

Addressing Masculinities  
**To Tackle** Violence  
Against Women  
In Ireland

Findings from the  
**PositivMasc Study**



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### Summary

Despite decades of policy intervention, violence against women (VAW) remains an intractable societal problem with deleterious effects. Concerns are increasingly being raised about the extent to which VAW is being experienced at younger ages. A survey carried out across the European Union found that one in three women in Europe has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since age 15 (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], 2014). The same survey found that 26% of the Irish sample had experienced physical and/or sexual violence by any partner and/or non-partner since age 15 (FRA, 2014).

It is widely recognised that a key factor in explaining the prevalence and experience of VAW lies in the attitudes and beliefs that young people hold about the acceptability of, or tolerance for, VAW. Understandings of gender norms - that is, the socially constructed ideas that circulate in a society about what is considered appropriate behaviour and roles for men and women - are central in shaping these attitudes. Multiple studies show that men who hold gender inequitable beliefs based around what we might term 'traditional' ideas of masculinity are more likely to perpetrate

VAW (Flood and Pease, 2009; Salazar et al., 2020).

It is therefore vital that we know more about how young people's constructions of gender and masculinities underpin their understandings and perceptions of VAW, in order to challenge societal attitudes and structures which contribute to the continued tolerance of VAW.

### The PositivMasc Study

This report documents the Irish findings of a four year (2019-2023), multi-country research study funded through the EU GENDER-NET Plus programme, entitled PositivMasc. The project had three key aims:

- To explore the discourses that young people (aged 18-24) use in their understandings of masculinities and how these discourses influence their attitudes towards violence against women.
- To explore young people's and stakeholders' views on how positive, anti-violence masculinities might be promoted and supported in order to challenge VAW.
- To develop actions and guidelines which support and promote forms of masculinity and manhood that actively reject and challenge VAW.



The study was built upon a three stage, mixed methods, research design. Phase 1 involved collecting qualitative data through 27 interviews with young people (women and men aged 18-24) and 14 stakeholders who work in the area of VAW in Ireland. Phase 2 involved a quantitative, participatory methodology known as Concept Mapping which sought to ascertain young people's and stakeholders' views on how we can reduce men's VAW and promote positive, non-violent forms of manhood. Phase 3 was a dissemination and knowledge translation phase which involved the production of an educational guide and policy brief drawing on data from across the four countries.

## Key findings

### Young people's understandings of VAW

- Young people are able to identify and define a range of acts and behaviours as 'violence against women'. However, they most commonly link VAW to physical and domestic violence and are more ambivalent about naming incidents of sexual violence or harassment. It is apparent that **many young people minimise acts of sexual harassment or sexual 'micro-aggressions' because they view them as unremarkable and 'normal'**.
- A concerning finding of the study is the ubiquity with which young people describe sexual harassment happening in their own lives and those of other young people they know.

- While most participants stated that VAW was unacceptable, the study found some ambiguity when young people were presented with specific scenarios of VAW. Some young people engaged in victim blaming discourses around the idea that women can bring violence or harassment upon themselves by behaving or dressing in particular ways.

### Masculinities and gender norms

- Young people identified forms of 'dominant masculinity' in Ireland which they connect with particular negative attitudes and behaviours. Whilst also being critical of these ideas, they suggested masculinity was associated with **control, assertion, confidence, bravery, physical strength, decision making, heterosexuality and success**. Male peer groups and peer pressure were cited as key mechanisms for the (re)production and regulation of masculine norms.
- Despite a recognition that women have and continue to gain greater opportunities for independence and personal autonomy, **young people believed women continue to be bound by an emphasis on maintaining a specific body image**. Participants perceived that a sexual double standard continues to regulate female sexuality, where active female heterosexuality is a source of shaming for women but pride for men.
- Young people perceived that considerable social change is occurring in relation to gender roles, sexuality and attitudes towards VAW. They differentiated traditional values that belong to an 'older cohort' of the population from more modern values of equality that are held more predominantly among young people.
- Participants perceived that **social media and digital technologies** have been key facilitators of social change relating to gender norms. However, they also suggest that these problematically mediate children's and young people's entry into the socio-sexual world, citing the availability of pornography as an example.

