that they, or their families, have trouble paying for items they need (n=476) were more likely to perceive there is social pressure on adolescent boys to act manly.
- Respondents who reported having no religious affiliation (n=696) were less likely than other respondents to agree with attitudes relating to rigid gender norms and more likely than others to report they had witnessed sexist comments.

There would be value in conducting further research to better understand how the attitudes, behaviours and experiences explored in the Adolescent Man Box Study vary for adolescents in different demographic groups and locations. This would support the tailoring of different practice approaches.

Chapter 8 – Priority outcomes and recommendations

The Adolescent Man Box research highlights significant opportunities to improve the wellbeing of Australian adolescents. Given the focus of our work at The Men's Project, we have placed particular emphasis on preventing violence and promoting respectful behaviours among adolescent boys.

This chapter identifies twelve Priority Outcomes we are seeking to achieve related to specific attitudes, behaviours, knowledge and skills of adolescent boys, as well as broader experiences of wellbeing. To achieve these outcomes, we then put forward:

- **Five recommendations for immediate policy and practice reform directly informed by our findings** to achieve the Priority Outcomes with specific calls to action for government, philanthropists, service providers, schools, parents and technology companies (such as social media and pornography sites).
- **Two recommendations for systemic reform.** These system level recommendations are informed by the findings of this research and draw on our knowledge of the policy context, our practice experience and other related research (including insights into the scale of the challenges).

The Priority Outcomes and recommendations reflect our understanding that behaviours are influenced by a complex mix of protective and risk factors that interact at an individual, family, community and societal level. Specific behaviours are related to motivations (which are shaped by attitudes, beliefs, values and personal experiences), capability (such as knowledge and skills) and opportunity (such as social norms and contexts).

Principles to guide this work: All interventions with adolescents should be developmentally-appropriate, trauma-informed, intersectional, culturally safe, and strengths-based, while respecting young people's voices and balancing support with accountability.

Priority Outcomes: What outcomes are we seeking to achieve among adolescent boys?

1. **Recovery and healing from experiences of violence and abuse**
   A significant number of adolescents reported being victims of aggression (including physical violence, bullying and sexual harassment). There is also substantial overlap between experiencing victimisation and adolescents using aggression themselves. Taken together with other research, including the Australian Child Maltreatment Study, there is a need to better support children and young people to recover and heal from experiences of violence and abuse. This would support efforts to prevent the long-term impacts of intergenerational harm and trauma, including experiences such as poor mental health, substance use, isolation, disordered attachment and dysregulation.
2. **Increased help-seeking behaviours**
   There is a need to encourage an increase in both formal and informal help seeking among adolescent boys, including after experiencing or using violence, for mental health concerns and for other troubling behaviours including harmful pornography use and gambling. While parents play an important role as a source of help, over one-third of adolescent boys surveyed reported they had not sought any support for an emotional or personal issue in the past six months. Some boys, particularly those who strongly endorse the Adolescent Man Box rules, report being unable to show vulnerability with friends. Support must build both the skills and the confidence to seek help alongside increased awareness and availability of support options.

3. **Normalising diverse masculinities**
   Many boys feel strong social pressure to always appear confident, tough, and strong. Teasing is often normalised as "just banter" among adolescent boys, even when it causes harm. Restrictive norms are widely perceived, even by those who don't personally endorse them. There is a need to normalise a broader range of masculinities that are diverse, not unique to men and boys (i.e. are not gendered themselves), gender equitable and inclusive, and healthy (The Men's Project & Flood 2018).

4. **Rejection of violence and violence-supportive attitudes**
   A small but concerning proportion of adolescent boys hold violence-supportive attitudes, and report using aggressive acts towards others. Programs working across a range of settings with adolescent boys should promote non-violent norms and build emotional regulation and conflict-resolution skills among adolescent boys, while also challenging harmful beliefs that link masculine identity with dominance or aggression.

5. **Deepened understanding and respect for gender equality**
   While most adolescent boys say they support gender equality, nearly half believe that boys have it harder than girls. Programs should support adolescent boys to better understand the lived experiences of girls, including rates of sexual and intimate partner violence and the structural barriers to equality. This work should acknowledge the unique challenges boys face, while fostering empathy and shared understanding across genders.

6. **Increased respect and empathy for LGBTQIA+ peers**
   Homophobic and transphobic attitudes remain common among adolescent boys. Programs should promote empathy, inclusion, and respect for sexual and gender diversity, and address the impact of exclusionary and discriminatory behaviours.

7. **Healthier responses to rejection**
   A concerning proportion of adolescent boys report that they usually retaliate when rejected. Programs are needed to support boys to better manage discomfort, shame, and emotional pain without resorting to aggression, control and violent behaviours.

8. **Improved understanding of digital consent and surveillance**
   A concerning proportion of boys (and girls) believe it is normal to constantly track a partner's social media activity and location. Boys who strongly endorse the Adolescent Man Box rules are more likely to agree that tracking or monitoring a partner is normal. Education should address respectful digital behaviours, challenge normalised surveillance, and promote healthy boundaries and safety planning in online relationships.

9. **Rejection of image-based abuse and its social acceptance**
   Too many adolescent boys report behaviours and attitudes that normalise image-based abuse, including in relation to sharing intimate images of partners without their consent or creating sexually explicit deepfake content. There is a need to build increased understandings of the harm and illegality of these abusive behaviours, and to support boys to pause and think before acting on frustration, impulse or peer pressure.

10. **Mitigating the risks and harms of pornography**
    Many boys are exposed to pornography that includes unsafe, aggressive, and non-consensual acts. In addition to efforts to mitigate exposure to harmful pornography, education should help boys understand how pornography can distort their views and experiences of people, sex and relationships, and where to seek effective support for harmful pornography use and its impacts.

11. **Improved bystander confidence and skills**
    Most boys report feeling uncomfortable when witnessing sexist or abusive behaviour, but a much smaller proportion take action. Programs working with adolescent boys must focus on increasing their motivation, confidence, and practical skills to take action safely and effectively when they witness unsafe, sexist or disrespectful behaviours.

12. **Sustaining hope for the future**
    Many adolescents shared that they feel positive about their future. Given the life-giving impacts of hope, in spite of this positive finding, sustaining hope merits ongoing focus. Supported by adults in their lives, we want adolescents of all genders to feel that they are safe, belong, are socially connected and are hopeful for their future.

Recommendations for immediate policy and practice reform

Recommendation 1

Continue to strengthen violence prevention efforts by ensuring that school-based initiatives (including Respectful Relationships Education) and other youth-focused prevention efforts reflect adolescents' lived experiences, and that adults are equipped to work with young people to address the contemporary issues highlighted in this study

This research has highlighted contemporary challenges faced by adolescents that could be better acknowledged and incorporated in current violence prevention work with men and boys. This includes improving adolescents' ability to cope with rejection, preventing harmful pornography use, mitigating the harms of digital surveillance and addressing image-based abuse. There is also a need to both promote help-seeking and strengthen responses to it, to ensure that when young people do ask for help they are met with appropriate, timely and effective supports. Many of these areas of concern are tightly linked with rigid adherence to Adolescent Man Box norms.

Key actions – we call on:

- Governments, peak bodies, and community sector organisations to translate findings from the Adolescent Man Box into practice as part of engaging with adolescents including by:
  - increasing emphasis on building specific skills in areas that to date have received insufficient attention as part of prevention efforts, including supporting adolescent boys to cope with rejection (how to sit safely with the discomfort of being told 'no'), conflict resolution, emotional regulation, strength-based reflection on values, and promoting as well as properly responding to help seeking (including disclosures related to victimisation and use of violence).
  - placing a greater focus on supporting adolescents to safety navigate digital environments including by addressing the harms of image-based abuse, digital surveillance and violent pornography.
  - continuing to engage with young people to inform the development of practical resources such as lesson plans, scenarios, videos, e-learning and self-help modules that tackle sensitive topics in an age-appropriate way
- Governments, drawing on expertise from the community and university sectors, to increase investment in upskilling teachers including by embedding respectful relationships content into tertiary training, and prioritising ongoing professional development for those already in schools.
- Organisations working with men and boys to better integrate explicit efforts to address transphobia and homophobia among adolescent boys including by engaging with people who have relevant expertise.
- Governments and organisations running public violence prevention campaigns to increase their focus on young people, including by drawing on and being informed by the findings of this research, sharing stories from boys and men who resist restrictive masculine norms and related pressures, emphasising that girls overwhelmingly reject restrictive masculine norms and highlighting the reality that masculinities are diverse.

Recommendation 2

Increase the scale of early intervention work with boys to prevent violence by addressing underlying needs, in partnership with communities, while also strengthening the evidence base of what works and what does not

There is a growing and understandable recognition of the need to more closely link violence prevention efforts with men and boys to demonstrable changes in their behaviour. While acknowledging there are facets of prevention work where it will take time to see change, there is also a need to continue to refine and clearly articulate the shorter-term outcomes that programs are seeking to achieve, making a clear case based on available evidence as to why proposed interventions are effective. Starting with early intervention programs working with adolescent boys, there is an opportunity for a more focused effort to drive positive behaviour change. Too often there are missed opportunities to disrupt pathways into violence, leading to harmful behaviours that emerge in early adolescence – continuing and sometimes escalating unabated into adulthood (Boxall, Pooley & Lawler 2021).

While by no means deterministic, many boys who engage in harmful behaviours have also often experienced violence or abuse. Services need to be accessible and respond to the complex needs of these adolescents through early intervention that is tailored, developmentally appropriate, culturally safe and relevant. This stands in stark contrast to an emphasis across states and territories on the punitive levers of the criminal and civil justice system including via juvenile detention and the use of intervention orders for young people. These punitive responses do not address the underlying reasons for the use of harmful behaviours nor the impacts of untreated trauma for adolescents who may be, first and foremost, victim-survivors of violence and abuse.