### Promoting positive, alternative, forms of masculinity to address VAW

- Participants stressed the need for **dominant ideas about masculinity to be challenged and 'reconstructed' in multiple spheres of life, in order to address VAW**. The research identified a multitude of strategies and spaces within which this might happen, including education around gender inequitable attitudes and practices, and VAW; public awareness raising; developing men and boys' skills and consciousness in relation to VAW; and government initiatives and reform.
- Action should be taken in a **'whole of society' approach, at the individual, community and societal level**, to challenge problematic gender stereotypes and inequalities which feed into VAW. It was proposed that this should not just happen by working with men and boys alone, but with multiple groups in society.

### The vital role of education

- Formal, informal and societal education was overwhelmingly seen as the most important element in challenging gender inequitable attitudes and dominant forms of masculinity which underpin VAW. Education should begin at a young age, take place in a range of spaces (schools, universities, youth clubs, workplaces), and be consistent and repeated.
- Within the formal education system, **sex and relationship education was perceived to be very poorly delivered in Ireland**, with participants strongly advocating for reform in this area. Sex and relationship education across multiple education settings (primary schools, secondary schools, universities, community programmes) was considered central in addressing VAW.
- Educational initiatives in schools and beyond should enable individuals to critically analyse and interrogate gender norms. Other topics raised as important in educational initiatives include awareness about equality issues; critical media literacy; pornography literacy; emotional literacy and regulation skills; healthy relationships; and the subject of VAW itself, including understanding different forms of violence.

### Work with men and boys: promoting alternative forms of masculinity, building men and boys' consciousness and skills

- Participants highlighted the need to develop boys' and men's skills to develop emotional literacy and to be able to articulate emotions in a non-violent way without fearing shame. They stressed the need to **develop boys' and men's skills to question and interrogate peer pressure and macho norms**.
- Participants suggested there is a need to educate men on how stereotypical gender roles and VAW women can harm their own health, happiness and wellbeing; to recognise how their upbringing, society and life experiences influence their attitudes, values and behaviours towards VAW; and to promote empathy for women, by developing their understanding of the effects of violence on women's lives.
- Participants also raised the importance of **men as actors and allies in addressing VAW**. They argued for the promotion of men's engagement in active bystanding and feminist allyship and activism. There is a need to tackle the stigma and peer shaming that act as barriers to men's active bystanding and involvement as feminist allies and activists.

### Increase public awareness of VAW and improve the representation of (non-violent) men

- There is a need to raise public awareness about the problem and extent of VAW and the public's responsibility in preventing it. Participants also argued for the promotion of age-relevant and relatable mass media representations of positive and non-violent forms of manhood.

### Government initiatives and law and justice reform

- Participants saw the need to improve the criminal justice system's identification, understanding of and response to victims and survivors of rape cases as particularly important. However, they also mentioned other government initiatives and developments, including support for men's paternity leave and men's increased involvement in caregiving, and the appointment and involvement of more women in the process of policy decision making regarding VAW.





## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

Despite decades of policy intervention, VAW remains an intractable societal problem and is recognised by the European Union as ‘a fundamental rights concern that warrants legal and political recognition’ (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], 2014: 7). Concerns are increasingly being raised about the extent to which VAW is being experienced at younger ages. The representative FRA (2014) survey, for example, found that one in three women in Europe has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since age 15. The same survey found that 26% of the Irish sample had experienced physical and/or sexual violence by any partner and/or non-partner since age 15 (FRA, 2014). Repeated surveys in third level and young adult populations in Ireland have also drawn particular attention to the problem of sexual violence and harassment experienced by young women (Burke et al., 2020; MacNeela et al., 2022; Union of Students in Ireland, 2013; Women’s Aid, 2020).

It is widely recognised that a key factor in explaining the prevalence and experience of VAW lies in the attitudes and beliefs that young people hold about the acceptability

of, or tolerance for, VAW. Understandings of gender norms - that is, the socially constructed ideas that circulate in a society about what is considered appropriate behaviour and roles for men and women - are central in shaping these attitudes. Multiple studies show that men who hold gender inequitable beliefs based around what we might term ‘traditional’ ideas of masculinity (the male as breadwinner, competitive, emotionally stoic, in control and dominant over women) are more likely to perpetrate VAW (Flood and Pease, 2009; Salazar et al., 2020). It is therefore vital that we know more about how young people’s constructions of gender underpin their understandings and perceptions of VAW. Crucially, we need to be able to challenge societal attitudes and structures which perpetuate gender inequality and contribute to the continued acceptance and tolerance of VAW.