Key actions – we call on:

- The Federal Government, in partnership with philanthropists, to establish and invest in a fund to support a number of randomised controlled trials focused on working with boys to achieve one or more of the Priority Outcomes outlined above. Design of this fund should be informed by rigorous evaluation of similar programs in other jurisdictions such as Becoming A Man and Coaching Boys into Men. Complemented by close monitoring of implementation and elevating the lived experience of program participants and people in their lives, evaluations should be used to inform the evidence-based scale-up of work with adolescents to support more positive life outcomes including the prevention of violence. Funding should be made available to support community sector organisations to engage in randomised controlled trial evaluations.
- Federal and state / territory governments to focus on specific locations where there is evidence that youth violence is a concern by establishing several place-based pilots. These pilots could use the Adolescent Man Box survey together with engagement with young people and the adults in their lives to inform the development of a multi-year and early intervention program of community-led work, engaging across government departments including with police, tracking progress towards reduction in violence and improvement in other life outcomes for young people.

Recommendation 3:

Better meet the needs of children and young people who have experienced or been impacted by violence or abuse through a substantial investment in targeted, trauma-informed interventions and support services delivered at-scale nationally, focused on healing and recovery

Children and young people who experience violence and abuse need to be engaged as victim-survivors in their own right. This is increasingly being recognised by experts although funding for relevant services to support healing and recovery remains limited. As a result, significant gaps exist across the service system.

Untreated trauma can result in inter-generational violence, poor mental health, substance use and other harmful behaviours. The poor outcomes for some adolescents documented in this report are likely to be underpinned at least in part by the experience of violence or abuse. Further, systems such as child protection, youth justice, family violence and homelessness are often falling short in their efforts to respond to the needs of children and young people who have been victims of violence or abuse, sometimes leading to further harm.

Key actions – we call on:

- The Federal Government to play a leadership role in designing and fully funding a range of services for children and young people who have experienced violence and abuse to address significant existing service gaps. This could involve matched funding from states and territories with payment from the Federal Government linked to whether Priority Outcomes are demonstrably achieved. Budget mechanisms that use avoided costs could also be used to sustain funding akin to the Early Intervention and Investment Framework in Victoria. These services must be developmentally appropriate and accessible in the settings in which children and young people spend their time.
- Governments and philanthropists to support the development and embedding of a suite of accessible (and where appropriate anonymous) online resources that promote help seeking and respond to adolescents who need support. This could include greater support for adolescents who have been victims of violence or abuse as well as those at risk of harming others. The resources should be promoted in digital environments where adolescents are already spending time and could include pop-up messages, information about available services to support help seeking and messages that direct young people to further resources in response to concerning online behaviours.
- The Federal, State and Territory Governments to foster accountability by:
  - Developing their capacity to monitor the waiting times for children and young people who experience violence or abuse and have been referred to or sought help from services (to keep them safe and support their recovery).
  - Committing to and reporting on progress against targets

Recommendation 4

Equip parents and carers to engage with boys, including by providing practical support on topics such as relationships, dealing with rejection, violence, digital harms, pornography, sexuality and healthy examples of masculinity

Parents and carers are a key source of support and influence on adolescent boys' beliefs and behaviours. The Adolescent Man Box study found that many adolescents look to their parents for guidance on how boys should act. Yet parents are often under-supported in identifying behaviours of concern and navigating conversations about sensitive topics such as coping with rejection, violence, harmful pornography use, image-based abuse, masculinities, sexuality and navigating boundaries in digital spaces.

Key actions – we call on:

- Governments and philanthropists to support the development and promotion of practical resources - such as podcasts, conversation guides, digital kits - that help parents talk with adolescent boys about how to navigate rejection, consent, harmful pornography, image-based abuse, online behaviours, sexuality and masculinities. While there are some existing resources to support conversations about mental health with children and young people, there are far fewer resources that help guide conversations about different forms of violence, diverse masculinities, sexualities and harmful behaviours tailored to key developmental moments (e.g. late primary school, first relationships) reaching parents at scale.
- Governments and organisations running public violence prevention campaigns to increase their focus on the role of parents responding to the issues raised in this research.
- Service and education providers that already engage with parents (for example via parenting programs, family services, health services and through schools) to - with support from governments - increase emphasis on promoting respectful relationships and addressing harmful attitudes and behaviours among adolescents, including the impacts of harmful pornography.
- Employers to enable time for parents to establish connection and bonds with their children including by adopting and promoting policies that provide parents with the opportunity to take leave or work flexibly. This will assist parents to build relationships that create the foundation for engagement on sensitive topics raised as part of this study.

Recommendation 5:

Make digital environments safer and more developmentally appropriate for adolescents including by strengthening regulation related to online safety and building on existing efforts to hold technology companies accountable for harms that take place facilitated by their platforms

Online spaces play a powerful role in shaping attitudes, behaviours and identities during adolescence. Boys are exposed to a wide range of harmful content, including misogynistic influencers, pornography, coercive and controlling behaviours, and gambling, that can be associated with harms to themselves and others.

While the social media minimum age restrictions is an important initiative, the objective of creating a safer, more developmentally appropriate digital environment for adolescents will not be achieved by this initiative alone. Action is required to strengthen Australia's online safety framework to enable it to better deal with image-based abuse, deepfakes, coercive control, and exposure to harmful pornography, and ensure it is responsive to new online harms.

Key actions – we call on:

- The Federal Government to strengthen online safety regulation by;
    - acting on recommendations from key reviews and inquiries related to safety in the digital environment, including moving urgently to introduce a robust and meaningful digital duty of care in line with the Statutory Review of the Online Safety Act, and the Parliamentary Inquiry into online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm (the Murphy Inquiry).
    - ensuring the e-Safety Commission's powers are adequate to effectively manage and prevent harms caused by multinational technology companies, including considering whether the maximum penalty is adequate in light of comparable penalties in other jurisdictions, equipping the Commission with appropriate powers to request and publish documents from companies enabling granular transparency, and aligning resourcing of the Commission to the scale of the challenge.
- The Federal Government to require online platforms to do more to implement age-appropriate safeguards (e.g. better regulating features such as infinite scroll and algorithmic recommender systems that promote harmful content) and to integrate age-appropriate prompts that discourage those accessing risky or illegal content (e.g. warning messages before posting harmful content or searching for illegal content).
- Digital technology companies (such as social media platforms and pornography sites) to take demonstrable steps to increase the online safety of digital spaces for adolescents, including by engaging with experts in child development and organisations working with young people to address harms caused or amplified by the digital environment. This includes proactively building in safety-by-design features before services are piloted, and ensuring there are robust age-appropriate requirements in place on the range of platforms to prevent harms to children and young people.

Recommendations for systemic reform

Recommendation 6:

We call on the Federal Government to develop and deliver a dedicated five-year National Action Plan for children and young people who have been victims of violence or abuse, which embeds system accountability to their needs and perspectives, including as part of guiding the investment proposed in recommendation 3 above.

Informed in part by the Australian Child Maltreatment Study, our understanding of the prevalence of child abuse and neglect has evolved substantially in recent years. While some policy documents are beginning to recognise children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right, this is yet to be reflected in practice.

There is increasing evidence at the national, state and territory levels of the significant shortcomings of current system responses for children and young people impacted by violence and abuse. This is reflected in myriad studies drawing on young people's experience of system failures across child protection, family violence, youth justice and homelessness Fitz-Gibbon 2025 a, Fitz-Gibbon 2025 b, Australian Human Rights Commission 2024, Fitz-Gibbon, McGowan & Stewart 2023, Centre for Innovative Justice & Melbourne City Mission 2025). In short, noting variations across different geographies, these studies have similarly evidenced that systems are not yet designed at scale to be accessible and appropriate to meeting the help-seeking and recovery needs of young victim-survivors (Fitz-Gibbon 2025 a, Fitz-Gibbon 2025 b, Australian Human Rights Commission 2024, Fitz-Gibbon, McGowan & Stewart 2023, Centre for Innovative Justice & Melbourne City Mission 2025).

In line with the National Plan to end Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032, the five-year Action Plan that we are proposing should include dedicated actions against each of the pillars: prevention; early intervention; response; recovery and healing. The action plan should embed a children's rights framework including recognition of the best interests' principle that children have a right to participate in all matters that impact them, alongside a right to non-discrimination and freedom from violence.

Accountability to the needs and perspectives of children and young people should be prioritised including through a nationally representative survey of children and young people to inform priorities. Young people themselves should hold roles in the governance arrangements set up to oversee implementation of the Action Plan, with responsibility included for assessing whether strategic priorities are being delivered upon.

Noting the Action Plan would be developed through a significant process with children and young people, drawing on evidence including the Adolescent Man Box study, it could include a commitment to:

- Develop frameworks to effectively prevent and respond to violence and abuse perpetrated against children and young people, including with attention given to the experiences of and risks faced by young people from different community groups and cohorts.
- Build our evolving understanding of the prevalence of child maltreatment, identifying service systems gaps across the prevention, early intervention, response, recovery and healing systems, with the view to working with federal, state and territory governments to address system gaps and unmet needs for young victim-survivors.
- Establish a range of approaches to better promote and respond to help seeking at scale, including by engaging with young people online.
- Monitor the effectiveness of service system responses and provide recommendations as to how the needs of children and young people impacted by violence and abuse could be better met.
- Build workforce capability to respond to disclosures of violence or abuse, promote and respond to other forms of help seeking, better identify, assess and manage risk, and take practical actions related to prevention.
- Elevate the voices of children and young people with lived experience of violence and abuse in a more systematic way with mechanisms in place to act on their perspectives in a timely and systemic way.
- Identify promising practice approaches or systemic solutions with the potential for scale bridging across governments, the community sector, philanthropy and academia.
- Establish mechanisms to track whether the prevalence of violence and abuse experienced by children and young people in Australia decreases over time, with data reported on prevalence rates and embedded in the National Plan outcomes framework.