### 1.2 About the PositivMasc study

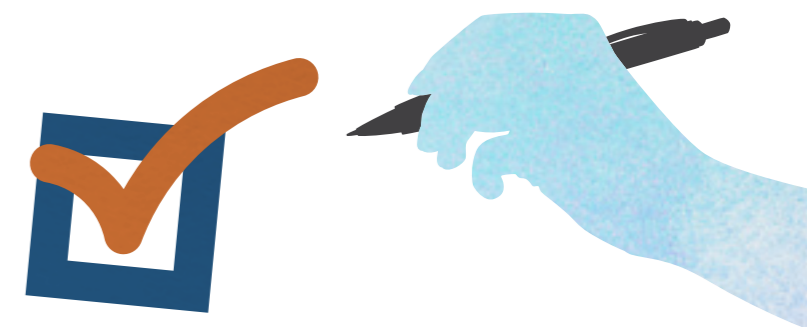
The PositivMasc study responds to calls to tackle gender inequitable attitudes by exploring how young people across Europe talk about and understand masculinities, and how these understandings shape their attitudes towards VAW. The study was funded by EU GENDER-NET and undertaken over a four year period (2019-

2023). It involved four countries, Ireland, Israel, Spain and Sweden. This report is based on findings from the Irish component of the study. More details about the multi-country study can be found at <https://positivmasc.ki.se/>.

In supporting policies and initiatives to tackle VAW amongst young people, PositivMasc had three key aims: first it aimed to explore the discourses that young people use in their understanding of masculinities and how these discourses ‘influence young people’s attitudes, behaviours and responses to VAW’ (Salazar et al., 2020: 3). Secondly, it interrogated young people’s and stakeholders’ views on how positive, anti-VAW masculinities might be promoted and supported. Finally, it sought to develop actions and guidelines which support and promote forms of masculinity and manhood that actively reject VAW. A key goal of the project then was to interrogate the potential existence of masculinities which specifically challenge violence against women, or what we term **anti-violence masculinities** (Casey and Ohler, 2012; Salazar and Öhman, 2015).

PositivMasc was based around a multi-method design, using both qualitative and quantitative methods (see Chapter 3 for more in-depth discussion of the methodology). Phase 1 involved conducting semi-structured interviews with young people aged 18-24 and stakeholders who worked in agencies relevant to the research area (this included those working within voluntary and community organisations that seek to address VAW; organisations that work directly with men; government policymakers working in the area of gender-based violence; and those working in youth organisations and/or with young people). This phase of the research was used to gain in-depth understandings of young people’s and stakeholders’ attitudes and perceptions of the ‘problem’ of VAW and in particular, their understandings of masculinities. Phase 2 deployed a quantitative, participatory methodology known as Concept Mapping (Kane and Trochim, 2007) which sought to ascertain young people’s and stakeholders’ views on how we can reduce men’s VAW and promote positive and non-violent forms of manhood. Together, these two phases facilitated an understanding of the

different ways in which we might address gender inequitable beliefs, practices and structures in tackling VAW. Phase 3 was a dissemination and knowledge translation phase which involved the production of resources including an educational guide and multi-country policy brief.



### 1.3 A note on definitions and terminology

In this study, we use the United Nations (1993) definition of VAW as ‘any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life’. We therefore recognise that VAW can incorporate a range of different forms of violence, abuse and hostility, from physical acts to emotional abuse, sexual harassment and coercion, and abuse that is perpetrated online. In using the term ‘violence against women’, our research is grounded in an approach that recognises gender and gendered power relations as a ‘fundamental factor in any analysis of violence against women’ (Lombard and McMillan, 2013: 8), and which recognises that ‘ending it must, among other strategies, attempt to denormalise such standards of gender’ (Frazer and Hutchings, 2020: 204). It is important to note that this approach is distinct from what has been termed the ‘family violence’ approach which suggests that intimate partner violence is broadly symmetrical - that is, that men and women equally commit violent acts towards each other (Walby et al., 2017).