In addition to the actions above, in line with calls from other advocates, we call on the Federal Government to introduce a Federal Minister for Children to provide cross-portfolio leadership on children's wellbeing, service system uplift and coordination across jurisdictions, and to ensure children's voices are heard in the decisions that impact them. This Ministerial role would drive focused and longer-term reforms across the settings in which children live, learn and play.

Recommendation 7:

We call on the Federal Government to fund a mechanism to improve the creation, sharing and use of high-quality evidence in order to increase the pace of progress and effectiveness of current efforts to reduce men's violence across the continuum of prevention, early intervention, response, healing and recovery

Efforts to end men's violence have increased over recent years but further investment and coordination is needed to address the scale of the problem. Although "engaging men and boys" is identified as a priority in the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022 – 2032, there is limited clarity regarding the implications for prevention, early intervention, response, healing and recovery.

Too often efforts to end men's violence are piecemeal and do not reflect the scale of the problem. The potential of existing efforts with men and boys is currently constrained by a lack of transparency regarding practice approaches, limited investment in developing the evidence base regarding which interventions are most effective and with whom, and limited system-wide understandings as to whether progress is being made to reduce different forms of men's violence.

Program-level evaluations need to move beyond process or implementation evaluation towards a greater focus on outcomes evaluation with more consistent approaches adopted across different funders. Likewise, evaluation of system level interventions (e.g. Respectful Relationships Education) could be strengthened with a tracking of participant (student) level progress in aggregate over time.

As part of designing an appropriate mechanism, consideration could be given to approaches in other jurisdictions such as What Works Centres in the United Kingdom. There are also a range of related existing efforts underway in Australia that could contribute, including the Australian National Research Office for Women's Safety's (ANROWS) Evidence Portal.

The focus of designing this mechanism should include:

- Creating opportunities to foster more purposeful and regular engagement with state and territory governments, community sector organisations and universities including to better integrate research, lived experience and practice wisdom, with particular attention to issues where there are differences of views regarding practice approaches.
- Completing independent evidence reviews focused on specific challenges outlined in the Adolescent Man Box research to inform the procurement, design and delivery of interventions that are most likely to be effective and to reflect the challenges in adolescents' lives.
- Increasing the translation of evidence into practice through implementation guidance and direct engagement with both policy makers and community sector organisations to improve decision making and practice quality as well as cross sector integration (e.g. embedding a greater focus on violence prevention as part of efforts to improve men's health).
- Supporting the coordination and completion of ongoing research and evaluation efforts of specific interventions to deepen our understanding of what is most likely to be effective with adolescents and men to prevent the use of violence. This should include building improved and deeper intersectional understandings of the needs and unique experiences of key demographic groups, and refining interventions to meet the evolving needs and life experiences of adolescents over time, with a focus on better understanding protective factors.
- Ensuring transparent monitoring and reporting on the prevalence of violence to National Cabinet, including collecting and monitoring more extensive data on children and young people. Such data should include tracking against relevant Closing the Gap targets, and provide insights at both local and national levels. This could include embedding adolescent-focused gender and violence indicators, informed by the Adolescent Man Box, in existing national surveys that track cohorts longitudinally to understand how specific attitudes, behaviours and experiences evolve over time (aligned with the Australian Institute of Family Studies' Ten to Men longitudinal study).

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Appendix A: About Jesuit Social Services and The Men's Project

Jesuit Social Services has worked with boys and young men for nearly half a century, supporting them to live respectful and fulfilling lives. The Men's Project, an initiative launched in 2017, expands on this direct engagement with boys and men, by building an evidence base and implementing prevention initiatives that address the root causes of violence and harm.

Our primary focus centres on our research on the 'Man Box' in Australia. The *Man Box* series has already influenced policy, practice and public understanding — including contributions to the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children, and the development of healthier masculinities frameworks in Victoria and beyond.

The Men's Project at Jesuit Social Services is committed to working in partnership with schools, government and the community to support adolescent boys during this formative time. We hope to assist adolescent boys to improve their well-being, form greater positive self-concept, engage in safer behaviours, and develop more respectful and fulfilling relationships with the people in their lives.

Appendix B: Demographic characteristics of survey sample

Demographic variable	Weighted % of survey sample (14-18 year olds)	Unweighted % of survey sample (14-18 year olds)	Raw number of 14-18 year old respondents (n)	% of Australian population (14-18 years old)
Gender				
Male / Boy	54%	47%	655	52%
Female / Girl	46%	53%	736	48%
Non-binary, gender questioning, unsure, use a different term	1%	1%	10	-
Age (whole year)				
14	21%	14%	197	21%
15	19%	12%	173	20%
16	21%	25%	353	20%
17	20%	27%	379	19%
18	20%	21%	299	19%
Age (category)				
14-15	40%	26%	370	42%
16-18	60%	74%	1031	58%
State & Territory				
New South Wales	34%	34%	483	31%
Victoria	32%	30%	419	25%
Western Australia	13%	14%	197	22%
Queensland	9%	9%	133	7%
South Australia	8%	8%	114	11%
Tasmania	3%	2%	33	2%
Australian Capital Territory	1%	1%	13	1%
Northern Territory	0%	0%	3	2%
Unknown/Other	0%	0%	6	0%
Metro / Non-Metro				
Metro	80%	80%	1118	66%
Non-metro	17%	17%	236	34%
Unknown	2%	3%	47	0%
Highest completed level of education				
Year 8 or below	10%	7%	98	6%
Year 9	18%	12%	172	22%
Year 10	21%	19%	273	28%
Year 11	21%	26%	369	23%
Year 12	25%	29%	411	17%
TAFE / Apprenticeship	3%	3%	44	4%
University diploma or higher	2%	2%	29	0%
None of the above	0%	0%	5	0%

Demographic variable	Weighted % of survey sample (14-18 year olds)	Unweighted % of survey sample (14-18 year olds)	Raw number of 14-18 year old respondents (n)	% of Australian population (14-18 years old)
Employment status				
Full-time	3%	3%	44	4%
Part-time/casual	39%	43%	598	22%
Not employed	58%	54%	756	71%
Prefer not to say	0%	0%	3	4%
Current school attendance				
Yes	88%	87%	1215	76%
No	11%	13%	182	19%
Prefer not to say	0%	0%	4	5%
School type				
Public school	64%	63%	767	53%
Private / alternative / homeschool	22%	22%	273	19%
Catholic	10%	10%	124	21%
Don't know / No further detail provided	3%	4%	51	7%
Country of birth				
Australia	87%	86%	1207	81%
Other	13%	14%	194	19%
Language spoken at home				
Another language	23%	26%	361	22%
English only	77%	74%	1038	78%
Don’t know	0%	0%	2	-
Cultural and linguistic diversity				
Born in Australia and speak English at home	73%	70%	985	72%
Speak a language other than English or born in another country	27%	30%	416	28%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identification				
No	95%	96%	1339	90%
Yes Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	5%	4%	58	6%
Prefer not to say	0%	0%	4	4%
Long-term disability, health condition, or injury				
Yes	14%	16%	222	16%
No	84%	82%	1153	75%
Prefer not to say	2%	2%	26	8%

Demographic variable	Weighted % of survey sample (14-18 year olds)	Unweighted % of survey sample (14-18 year olds)	Raw number of 14-18 year old respondents (n)	% of Australian population (14-18 years old)
Religion				
Buddhism	2%	2%	32	2%
Christianity	32%	32%	449	43%
Hinduism	4%	5%	64	2%
Islam	3%	3%	48	4%
Judaism	1%	1%	9	0%
Sikhism	0%	0%	7	0%
No religious affiliation	51%	50%	696	42%
Other religions and beliefs	3%	3%	45	1%
Prefer not to say	3%	4%	51	6%
Sexuality (specific identities)				(unavailable via census 2021)
Straight / heterosexual	85%	83%	1157	-
Gay	2%	2%	31	-
Bisexual	6%	6%	91	-
Pansexual	1%	1%	14	-
Queer	1%	1%	12	-
Asexual	1%	1%	12	-
Prefer not to have a label	2%	2%	26	-
I use a different term	1%	1%	9	-
Don't know	2%	2%	26	-
Prefer not to say	1%	2%	23	-
Sexuality (summary)				(unavailable via census 2021)
Straight / heterosexual	85%	83%	1157	-
Non-straight	12%	14%	195	-
Prefer not to say	1%	2%	23	-
Don’t know	2%	2%	26	-
Sometimes my family and I have trouble paying for things we need				(unavailable via census 2021)
Strongly disagree	20%	20%	277	-
Disagree	40%	41%	572	-
Agree	27%	26%	371	-
Strongly agree	8%	7%	105	-
Prefer not to say	2%	2%	32	-
Not sure	4%	3%	44	-

Population % is provided for data that is available

Appendix C: Methodology

Survey design

There are a range of validated scales and inventories available to measure masculine norms, many of them developed for use with men or both men and boys (Thompson & Bennett, 2015). To measure masculine norms in an adolescent cohort, the Men's Project used the Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale (MAMS), originally developed in the United States by Oransky and Fisher (2009). One of the key reasons MAMS was chosen for use in the Adolescent Man Box (AMBOX) Study, despite being slightly dated, is that the MAMS' content validity, clarity, and format of scale items were generated from interview data and through focus group discussions with adolescent boys, which enabled their direct lived experience and expressions of masculinity to be incorporated into the scale (Oransky & Fisher, 2009). This gave the scale specific validation with the 14-18-year target group, and more confidence that the key constructs were nuanced and applicable for AMBOX Study purposes.

To complement MAMS, the Men's Project developed additional survey questions to be included in the AMBOX Study to understand other attitudes, experiences and behaviours. Where possible and appropriate, these questions were derived from existing validated tools, and these were also supplemented with a selection of new questions developed for this study which had not been previously used or validated (see Appendix D for more detail).

The AMBOX survey was initially pilot tested in mainstream and flexible learning schools in Victoria and Queensland in 2019; and in 2021-22 the AMBOX survey was implemented at a state secondary school in Melbourne, Victoria with students of all genders and used by the school community as part of the implementation of Respectful Relationships curriculum. The early iterations of the AMBOX survey design included MAMS and questions about life outcomes, behaviours and experiences. These have been refined over time through empirical testing, Jesuit Social Services ethics review processes, and input and feedback from an expert Advisory Group.

As part of the current study, the Men's Project tested the main construct of MAMS, proving its validity and reliability for the Australian context (see discussion below on confirmatory factor analysis). The decision to keep the survey short to mitigate the risk of adolescents becoming unengaged (based on expert advice and prior experience of others implementing online surveys with the target age group), meant that some existing validated scales or key variables were not used. Rather, shorter 'encapsulating' question(s) were used (for example the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) was replaced with three indicative questions on mental health).

For sensitive questions (such as those about pornography, drugs or violence), respondents were provided with opt-out response options such as 'prefer not to say' (See Appendix D for detail).

Survey implementation

Wallis Social Research – a qualified and experienced social research organisation – led the data collection, verification and cleaning.

The study used non-probability convenience sampling, with three accredited survey panel providers recruiting respondents and employing exhaustive sampling to maximise both sample size and diversity that one panel provider alone could not achieve. All respondents aged 14 to 15 years were recruited via a parent or guardian; about two-thirds of the respondents aged 16 to 18 years were recruited directly, and the remaining third were recruited via a parent or guardian.

Informed consent was sought from all 14 to 18-year-old survey respondents and parental consent for all 14 to 15-year-old survey respondents, followed by consent for the adolescents themselves. As some adolescents recruited via their parents would have used their parents' device to complete the survey, and may have had a parent in the same room as they completed the survey, the following risk mitigation measures were used: providing reassurances to adolescents that their survey responses would not be saved on their parents' device; and designing the interface to ensure that answers disappeared as soon as they were submitted and could not be viewed by navigating backwards in the survey.

Social desirability bias was managed through use of an anonymous and online format; repeated reminders about the confidentiality and anonymity of responses throughout the questionnaire; and using descriptive and non-judgmental words for sensitive topics. The survey underwent cognitive testing (in which five adolescents pre-tested the survey) for sensitive question wording, understanding of terminology, and response alignment.

Initial screening was conducted prior to accepting a respondent into the study to ensure respondent eligibility (e.g. met age criteria, were who they said they were, and consented); detection and review of a range of potential survey response biases such as completing the survey quickly, providing the same answer to scale questions, and/or providing all the same responses to other questions; and utilising a series of vetting questions to exclude 'bots' or anyone lying to meet eligibility criteria.

The survey was appropriate for all device types, including mobile phones, the interface was tested with an adolescent for readability and useability, and definitions were provided to aid respondents in understanding questions where it was deemed that more than one interpretation could be made of a concept used in question phrasing.

Due to the sensitive and potentially triggering nature of some survey content, helpline numbers were provided to respondents throughout the survey. Respondents who completed the survey were provided with points by their survey panel provider, which can be redeemed for cash or gift cards.

The survey was implemented over a five-week period during March and April 2025. The median time to complete the survey was 13 minutes 38 seconds. In total, 1,401 respondents completed the survey, including 655 boys, 736 girls and 10 non-binary respondents. Recruiting from the target age group (14-18 years) is challenging and the survey sample size was set at a level that could be realistically achieved.

Survey data analysis

Data cleaning procedures were based on frequency and severity of cleaning categories such as duplicate IPs, excessive speeding, junk verbatims, and non-response straight-lining, among others.

A reasonably representative spread of the sample was achieved across the key demographic variables of age, gender, location (metropolitan/regional/rural) and State/Territory. To enhance representativeness and align with national population proportions (ABS Census 2021), the data were weighted by age and gender - the most appropriate weighting scheme given the results of predictive modelling on MAMS scale items and stability of the weighting.

Results from Shapley's Relative Importance showed that gender and age explained the vast majority of variance (R^2 = 0.199), while state/territory and location had negligible independent contributions. The approach relied on natural fallout for all demographics beyond age and gender. Additional variables such as sexuality, employment, education status, and religion in the sample can be considered as broadly representative.

Tests of statistical significance were used to determine whether differences between groups were not due to sampling error. Various types of significance testing were used in processing based on the type of data (e.g. numeric, categorical, ordinal) and group size. All testing was conducted at a 95% confidence level with a +/- 5% confidence interval using the weighted sample.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of MAMS was conducted with the hypothesised four-factor structure showing acceptable to good fit and CFA reliability tests passed irrespective of measurement type. Convergent validity fell short in two pillars (Emotional Restriction and Social Teasing) due to low-loading items, indicating where opportunities lie to consider strengthening MAMS in future use, such as dropping the items or undertaking further testing. High inter-factor correlations were observed between Constant Effort & Heterosexism and Emotional Restriction & Heterosexism. Reliability was satisfactory across all factors ($\omega \geq .75$).

Post application of weighting indicated strong representation and limited impacts on the average numeric value across the MAMs items.

Analysis of non-response data (e.g. selecting 'prefer not to say' or 'not sure') showed that for most items, fewer than 2% of respondents chose a non-response option. Slightly higher rates (4-5%) were seen for questions about school type, religious affiliation, and financial hardship. Non-response was significantly higher for questions on pornography and sexually explicit deepfakes, with 8-18% choosing not to answer.

Adolescent Man Box scores and Adolescent Man Box quintiles

Adopting a similar approach to our previous 2018 and 2024 Adult Man Box studies, we calculated composite scores for each survey respondent and measured the degree to which they personally agreed with the Man Box rules. We refer to the composite scores as the "Adolescent Man Box score" or "AMBOX score", calculated by averaging the score for each respondent on each MAMS item rated, i.e. the total score divided by 27 (the total number of MAMS items). "AMBOX scores" have a minimum value of 1.0 and a maximum value of 4.0. The higher the AMBOX score, the higher the personal endorsement of AMBOX rules.

Quintile analysis

We also conducted quintile analysis that had been introduced in our 2018 and 2024 Adult Man Box studies. Quintile analysis included the 14-18-year-old boys in the sample (n=655). The quintile analysis splits the sample into five groups based upon their scores from those who least strongly endorse AMBOX rules to those who most endorse AMBOX rules, meaning that each quintile was approximately 130 respondents. However, quintile counts were lower if boys opted out of survey questions - for example the pornography questions[29].

Prior to forming the quintiles, data were weighted to ensure adherence to a true quintile structure (i.e. split across 5 segments in roughly equal proportions). Post application of weighting yielded a total effective sample size of 94% (n=619) indicating strong representation and limited impacts caused by post-weighting. For an effective sample size of n=619, at a 95% confidence level and ±5% confidence interval, the margin of error was ±3.94%.

Important to note is that each quintile represents a fifth of the range of AMBOX scores, not a fifth of respondents. In other words, the first quintile represents the lowest fifth of the range of AMBOX scores, the second quintile represents the second fifth of the range, and so on. Respondents with identical scores are placed in the same quintile (rather than arbitrarily split into two different quintiles), which is why the quintiles do not have a precisely equal number of survey respondents.

An analysis of adherence to the AMBOX based on quintiles of AMBOX scores was conducted across the other variables. For each life outcome variable the average score for each quintile was calculated.

Man Box quintiles, with range of average scores

Male AMBOX Scores by Quintile / Overall sample	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Overall
Average	1.41	2.01	2.25	2.48	2.85	**2.17**
Minimum	1.00	1.81	2.15	2.37	2.63	**1.00**
Maximum	1.78	2.11	2.33	2.59	3.59	**3.59**

29 Raw quintile counts were: Quintile 1 – 139; Quintile 2 – 138; Quintile 3 – 131; Quintile 4 – 133; Quintile 5 – 114.

Appendix D: The questionnaire

Question topic	Details and source
Hover text throughout the survey	Prompts and links were provided throughout the survey to a range of online support options including specialist services for: young people on any issue, young people's mental health, people identifying as Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander, and LBGTQIA+ individuals. Gambling helpline support was provided at the point of asking questions about gambling behaviour. The survey also included the following messages about anonymity multiple times throughout the survey: - *Remember: Your answers to all questions will never be tied back to you. All answers will remain anonymous, which means nobody will ever know who said what* - *We cannot connect your answers to your name, so we cannot contact you. If you are having a hard time, please call one of the free helplines listed after clicking the 'Helplines' button below*
Adolescent Man Box rules	The Adolescent Man Box rules come from the Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale, which elicits responses to 27 statements about masculinity which are structured around four pillars: (1) Constant effort to be manly; (2) Emotional restriction; (3) Heterosexism; (4) Social teasing. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 4-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree). Minor wording changes were made to suit a contemporary Australian context. Two negatively worded items were rephrased positively (e.g. "It is not important for boys to listen to each other" became "It is important for boys to listen to each other"), with responses reverse-coded for consistency. Positively worded items are generally easier for adolescents to interpret, and research suggests that reversing item valence (positive vs. negative) has minimal impact on scale reliability. **Source:** Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale (Oransky & Fisher, 2009). This is a validated scale and confirmatory factor analysis has confirmed appropriateness for Australia.
Additional attitudes about heterosexism	Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements on a 4-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree) with the following attitude statements: - In heterosexual (straight) relationships, men should be the main provider for their families. **Source:** adapted from the Adult Man Box survey conducted in 2023 (The Men's Project & Flood, 2024). - Hover Text: Heterosexual relationships are romantic and/or sexual relationships that are between a man and a woman - A man shouldn't have to do household chores. **Source:** The Adult Man Box survey conducted in 2023 (The Men's Project & Flood, 2024). - It does not matter if a teenage boy is gay, it's the type of person he is that's important. **Source:** original question requested by JSS Ethics Committee. - It's okay for straight teenage boys to be friends with transgender and gender diverse people. **Source:** original question developed with Advisory Group - Hover Text: People whose gender identity or experience is different from the gender that was presumed and recorded for them at birth - Hover Text: People whose gender is different to what it was assumed to be at birth (includes non-binary people and transgender people, as well as those who identify as gender non-conforming).