In the context of PositivMasc, we understand ‘masculinity’ as a product of a set of socially prescribed norms - enacted through individual interactions and relationships, as well as societal institutions - about what it is to be, or act, as a man in any given society. Masculinity is not a singular, fixed identity, but rather can differ across societies, dependent on social, economic and cultural contexts; it is also subject to change over time (Katz et al., 2021). It is therefore important to recognise that there is not one version of masculinity but many ‘masculinities’. However, as many commentators have pointed out, there is always a dominant idea of what it is to be a man in a given society - what Connell (1995) refers to as ‘hegemonic masculinity’. Hegemonic masculinity may differ from society to society but is often built upon the idea of men’s dominance and power over women, of the man as breadwinner, as competitor and risk taker.

In the context of VAW, men’s perpetration of VAW has been theorised as a means to (un)consciously enforce gender differences, such that men use VAW to maintain power and privileges (Frazer and Hutchings, 2020; Stark, 2007). A vital task therefore is to develop alternative forms of masculinities that are not based on a need or desire to dominate and control (Peralta and Tuttle, 2013). Given the high prevalence rates of VAW amongst young people, scholars argue that initiatives to combat VAW must begin in early life (McCarry, 2010; Salazar et al., 2020; Stöckl et al., 2014).

### 1.4 Report structure

The report is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 2 sets the research in context by exploring what we know already about young people’s gendered attitudes towards VAW from international literature and discusses the Irish context to these debates. We also discuss the policy and legislative context in Ireland which has led to responses to the issue of VAW and gender-based violence. Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology.

Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 discuss the findings from the study. Chapter 4 draws on findings from Phase 1 of the research (interviews with young people and stakeholders) to explore how young people understand VAW, and their attitudes towards it. Linking ideas about gender norms and roles to VAW, Chapter 5 explores more specifically how young people perceive, speak about and construct norms around gender, and in particular masculinities and femininities. Chapters 6 and 7 turn their attention to the ways in which young people and stakeholders think VAW might be addressed and prevented, and specifically, how more positive or alternative forms of manhood or masculinity might be promoted in helping to address VAW. Chapter 6 explores these themes drawing on data from the qualitative phase (Phase 1) of the study, whilst Chapter 7 expands this discussion by exploring the findings from the Concept Mapping phase (Phase 2). Chapter 8 presents the conclusions of the report and discusses implications for policy and practice.

# REPORT STRUCTURE



## 2 Setting the Context: Literature and Policy Review

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we situate the PositivMasc study and findings by briefly reviewing international and Irish literature exploring young people’s attitudes towards gender, masculinities and VAW. We know relatively little about young people’s gendered attitudes towards VAW in Ireland, but some limited work explores understandings of masculinities and how these connect to young people’s experiences (see for example Bolton et al., 2020; Hyde et al., 2008, 2009). Recent surveys and studies commissioned by organisations working in the arena of domestic and intimate partner violence also provide important insights into young people’s direct experiences of, and attitudes towards, VAW, particularly in the context of sexual violence and sexual consent (MacNeela et al., 2022; Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI), 2021; Women’s Aid, 2020). There is little doubt that, partly as a result of growing international movements such as #MeToo, but also key ‘flashpoint’ events (Ging et al., 2019) in Ireland, men’s VAW - and how to address problematic attitudes tied to dominant norms of masculinity - have been brought

sharply into public view in recent years. This has contributed to a growing national conversation in Ireland about interventions that are needed to tackle VAW and how to engage men in these efforts.

### 2.2 Young people and attitudes towards gender and VAW: an international perspective

A significant body of international literature has explored young people’s understandings of and attitudes towards VAW, and the role that gender plays in these understandings. Gender has been shown to play a role in different ways. Firstly, it is apparent that there is a ‘gender gap’ in terms of attitudes towards VAW: that is, men and women hold differential views in terms of explaining, understanding and sometimes justifying violent acts and behaviours (Flood and Pease, 2009). Secondly, we can understand the influence of gender in terms of the wider cultural norms and social scripts which cohere around being a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’ or define what it is to be ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’.