Additional attitudes about heterosexism	- It's okay for teenage boys to be close friends with teenage girls. **Source:** original question developed with Advisory Group - Teenage boys should always want to have sex. **Source:** adapted from the Adult Man Box 2023 (The Men's Project & Flood, 2024).
Attitudes about aggression and control	Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on a 4-point likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree) with the following attitude statements: - If a teenage boy has a girlfriend, he should know where she is all the time. **Source:** adapted from The Adult Man Box 2023 (The Men's Project & Flood, 2024). - A teenage boy should use violence to get respect if necessary. **Source:** adapted from The Adult Man Box 2023 (The Men's Project & Flood, 2024). - If a man is violent to his partner, it's probably because his partner did something to provoke / deserve it. **Source:** original question developed with Advisory Group - If a teenage boy has sex with a teenage girl, he should decide what happens and what she does during sex. **Source:** original question developed with Advisory Group - It's ok to send multiple texts, phone calls, social media messages when your partner isn't responding immediately, or when you are frustrated with them. **Source:** Informed by the TAR Scale (Technology-facilitated Abuse in Relationships) (Brown & Hegarty 2021), which is a validated scale in Australia, with Australian youth aged 16-24. - It's ok to call your partner mean names when they disagree with you or your beliefs. **Source:** adapted from Composite Abuse Scale (Revised)-Short Form (CASR-SF) (Ford-Gilboe et al. 2016), which is a validated scale amongst Canadian adult women. - Continually checking who my partner is communicating with on social media is normal in a relationship. **Source:** Informed by the TAR Scale (Technology-facilitated Abuse in Relationships) (Brown & Hegarty, 2021), which is a validated scale in Australia, with Australian youth aged 16-24. - It's ok to use a photo or video of someone and change it into something sexual (e.g. use deepfakes or photoshop). **Source:** Informed by the TAR Scale (Technology-facilitated Abuse in Relationships) (Brown & Hegarty, 2021), which is a validated scale in Australia, with Australian youth aged 16-24. - Sharing intimate photos of your partner after a breakup is not a big deal. **Source:** Informed by the TAR Scale (Technology-facilitated Abuse in Relationships) (Brown & Hegarty, 2021), which is a validated scale in Australia, with Australian youth aged 16-24.
Attitudes about gender equality	Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements on a 4-point likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree) with the following attitude statements: - In Australia today, boys have it harder than girls. **Source:** adapted from question in Barker et al. 2023. - It's not important for teenage boys to treat girls and women as equals in all areas of life. **Source:** adapted from positive masculinity domain regarding men's respect for women (Kiselica et al., 2016)
Impact of sources of ideas about adolescent masculinity	The survey provided a list of people, groups and media and asked respondents to rate how much impact each item has on their ideas about how teenage boys should act. The items were: social media and online influencers; dad or male parental figure; mum or female parental figure; family members (other than parental figure); teachers; male friends; female friends; gender diverse friends; peers who are not your main friends; sports clubs or sports people; advertising; religion; video games; romantic or sexual partners; movies or television; pornography; and coach or mentor. For each item on the list, the response options were: 'no impact', 'some impact', 'big impact'. Respondents could opt out by selecting: 'not sure / not relevant to me'. There was no limit to how many items respondents could rate as having each level of impact. **Source:** original question, with advice from Advisory Group

Online life	he survey asked respondents how much they agreed that their online social life is more engaging and rewarding than their offline social life. The response options were: strongly agree; agree; disagree; strongly disagree; and 'I do not have an online social life'. **Source:** Barker et al (2023)
Online influencer or content creator	The survey asked respondents to name an online influencer or content creator that they follow and provided an open text box. Respondents could opt out by selecting 'I don't have an influencer or content creator I follow'. **Source:** original question developed with Advisory Group
Use of aggression	The survey asked respondents how often they had done the following things in the past month: 'Insulted, posted photos meant to embarrass, or made threats to someone over text messages, social media or another app or website'; 'Physically hurt someone on purpose'; and 'Made sexual comments to someone you didn't know, in person or online'. Response options: Never; Sometimes; Often; Very Often; Prefer not to say. **Source:** Promundo Man Box Questionnaire 2017 (Heilman et al., 2017).
Experience of being victimised	The survey asked respondents how often they had experienced the following things in the past month: 'Someone or a group of people insulted you, posted photos meant to embarrass you, or made threats to you over text messages, social media or another app or website'; 'Someone or a group of people physically hurt you on purpose; 'Someone you don't know, or a group of people that you don't know, made sexual comments to you or about you? This includes in person or online'. Response options: Never; Sometimes; Often; Very Often; Prefer not to say. **Source:** Promundo Man Box Questionnaire 2017 (Heilman et al., 2017).
Retaliation when rejected	The survey asked respondents to what extent they agree or disagree with the statement: 'If someone rejects me, I usually try to get back at them'. Response options: Strongly agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree; Prefer not to say. **Source:** original question informed by relevant research (Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2021; Volz & Kerig, 2010)
Responses to witnessing sexist jokes and harassment (ie bystander behaviour)	The survey asked respondents if they had ever seen 'Teenage boys or men making sexist comments or jokes near or around you (sexist comments refer to something which is said that puts down or makes fun of women or girls)'; 'Teenage boys or men verbally or physically harassing a woman or girl near or around you'; and 'Teenage boys or men verbally or physically harassing someone who is transgender (trans) or gender diverse'. Response options: 'Yes'; 'No'. Those who selected 'Yes', were then asked how they had responded to each scenario the last time it happened. Response options: 'It didn't bother me'; 'I felt a bit uncomfortable but didn't say or do anything'; 'I wanted to say or do something, but didn't know what to do'; 'I said or did something to show I didn't approve'; 'I did something else' (which sought to capture behaviours that didn't fit the other categories - such as pretending to take a phone call to remove themselves from the situation). Hover Text: Note: Sexist comments refer to something which is said that puts down or makes fun of women or girls **Source:** adapted from Coumarelos et al (2023) (the National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey) (questions on prosocial bystander behaviour from Sexual Harrassment Scale), which is a validated scale in Australia, with Australians aged 16 years or over.

Pornography	Respondents were asked: Have you ever seen pornography? (Yes / No / Not sure / Prefer not to say). If they answered 'yes', they were asked the following questions about pornography: - 'In the last 6 months how often have you looked at pornography?'. Response options: More than once a day, Daily or almost daily, Once or a few times a week, Once or a few times a month, A few times in the last 6 months, Once or twice, Never, Prefer not to say. - 'When you look at pornography, how often do you see: Something happening to a female without consent; Something happening to a male without consent; Something happening to a gender diverse person without consent; A female being choked; A male being choked; A gender diverse person being choked; A female being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped or gagged; A male being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped, gagged; A gender diverse person being pushed, shoved, kicked punched, slapped, gagged'. For each item the response options were: Always; Often; Sometimes; Rarely; Never; Not sure; Prefer not to say. Hover text: For the purposes of this survey, pornography is defined as sexually explicit material, primarily intended to arouse the audience. Hover text: Please note 'without consent' refers to something happening without the person's permission or against their will. This may include actions such as verbal pressuring, intimidation, physical force, tricking someone, using hidden cameras or upskirting, or when a person is asleep **Source:** original question developed with Advisory Group. Response options for frequency question are from the New Zealand Youth and Pornography study 2018 (OLFC, 2018).
Image-based abuse	'In the last 6 months, have you seen sexually explicit deepfake pictures or videos of real people you know?' (Yes; No; Not sure; Prefer not to say). 'My friends would probably use AI to create fake nude images of people they know (sometimes called deepfakes)' (Disagree; Agree; Strongly Agree; Prefer not to say) **Source:** original questions developed with Advisory Group
Physical fights	'Have you ever got into a physical fight (a fight that was serious and not for fun or play)?'. (Yes; No; Prefer not to say). If yes: 'In the last year, how many physical fights did you get into? (None; One; More than one; Prefer not to say) **Source:** Adolescent Risk-Taking survey (Kwong et al., 2018), which validated three composite indicators of adolescent risk behaviours in a Canadian adolescent population.
Alcohol	Respondents were asked 'In the last 12 months, how often did you typically have an alcoholic drink of any kind?'. Response options were: 'Every day', 'More than once a week', 'About once a week', 'About once a month', 'Every few months', 'Once or twice a year', 'Not at all', and 'Prefer not to say'. **Source:** Adolescent Risk-Taking survey (Kwong et al., 2018), which validated three composite indicators of adolescent risk behaviours in a Canadian adolescent population.
Marijuana and other drugs	Respondents were asked whether they had ever used marijuana, and if so, how often in the last 12 months, with the following response options: 'Every day', 'More than once a week', 'About once a week', 'About once a month', 'Every few months', 'Once or twice a year', 'Not at all', and 'Prefer not to say'. Respondents were also asked if they had used any other drugs (excluding marijuana, alcohol, tobacco or vapes), and if so, how often in the last 12 months using the same response options above. **Source:** Adolescent Risk-Taking survey (Kwong et al., 2018), which validated three composite indicators of adolescent risk behaviours in a Canadian adolescent population.