In a review of international literature conducted for the PositivMasc study (Edwards et al., 2022), we found disjunctures in what young people define and ‘name’ as violence. This is significant as



how we name particular acts has an impact on how seriously we take them - this in turn can feed into how acceptable or otherwise such acts and behaviours are perceived to be. Our review found that while young people very readily identified physical acts as violence, they were far more ambivalent about naming other behaviours as violence and drew boundaries around what they perceive to be 'real' or 'unreal' violence (Lombard, 2013). This particularly relates to sexual harassment or coercion, where multiple authors note how young people often play down sexual harassment as for example, 'flirting', thereby minimising the seriousness of the act (Hlavka, 2014; Lombard, 2013; Tinkler et al., 2018). Indeed, a key theme across the literature is the perceived normalisation of sexual harassment amongst young people.

The naming (or non-naming) of violence is closely related to young people's tolerance for, or acceptability of violence (Edwards et al., 2022). While most young people declare VAW to be wrong and unacceptable, qualitative research has shown that there are contextual caveats to this, and situations where young people suggest violence may be warranted or justified. The most commonly cited justification across international literature is partner cheating, and in particular, a female partner's perceived or actual infidelity. Young people also suggest that VAW may be warranted where a woman transgresses gender roles in a heterosexual relationship; our review shows that many young people continue to 'justify and normalise control within a heterosexual relationship, believing that men should be the 'boss' of the relationship; that women should defer to and 'listen' to male partners; and that men should be entitled to tell their female partners what to do' (Edwards et al., 2022: 6).

Constructions of gender roles are therefore key in understanding young people's attitudes towards VAW. Studies show that young people continue to draw upon ideas of 'hegemonic masculinity' - that is norms around masculinity associated with the man as a protector of, and dominant over, women (Connell, 1995). What is interesting however, is that young people do not necessarily explain VAW in terms of these constructions, but rather draw on



individualistic explanations. For example, young people are more likely to explain men's violence in terms of bio-deterministic discourses, as a feature of men's physical strength or uncontrollable sex drive, or as a problem of anger management or an individual being under stress (Edwards et al., 2022). Such understandings have the potential to blame women for their own sexual victimisation, as it is perceived that they 'provoked' men's (uncontrollable) sexual desires. There is some evidence that young women are more likely to cite 'structural explanations' for violence (for example, 'negative masculinity' or 'patriarchal society') than men (Burman and Cartmel, 2005: 41), but it is clear, that deep rooted assumptions about heterosexual gender roles persist. Based on these studies, then, it is apparent that there is a long way to go in seeking to address and challenge how young people make sense of gender roles and masculinities in explaining and understanding VAW.

### 2.3 VAW, gender relations and masculinities in Ireland

Increasing concern about rising rates of sexual and intimate partner violence and a focus on 'flashpoint' (Ging et al., 2019) events have brought the topic of men's VAW in Ireland into the public sphere. It has been widely recognised that Ireland has a dearth of data on the incidence of, and experience of VAW, particularly amongst younger age cohorts. One of the most extensive studies of sexual violence in Ireland, the SAVI Report (McGee et al., 2002) for example did not gather data on those under 18, and is now over 20 years old (RCNI, 2021). However, recent pieces of research conducted on behalf of agencies such as Rape Crisis Network Ireland, Safe Ireland and Women's Aid provide a picture of the extent and experience of VAW. A Women's Aid (2020) study of 500 18-24 year olds found that one in five had experienced intimate relationship abuse and that of these one in five, 92% had experienced emotional abuse. The study

found that while participants recognised that abuse covered a range of behaviours, participants noted that some behaviours - such as emotional abuse - were harder to identify and thus less likely to be challenged. RCNI's (2021) study of 13-17 year olds also found that 80% of adolescents had experienced some form of sexual harassment over a 12 month period, with the most common type of behaviour being 'mild' harassment such as sexual comments and jokes.