Gambling	Respondents were asked 'Do you spend money on any of the following activities?' with the following response options: 'online table games (eg: poker, blackjack, roulette)', 'online betting on horse or dog races', 'online betting on sports', 'lootboxes in online games', 'asking someone to place a bet for you in person', 'other betting or gambling activities', 'none of the above' and 'prefer not to say'. Respondents were then asked: 'In the last year, how often have you?' with the following response options: 'bet more than you could really afford to lose', 'been criticised for your betting or told that you had a gambling problem (regardless of whether or not you thought it was true)', 'felt guilty about the way you gamble or what happens when you gamble'. **Source:** Adapted from Short Form Problem Gambling Severity Index (Ferris & Wynne, 2001), which is a validated scale amongst Canadian adults and subsequently widely used globally as a reliable and standardised measure of at-risk behaviour in problem gambling.
Mental health	'Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you experienced any of the following?: Little interest or pleasure in doing things; Feeling down, depressed or hopeless; Having thoughts of self-harm' (Not at all; Some days; More than half the days; Nearly every day; Prefer not to say). **Source:** The Adult Man Box 2023 (The Men's Project & Flood, 2024).
Optimism	Respondents were asked about their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement, 'I feel mostly positive about my future'. **Source:** Barker et al (2023) found low optimism for the future using a 9-point scale with American men. The scale was too long for the Adolescent Man Box survey, therefore, only one question was used to assess adolescents' level of optimism about the future.
Social connection	The survey asked respondents to indicate, on a 4-point Likert scale, their level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements: 'In my home it's acceptable to talk about my feelings and be vulnerable', 'I have a friend I can talk about my feelings and be vulnerable with', and 'No one really knows me well'. They could also indicate that they 'prefer not to say'. **Source:** Original questions developed with input from the Advisory Group. 'No one really knows me well' is from Barker et al (2023).
Support seeking	A detailed list of who adolescents seek help from first, including the options of: a friend, parent or guardian, brother/sister, relative, pet, partner or significant other, internet, GP or health professional, teacher/coach, social media, school counsellor. - Hover Text: Note: By seeking help, we mean having a chat, getting professional advice or looking into something yourself - Hover Text: Note: That person [you sought help from] could be a friend, parent, other relative/family member, intimate partner, mental health professional, doctor/GP, helpline, minister or religious leader **Source:** Mission Australia Youth Survey 2019 (Carlisle, 2019).

Appendix E: Detailed data tables

This appendix presents more granular data than the findings provided in the body of the report. Where figures are coloured blue or red, it indicates that the difference is statistically significant. Blue text indicates the figure is statistically higher than the average; while red text indicates the figure is statistically lower than the average. Statistical significance indicates the likelihood that the observed difference is not due to random chance (random sampling variability). In other words, the coloured numbers point to a real (not random) difference.

Chapter 1: Adolescent Man Box

Figure 1.1A: Perceived social expectation for teenage boys to adhere to Adolescent Man Box rules related to 'constant effort to be manly' (n=1401)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed that 'Most people in Australia believe...'

Adolescent Man Box pillar 1 - Constant effort to be manly	Boys	Girls	Total*
A teenage boy should always seem as manly as other boys that he knows	60%	62%	61%
A teenage boy should never back down from a challenge in public	46%	50%	48%
Acting manly should be the most important goal for teenage boys	52%	52%	52%
A teenage boy must always appear confident even if he isn't	62%	61%	61%
No matter what happens, a teenage boy should seem strong to others	63%	62%	63%
Getting made fun of helps teenage boys become tough	53%	56%	54%
Teenage boys should try to appear manly in almost all situations	62%	63%	62%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Chapter 2: Other attitudes relevant to violence prevention

Figure 2.1A: Proportion of boys who endorsed attitudes about rigid gender roles, heterosexism and sexuality, by age (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-15 and 16-18 who agreed or strongly agreed that 'In my opinion...'.

Restrictive masculinity: heterosexism	Boys 14-15	Boys 16-18
In heterosexual (straight) relationships, men should be the main provider for their families	44%	44%
A man shouldn't have to do household chores	10%	9%
It matters if a teenage boy is gay, it's not the type of person he is that's important	17%	14%
It's not okay for straight teenage boys to be friends with transgender and gender diverse people	22%	18%
It's not okay for teenage boys to be close friends with teenage girls	3%	5%
Teenage boys should always want to have sex	11%	11%

Figure 2.2A: Proportion of boys who endorsed violence-supportive attitudes, by age (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed that 'In my opinion...'

Violence-supportive attitudes	Boys 14-15	Boys 16-18
Attitudes about masculinity as aggressive and controlling		
If a teenage boy has a girlfriend, he should know where she is all the time	13%	12%
A teenage boy should use violence to get respect if necessary	11%	10%
If a man is violent to his partner, it's probably because his partner did something to provoke / deserve it	11%	9%
If a teenage boy has sex with a teenage girl, he should decide what happens and what she does during sex	14%	12%
Attitudes about intimate partner abuse and technology-facilitated abuse		
It's ok to send multiple texts, phone calls, social media messages when your partner isn't responding immediately, or when you are frustrated with them	19%	27%
It's okay to call your partner mean names when they disagree with you or your beliefs	9%	8%
Continually checking who my partner is communicating with on social media is normal in a relationship	20%	17%
It's okay to use a photo or video of someone and change it into something sexual	6%	6%
Sharing intimate photos of your partner after a breakup is not a big deal	10%	6%

Figure 2.3A: Proportion of boys who endorsed attitudes about gender equality, by age (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed that 'In my opinion...'

Gender equality	Boys 14-15	Boys 16-18
In Australia today, boys have it harder than girls	38%	44%
It's not important for teenage boys to treat girls and women as equals in all areas of life	5%	3%

Chapter 3: Influences on adolescents' attitudes

Figure 3.1A: Online influencers and content creators named by at least five respondents

The 17 individual influencers and creators mentioned by at least five survey respondents in response to the question, 'Can you name an online influencer or content creator that you follow?'

Name of influencer or creator	Number of mentions by survey respondents of different genders
Mr Beast	69 mentions (60 boys, 9 girls)
Anna Paul	25 mentions (25 girls)
Kat Clark	9 mentions (9 girls)
Sidemen	8 mentions (4 boys, 4 girls)
James Charles	8 mentions (3 boys, 4 girls, 1 non-binary respondent)
Spencer Barbosa	8 mentions (8 girls)
Andrew Tate	7 mentions (7 boys)
Indy Clinton	7 mentions (7 girls)
IShowSpeed	6 mentions (5 boys, 1 girl)
Taylor Swift	6 mentions (1 boy, 5 girls)
Norris Nuts	6 mentions (6 girls)
Noel Deyzel	5 mentions (5 boys)
Dan TDM	5 mentions (4 boys, 1 girl)
Markiplier	5 mentions (1 boy, 4 girls)
Bridey Drake	5 mentions (5 girls)
Deja Clark	5 mentions (5 girls)
Sophadophaa	5 mentions (5 girls)

Chapter 4: Aggressive behaviour

Figure 4.1A: Proportion of adolescents who used physical violence, bullying or sexual harassment behaviours, by gender (n=1401)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who reported using each behaviour in the past month

Physical violence, bullying and sexual harassment	Boys	Girls	Total*
Ever used any act during the past month	18%	13%	16%
Insulted, posted photos meant to embarrass, or made threats to someone over text messages, social media or another app or website	10%	7%	9%
Physically hurt someone on purpose	9%	5%	7%
Made sexual comments to someone you didn't know, in person or online	13%	7%	10%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Figure 4.2A: Proportion of boys who used physical violence, bullying or sexual harassment behaviours, by age (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-15 and 16-18 who reported using each behaviour in the past month

Physical violence, bullying and sexual harassment	Boys 14-15	Boys 16-18
Ever used any act during the past month	16%	20%
Insulted, posted photos meant to embarrass, or made threats to someone over text messages, social media or another app or website	8%	11%
Physically hurt someone on purpose	6%	11%
Made sexual comments to someone you didn't know, in person or online	13%	13%

Figure 4.3A: Proportion of boys who used physical violence, bullying or sexual harassment behaviours, by survey recruitment type (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported using each behaviour in the past month

Physical violence, bullying and sexual harassment	Boys 16-18 recruited directly	Boys 16-18 recruited via parent
Ever used any act during the past month	23%	17%
Insulted, posted photos meant to embarrass, or made threats to someone over text messages, social media or another app or website	12%	9%
Physically hurt someone on purpose	13%	8%
Made sexual comments to someone you didn't know, in person or online	14%	12%

Figure 4.4A: Proportion of adolescents who responded in different ways to witnessing sexist comments or jokes, by gender (n=987)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who reported each response type the last time they were around teenage boys or men making sexist comments or jokes

Response	Boys	Girls	Total
It didn't bother me	20%	6%	13%
I felt a bit uncomfortable, but didn't say or do anything	38%	35%	36%
I wanted to say or do something, but didn't know what to do	23%	30%	27%
I said or did something to show I didn't approve	17%	28%	23%
I did something else	1%	1%	1%

Figure 4.5A: Proportion of adolescents who responded in different ways to witnessing harassment of a woman or girl, by gender (n=599)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who reported each response type the last time they were around teenage boys or men verbally or physically harassing a woman or girl