Amongst the student population of Ireland's higher education institutions, an extensive national survey of 7,901 students also revealed 'a high level of exposure to sexual harassment and sexual violence', such that 'nearly all of the forms of sexual harassment described in the survey had been experienced by a majority of students, including sexualised comments, sexist hostility, sexual hostility, unwanted sexual attention, and harassment via electronic communication or visual / written materials' (MacNeela et al., 2022: 25). While the report highlights 'high levels of positive intentions and attitudes' (p. 34) amongst students in relation sexual consent strategies and interventions (such as bystander interventions), a particular concern in the survey is the continued adherence to female rape myths by a substantial minority of participants: for example, 10% of all students, and a fifth of all male students agreed with the statement that 'If a girl initiates kissing or hooking up, she should not be surprised if a man assumes she wants to have sex' (MacNeela et al., 2022: 39). This potential acceptance of rape myths or victim blaming is also echoed in a survey of 1000 adults conducted by Safe Ireland, which found that 1 in 7 survey participants felt that 'women may provoke abuse against themselves' (Safe Ireland, 2019: 14).

In light of these troubling statistics, there is a growing recognition in Ireland of the need to address gender inequitable attitudes and hegemonic masculinities which explicitly or implicitly support men's VAW in its multiple forms - and crucially, engage men in this work. Reflecting on the murder of 23-year-old Ashling Murphy in County Offaly, Ireland, in 2022 for example, Taoiseach Micheál Martin argued that 'Men must take a lead role in this, in changing the culture



that is prevalent in terms of undermining women and in terms of violence on women. That is the direction in which we have to go' (McCarthy, 2022). Such a view, articulated by many others amongst the outpouring of anger (see for example Crowley, 2022), recognises the significance of changing men's attitudes and practices which excuse, and often justify, men's VAW.

### 2.3.1 Understanding masculinities in Ireland

Literature on constructions of masculinities and men as gendered beings in Ireland can be helpful in seeking to make sense of contemporary attitudes towards VAW. Research on men and masculinities in Ireland has historically been limited, with more empirical research only having been published in recent years (see for example, Bolton, 2022; Darcy, 2019; Johnston

and Morrison, 2007; Katz et al., 2021; Ní Laoire, 2002, 2005; Ó Beaglaoich et al., 2015). Discussions of gender relations and masculinities in Ireland cannot be understood without recognising the significant power of the Catholic Church in shaping social and cultural values within twentieth century Ireland, which established the male as breadwinner and head of the family unit, confined women to care of the home, and punished women who transgressed moral boundaries. Masculinity at this time 'was essentially rural, based heavily around the family, marriage and celibacy' (Ferguson, 2001: 120), based on a system of (agricultural) inheritance and the 'authority of a powerful father figure' (Ní Laoire, 2002: 18).

Since this time, multiple societal changes, including the waning influence of the

Catholic Church, greater reproductive rights for women, and changes to the economy and economic position of women have shifted the nature of gender relations in Ireland. Recent studies shed light on constructions of masculinities and manhood as they are understood in more contemporary times (Darcy, 2019; Ó Beaglaoich et al., 2015; Katz et al., 2021). While some empirical studies find that young men find it hard to articulate what masculinity means to them (Darcy, 2019; Johnston and Morrison, 2007), other research has shown that young Irish men construct being a man predominantly in terms of heterosexuality, not caring what other people think, working on their physical appearance (Ó Beaglaoich et al., 2015), drinking, sport, sexualised relationships with women (Johnston and Morrison, 2007), and maintaining a role as a breadwinner (Ralph, 2018). In Darcy's (2019) study of 44 white men aged 18-85, for example, participants constructed masculinities in terms of the traditional values of emotional restraint, with some men remarking about feeling uncomfortable being in the presence of a man who is crying. Key constructions of masculinity in the study were based on ideas that men should be 'providers, hard-working, philandering, tough and stoic' (Darcy, 2019: 23).