Response	Total	Boys	Girls
It didn't bother me	2%	5%	1%
I felt a bit uncomfortable, but didn't say or do anything	25%	29%	22%
I wanted to say or do something, but didn't know what to do	37%	32%	39%
I said or did something to show I didn't approve	34%	33%	36%
I did something else	2%	1%	2%

Figure 4.6A: Proportion of adolescents who responded in different ways to witnessing harassment of a transgender or gender diverse person, by gender (n=430)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who reported each response type the last time they were around teenage boys or men verbally or physically harassing a transgender or gender diverse person

Response	Total	Boys	Girls
It didn't bother me	13%	22%	5%
I felt a bit uncomfortable, but didn't say or do anything	23%	23%	24%
I wanted to say or do something, but didn't know what to do	32%	29%	35%
I said or did something to show I didn't approve	28%	21%	33%
I did something else	4%	5%	3%

Chapter 5: Pornography and image-based abuse

Figure 5.1A: Proportion of adolescents who had ever seen pornography, by gender (n=1265)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who reported they had ever seen pornography (defined as 'sexually explicit material primarily intended to arouse the audience')

Ever seen pornography	Boys	Girls	Total*
Prevalence of respondents that reported ever seeing pornography in their life	59%	43%	52%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Figure 5.2A: Proportion of boys who had ever seen pornography, by age (n=589)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-15 and 16-18 who reported they had ever seen pornography (defined as 'sexually explicit material primarily intended to arouse the audience')

Ever seen pornography	Boys 14-15	Boys 16-18
Prevalence of respondents that reported ever seeing pornography in their life	43%	70%

Figure 5.3A: Proportion of boys who had ever seen pornography, by survey recruitment type (n=403)

Percentage of male respondents aged 16-18 who reported they had ever seen pornography (defined as 'sexually explicit material primarily intended to arouse the audience')

Ever seen pornography	Boys 16-18 recruited directly	Boys 16-18 recruited via parent
Prevalence of respondents that reported ever seeing pornography in their life	72%	68%

Figure 5.4A: Proportion of adolescents who viewed pornography at different frequencies, by gender (n=621)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who reported they had viewed pornography in the last 6 months, who reported different viewing frequencies (pornography was defined as 'sexually explicit material, primarily intended to arouse the audience')

Frequency of pornography viewing in the last 6 months	Boys	Girls	Total*
Prevalence of respondents that reported seeing pornography at different frequencies in the last 6 months			
Not in the last 6 months	9%	26%	15%
Once or twice	24%	35%	28%
A few times in the last 6 months	15%	12%	14%
Once or a few times a month	18%	16%	18%
Once or a few times a week	23%	9%	18%
Daily or almost daily	8%	1%	5%
More than once a day	3%	1%	2%
Prevalence of respondents that reported seeing pornography at different frequency categories			
Less than once per month	39%	47%	42%
Once per month or more	52%	27%	43%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Figure 5.5A: Proportion of boys who viewed pornography at different frequencies, by age (n=334)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported they had viewed pornography in the last 6 months, who reported different viewing frequencies (pornography was defined as 'sexually explicit material, primarily intended to arouse the audience')

Frequency of pornography viewing in the last 6 months	Boys 14-15	Boys 16-18
Prevalence of respondents that reported seeing pornography at different frequencies in the last 6 months		
Not in the last 6 months	8%	9%
Once or twice	36%	18%
A few times in the last 6 months	18%	14%
Once or a few times a month	16%	19%
Once or a few times a week	19%	25%
Daily or almost daily	2%	10%
More than once a day	1%	4%
Prevalence of respondents that reported seeing pornography at different frequency categories		
Less than once per month	54%	32%
Once per month or more	38%	58%

Figure 5.6A: Proportion of boys who viewed pornography at different frequencies, by survey recruitment type (n=258)

Percentage of male respondents aged 16-18 who reported they had viewed pornography in the last 6 months, who reported different viewing frequencies (pornography was defined as 'sexually explicit material, primarily intended to arouse the audience')

Frequency of pornography viewing	Boys 16-18 recruited directly	Boys 16-18 recruited via parent
Prevalence of respondents that reported seeing pornography at different frequencies in the last 6 months		
Not in the last 6 months	11%	8%
Once or twice	8%	33%
A few times in the last 6 months	10%	21%
Once or a few times a month	23%	13%
Once or a few times a week	28%	20%
Daily or almost daily	15%	3%
More than once a day	5%	1%
Prevalence of respondents that reported seeing pornography at different frequency categories		
Less than once per month	18%	54%
Once per month or more	72%	38%

Figure 5.7A: Proportion of adolescents who see harmful acts when they look at pornography, by gender (n=419)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who had ever seen pornography and who reported seeing different acts when they look at pornography, including: 'Something happening to [someone] without consent' (defined as 'something happening without the person's permission or against their will. This may include actions such as verbal pressuring, intimidation, physical force, tricking someone, using hidden cameras or upskirting, or when a person is asleep'); '[Someone] being choked'; and '[Someone] being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped or gagged'

Harmful acts within pornography	Boys	Girls	Total
Something happening to a female without consent	45%	54%	48%
A female being choked	50%	70%	57%
A female being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped, or gagged	31%	55%	40%
Something happening to a male without consent	34%	36%	35%
A male being choked	31%	33%	32%
A male being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped, gagged	22%	33%	26%
Something happening to a gender diverse person without consent	26%	30%	27%
A gender diverse person being choked	22%	29%	24%
A gender diverse person being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped, gagged	17%	27%	21%
Harmful acts grouped			
Non-consensual act to anyone	45%	53%	48%
Anyone choked	50%	67%	56%
Anyone pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped, gagged	32%	52%	39%
Any of these acts happening to a female	63%	83%	70%
Any of these acts happening to a male	47%	54%	50%
Any of these acts happening to a gender diverse person	32%	44%	36%
Any of these acts happening to anyone	63%	81%	69%

Figure 5.8A: Proportion of boys who see harmful acts when they look at pornography, by age (n=253)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-15 and 16-18 who had ever seen pornography and who reported seeing different acts when they look at pornography, including: 'Something happening to [someone] without consent' (defined as 'something happening without the person's permission or against their will. This may include actions such as verbal pressuring, intimidation, physical force, tricking someone, using hidden cameras or upskirting, or when a person is asleep'); '[Someone] being choked'; and '[Someone] being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped or gagged'

Harmful acts within pornography	Boys 14-15	Boys 16-18
Something happening to a female without consent	34%	49%
A female being choked	46%	51%
A female being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped, or gagged	24%	35%
Something happening to a male without consent	26%	38%
A male being choked	26%	34%
A male being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped, gagged	16%	24%
Something happening to a gender diverse person without consent	22%	27%
A gender diverse person being choked	22%	22%
A gender diverse person being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped, gagged	12%	20%
Harmful acts grouped		
Non-consensual act to anyone	29%	51%
Anyone choked	47%	51%
Anyone pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped, gagged	24%	36%
Any of these acts happening to a female	54%	68%
Any of these acts happening to a male	38%	51%
Any of these acts happening to a gender diverse person	25%	35%
Any of these acts happening to anyone	52%	68%

Figure 5.9A: Proportion of boys who see harmful acts when they look at pornography, by survey recruitment type (n=196)

Percentage of male respondents aged 16-18 who had ever seen pornography and who reported seeing different acts when they look at pornography, including: 'Something happening to [someone] without consent' (defined as 'something happening without the person's permission or against their will. This may include actions such as verbal pressuring, intimidation, physical force, tricking someone, using hidden cameras or upskirting, or when a person is asleep'); '[Someone] being choked'; and '[Someone] being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped or gagged'.

Harmful acts within pornography	Boys 16-18 direct recruit	Boys 16-18 parental recruit
Something happening to a female without consent	49%	50%
A female being choked	61%	38%
A female being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped, or gagged	43%	23%
Something happening to a male without consent	42%	31%
A male being choked	43%	20%
A male being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped, gagged	32%	13%
Something happening to a gender diverse person without consent	28%	26%
A gender diverse person being choked	27%	15%
A gender diverse person being pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped, gagged	24%	14%
Harmful acts grouped		
Non-consensual act to anyone	50%	53%
Anyone choked	62%	37%
Anyone pushed, shoved, kicked, punched, slapped, gagged	45%	23%
Any of these acts happening to a female	71%	62%
Any of these acts happening to a male	57%	43%
Any of these acts happening to a gender diverse person	36%	33%
Any of these acts happening to anyone	71%	64%

Figure 5.10A: Proportion of adolescents who have seen image-based abuse material, or have friends who would create such material, by gender

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who reported they have seen sexually explicit deepfake images of people they know in the last 6 months, and who agreed or strongly agreed that their friends would probably create sexually explicit deepfake images of people they know

Image-based abuse	Boys	Girls	Total*
In the last 6 months, have you seen sexually explicit deepfake pictures or videos of real people you know? (n=1289)	9%	5%	8%
My friends would probably use AI to create fake nude images of people they know (n=1387)	13%	7%	10%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Figure 5.11A: Proportion of boys who have seen image-based abuse material, or have friends who would create such material, by age

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-15 and 16-18 who reported they have seen sexually explicit deepfake images of people they know in the last 6 months, and who agreed or strongly agreed that their friends would probably create sexually explicit deepfake images of people they know

Image-based abuse	Boys 14-15	Boys 16-18
In the last 6 months, have you seen sexually explicit deepfake pictures or videos of real people you know? (n=596)	6%	12%
My friends would probably use AI to create fake nude images of people they know (n=650)	14%	12%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Figure 5.12A: Proportion of boys who have seen image-based abuse material, or have friends who would create such material, by survey recruitment type