Ó Beaglaoich et al., (2015: 323) highlight that there were issues raised in their interviews with 12-18 year old boys which seemed to be specific to the Irish context, namely, the requirement articulated by boys that they should be 'up for a laugh' and be 'entertaining and keeping exchanges light in the presence of other boys'. In Darcy's (2019) study, too, men suggested that alcohol, humour and the ability of men to entertain and socialise was constructed as the central distinguishing features of an 'Irish' masculinity. This echoes ideas of a 'lad culture', which is evident in other studies of gendered attitudes in Ireland (see for example Safe Ireland, 2019). Being 'up for a laugh' however, can have negative consequences. In Ó Beaglaoich et al.'s (2015) study, boys reported on how this 'slagging' makes them careful about projecting non-normative masculinity, especially displays of emotions of sensitivity. Similarly, in Curtin

and Linehan's (2002) study, young men reported that non-normative masculinity - such as emotional displays - would be disciplined by name calling such as 'faggot' and 'gay' or by 'slagging'. These findings also mirror Hyde et al.'s (2008) study of heterosexual sexual coercion amongst 15-19 year olds in Ireland, which found that boys described feeling out of place, 'a loser' or 'different' if they did not have sex (Hyde et al., 2008: 488). Hyde et al. (2009) suggest that these discourses stem from normative expectations circulating within peer groups around acceptable sexual practices, which enact a form of social control.

While these studies perhaps point to a dominant form of masculinity, research also indicates an increasing fluidity of Irish masculinities. Darcy (2019) for example, notes how some men in his study adopted a language of self-determination, as they felt there was more room today to enact more fluid masculinities based on individuality and adherence to personal, rather than wider group, norms. Darcy (2019) and Johnston and Morrison (2007) also found that older men were more able to step away from expectations around masculine gender norms. Such findings indicate the potential for alternative forms of masculinity and a fluidity of masculine identities over the lifecourse.

### 2.4 Legal and policy developments

Although not without problems and gaps, increased awareness of the complex, multifaceted nature of VAW and recognition of the need for expanded powers to address it has been exemplified by developments in law and policy over the past 20 years (see Table 1). It is not our intention here to provide an in-depth discussion of all these developments, but rather point to some of the key initiatives and their relevance to the PositivMasc study, particularly in terms of addressing gender inequitable attitudes and masculinities. While the interventions we refer to here focus on government-issued policies, strategies and interventions, it is important to note that these have been shaped by a very active civil society sphere which exists in Ireland around the issue of men's VAW, and which has effectively lobbied to keep the issue of VAW on the public and political agenda.





**Table 1 Key Reports and legal and policy developments relating to gender-based violence in Ireland**

Year	Type	Title
1981	Law	Criminal Law (Rape) Act 1981
1990	Law	Criminal Law (Rape) (Amendment) Act, 1990
1992	Law	Criminal Evidence Act 1992
1996	Law	Domestic Violence Act 1996
1997	Report	Report of the Task Force on Violence Against Women
1997	Law	Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997
2001	Law	Sex Offenders Act 2001
2002	Report	Gender Politics and Exploring Masculinities in Irish Education
2006	Law	Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006
2008	Policy	National Men's Health Policy 2008-2013
2010	Policy	National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence 2010-2014
2010	Policy	Health Service Executive (HSE) Policy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender based Violence
2016	Policy	Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence
2016	Policy	National Men's Health Action Plan 2017-2021
2017	Law	Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017
2017	Policy	National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020
2017	Policy	Garda Síochána Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy
2018	Law	Domestic Violence Act
2019	Framework	Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive: Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions
2020	Law	Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020
2020	Review	Review of Protections for Vulnerable Witnesses in the Investigation & Prosecution of Sexual Offences
2022	Policy	Zero Tolerance: Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual & Gender-Based Violence 2022-2026
2023	Implementation Plan	Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education Institutions IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2022-2024

In terms of policy developments, the *Report of the Task Force on Violence Against Women* (Office of the Tánaiste, 1997) was the first key intervention which called for a National Strategy on VAW. The report recognised that VAW is a gendered issue, with men being the predominant perpetrators. It stressed the need for broader culture and societal change in values, attitudes and structures that promote and maintain inequality. The report recognised the relationship between dominant masculinities and VAW and argued for the rolling out of campaigns that would have the 'full and visible support of organisations which are strong centres of male culture e.g., GAA/soccer clubs' (Office of the Tánaiste, 1997: 113). It also argued that 'special focus programmes are needed to provide children with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to prevent VAW in future generations' (Office of the Tánaiste, 1997: 114).