Percentage of male respondents aged 16-18 who reported they have seen sexually explicit deepfake images of people they know in the last 6 months, and who agreed or strongly agreed that their friends would probably create sexually explicit deepfake images of people they know

Image-based abuse	Boys 16-18 recruited directly	Boys 16-18 recruited via parent
In the last 6 months, have you seen sexually explicit deepfake pictures or videos of real people you know? (n=402)	14%	9%
My friends would probably use AI to create fake nude images of people they know (n=439)	12%	12%

Chapter 6: Risk-taking: alcohol, drugs, gambling, physical fights

Figure 6.1A: Proportion of adolescents who had consumed alcohol or drugs, by gender

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who reported they had consumed alcohol or drugs

	Boys	Girls	Total*
Alcohol use (n=1370)			
Ever	40%	50%	45%
Regular (once a month or more)	13%	17%	15%
Less regular (less than once a month)	25%	30%	27%
Marijuana use (n=1380)			
Ever	10%	12%	11%
Regular (once a month or more)	4%	3%	4%
Less regular (less than once a month)	4%	7%	6%
Other drug use (n=1381)			
Ever	4%	4%	4%
Regular (once a month or more)	2%	1%	2%
Less regular (less than once a month)	2%	2%	2%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Figure 6.2A: Proportion of adolescents who had ever consumed drugs, by gender (n=1371)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who reported they had ever consumed drugs

Ever (in their life) used marijuana or other drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco, vapes)	Boys	Girls	Total*
Yes	11%	13%	12%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Figure 6.3A: Proportion of adolescents who gambled or had gambling problems, by gender (n=1386)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who reported they had ever spent money on gambling activities in their life, and the percentage of those respondents who reported they had experienced a gambling problem in the last 12 months

	Boys	Girls	Total*
Ever spend any money on online betting, gambling, or gaming activities	16%	7%	12%
Ever bet more than could afford to lose	6%	2%	4%
Ever been criticised for betting or told they had a gambling problem	6%	2%	4%
Ever felt guilty about the way they gamble or what happens when they gamble	6%	3%	4%
Ever experienced any of the above gambling problems	8%	3%	6%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Figure 6.4A: Proportion of adolescents who had been in a physical fight, by gender (n=1376)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who reported they had been in a physical fight in the last year that was serious and not for fun or play

	Boys	Girls	Total*
Ever been in a physical fight in the last year	25%	13%	19%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Chapter 7: Mental health experiences and behaviours

Figure 7.1A: Proportion of adolescents who experienced poor mental health, by gender (n=1361)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who reported they had experienced each mental health symptom in the last two weeks

Poor mental health symptoms	Boys	Girls	Total*
Little interest or pleasure in doing things	68%	77%	72%
Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	57%	68%	62%
Having thoughts of self-harm	13%	20%	17%
Any of these poor mental health symptoms	73%	83%	78%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Figure 7.2A: Proportion of boys who experienced poor mental health, by age (n=640)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-15 and 16-18 who reported they had experienced each mental health symptom in the last two weeks

Poor mental health symptoms	Boys 14-15	Boys 16-18
Little interest or pleasure in doing things	60%	74%
Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	44%	66%
Having thoughts of self-harm	11%	15%
Any of these poor mental health symptoms	64%	80%

Figure 7.3A: Proportion of boys who experienced poor mental health, by survey recruitment type (n=640)

Percentage of male respondents aged 16-18 who reported they had experienced each mental health symptom in the last two weeks

Poor mental health symptoms	Boys 16-18 recruited directly	Boys 16-18 recruited via parent
Little interest or pleasure in doing things	82%	63%
Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	78%	51%
Having thoughts of self-harm	22%	6%
Any of these poor mental health symptoms	89%	69%

Figure 7.4A: Proportion of adolescents who felt optimistic or isolated, by gender (n=1364)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement

Optimism and isolation	Boys	Girls	Total*
I feel mostly positive about my future	85%	82%	84%
No one really knows me well	32%	33%	32%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Figure 7.5A: Proportion of adolescents who can talk about their feelings and be vulnerable, by gender (n=1364)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement

	Boys	Girls	Total*
In my home it's acceptable to talk about my feelings	85%	79%	82%
I have a friend I can talk about my feelings and be vulnerable with	80%	86%	83%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Figure 7.6A: Proportion of adolescents who sought support, by gender (n=1401)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who reported different frequencies of help seeking for an emotional or personal problem over the last 6 months

Help seeking	Boys	Girls	Total*
More frequent (once per month or more)	27%	50%	38%
Less frequent (less than once per month)	37%	29%	33%
Never	36%	20%	29%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Figure 7.7A: Proportion of boys who experienced poor mental health, by quintile (n=640)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported they had experienced each mental health symptom in the last two weeks

Poor mental health	Q1 Very Low AMBOX	Q2 Low	Q3 Moderate	Q3 Moderate	Q5 Very High AMBOX
Little interest or pleasure in doing things	66%	68%	67%	62%	78%
Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	55%	56%	50%	55%	70%
Having thoughts of self-harm	15%	7%	12%	10%	23%
Any of these poor mental health symptoms	71%	72%	70%	70%	85%

Figure 7.8A: Proportion of boys who can talk about their feelings and be vulnerable, by quintile (n=632)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement

Can be vulnerable with someone	Q1 Very Low AMBOX	Q2 Low	Q3 Moderate	Q4 High	Q5 Very High AMBOX
In my home it's acceptable to talk about my feelings and be vulnerable	88%	90%	83%	85%	76%
I have a friend I can talk about my feelings and be vulnerable with	89%	78%	83%	82%	65%

Figure 7.9A: Proportion of boys who felt optimistic or isolated, by quintile (n=632)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement

Optimism and isolation	Q1 Very Low	Q2 Low	Q3 Moderate	Q4 High	Q5 Very High
No one really knows me well	23%	28%	31%	32%	46%
I feel mostly positive about my future	86%	90%	84%	84%	81%

Figure 7.10A: Proportion of adolescents who sought initial support from different sources, by gender (n=1401)

Percentage of respondents aged 14-18 who reported different sources in response to the question, 'When you have a personal or emotional issue, which people or places would you seek help from first?' (Choose up to 3 sources of help)

Initial help seeking sources	Boys	Girls	Total*
Family			
Parent or guardian	76%	71%	74%
Brother/sister	31%	32%	31%
Relative	14%	9%	11%
Any of the above	81%	79%	80%
Friends and partners			
Friend	66%	75%	70%
Partner or significant other	7%	10%	8%
Any of the above	69%	77%	73%
Formal figures or service			
Teacher/coach	10%	8%	9%
GP or health professional	8%	7%	8%
School counsellor	8%	9%	8%
Spiritual/religious mentor	3%	2%	2%
Mobile apps	2%	2%	2%
Community service	2%	0%	1%
Any of the above	29%	25%	27%
Media			
Internet	10%	11%	11%
Social media	5%	6%	5%
Any of the above	13%	15%	14%
Other sources			
Pet	8%	11%	9%
Other	1%	1%	1%
Any of the above	8%	12%	10%
None of the above, I would keep the issue to myself	2%	4%	3%

**total includes boys, girls and non-binary respondents*

Figure 7.11A: Proportion of boys who sought initial support from different sources, by age (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-15 and 16-18 who reported different sources in response to the question, 'When you have a personal or emotional issue, which people or places would you seek help from first?' (Choose up to 3 sources of help).

Initial help seeking sources	Boys 14 to 15	Boys 16 to 18
Family		
Parent or guardian	80%	72%
Brother/sister	34%	28%
Relative	19%	10%
Any of the above	86%	78%
Friends and partners		
Friend	59%	72%
Partner or significant other	2%	10%
Any of the above	61%	75%
Formal figures or service		
Teacher/coach	12%	8%
GP or health professional	6%	10%
School counsellor	11%	6%
Spiritual/religious mentor	3%	3%
Mobile apps	1%	4%
Community service	2%	2%
Any of the above	30%	27%
Media		
Internet	7%	13%
Social media	5%	5%
Any of the above	10%	15%
Other sources		
Pet	8%	7%
Other	0%	1%
Any of the above	8%	8%
None of the above, I would keep the issue to myself	1%	3%

Figure 7.12A: Proportion of boys who sought initial support from different sources, by quintile (n=655)

Percentage of male respondents aged 14-18 who reported different sources in response to the question, 'When you have a personal or emotional issue, which people or places would you seek help from first?' (Choose up to 3 sources of help)

Help seeking sources	Q1 Very Low AMBOX	Q2 Low	Q3 Moderate	Q4 High	Q5 Very High AMBOX
Family					
Parent or guardian	81%	82%	74%	74%	67%
Brother/sister	37%	28%	33%	30%	24%
Relative	10%	15%	13%	20%	11%
Any of the above	85%	87%	83%	78%	72%
Friends and partners					
Friend	71%	69%	66%	66%	59%
Partner or significant other	6%	6%	8%	7%	7%
Any of the above	74%	71%	69%	69%	61%
Formal figures or service					
Teacher/coach	8%	12%	12%	10%	8%
GP or health professional	14%	8%	9%	7%	4%
School counsellor	6%	12%	8%	5%	8%
Spiritual/religious mentor	3%	2%	1%	3%	4%
Mobile apps	1%	4%	2%	1%	4%
Community service	1%	2%	2%	0%	4%
Any of the above	30%	34%	28%	22%	29%
Media					
Internet	10%	10%	8%	14%	10%
Social media	3%	3%	6%	6%	5%
Any of the above	12%	11%	13%	18%	12%
Other sources					
Pet	8%	5%	6%	5%	13%
Other	0%	1%	0%	1%	3%
Any of the above	8%	6%	6%	6%	16%
None of the above, I would keep the issue to myself	2%	1%	2%	2%	4%

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