Since this time, three national strategies for tackling gender-based violence have been implemented, with the third and most recent *Zero Tolerance: Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual & Gender-Based Violence* published in 2022 (Department of Justice, 2022). The Strategy outlines actions focused on prevention, protection, prosecution, and policy coordination. As part of actions towards prevention, the policy aims to 'Enhance the understanding of the general public of all forms of DSGBV (Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence) and its root causes' (Department of Justice, 2022: 26). The document footnotes and explains that 'root causes' refers to 'Gender-related factors such as men's entitlement, privilege and social norms regarding masculinity' (Department of Justice, 2022: 26). Another key aspect of the Strategy will be the establishment of a specialised agency tasked with coordinating it.

In terms of initiatives that address the issue of masculinity and gender equitable relations more specifically, addressing and improving Relationship and Sexuality Education in schools remains a key concern of many organisations working in the arena of gender-based violence and VAW. A key recommendation of the Women's Aid (2020: 7) research for example was that

'further awareness-raising and education is needed from primary school level and up in relation to promoting healthy and identifying unhealthy relationships amongst young people', and that 'teaching on intimate relationship abuse should be part of all learning in relation to Relationships & Sexuality Education'.

In 1995, some second level schools in Ireland did have the opportunity to deliver the *Exploring Masculinities* programme to 4th year male students of approximate sixteen years of age. The programme was composed of a number of themes aimed at boys, with theme five exploring 'violence against women, men, and children' and was composed of eleven lessons. In their review of the programme, Mac an Ghaill et al. (2002: 89) argued that the 'quality of the material is excellent', but the programme lost momentum and was eventually withdrawn due to negative media coverage propelled by a few high-profile journalists and the Congress of Catholic Schools Parent Association (McCormack and Gleeson, 2012). This is especially unfortunate given that McCormack and Gleeson's (2012) survey of a national cohort of parents indicated high support for the programme topics.

A focus on masculinity as it relates to men's health and cognate areas such as VAW has also been raised by the *National Men's Health Policy 2008-2013* (Minister for Health and Children, 2008) and the subsequent *National Men's Health Action Plan 2017-2021* (Health Service Executive, 2016). The Men's Health Policy argued that the school should act 'as a key setting in which to promote and nurture positive masculine identities in boys' in terms of personal development and health education (Minister for Health and Children, 2008: 81) and recommended that a 'revised' *Exploring Masculinities* programme should be piloted within secondary schools. The Policy also recommended increased intervention programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence as well as more research evaluating the impact of these programmes on both reducing perpetrator violence and improving the health of perpetrators (Minister for Health and Children, 2008).



The later *Men's Health Action Plan* (Health Service Executive, 2016) did not raise the issue of domestic violence. It did, however, argue that the 'nurturing' of 'positive masculinities among boys' are important in promoting men's' health (Health Service Executive, 2016: 9). It advocated that education around emotional awareness and intelligence of boys and young men could be undertaken through both the formal SPHE curriculum and the youth sector. It did not (as in the *Men's Health Policy*) however, explore or define what 'positive masculinities' might mean.

Other developments in more recent years relate to the issue of sexual harassment and sexual VAW. The *Framework for Consent in Higher Education Institutions* (Department of Education and Skills, 2019) provides Higher Education Institutions in Ireland with a set of standards toward promoting campus cultures that are safe, respectful and supportive. The framework arose out of a recognition of the all 'too common' (Department of Education and Skills, 2019: 9) issue of sexual harassment and assault amongst third-level students and it delineates a number of outcomes in relation to institutional culture, the recording of data, institutional policy and targeted initiatives. In relation to the 'targeted initiatives', the *Framework* proposes that 'HEIs will provide direct student-facing activities including workshop/classes that promote an understanding of consent; student understanding and skills for speaking up and calling out unacceptable behaviour' (Department of Education and Skills, 2019: 18). Indeed, a number of training programmes have been developed at some Irish universities, including University College Cork's (2021) Bystander Intervention Programme and the Active\* Consent programme at University of Galway (2022).

These initiatives have also occurred at the same time as a growing number of developments have sought to strengthen legal responses to the issue of VAW. This has included the creation of new criminal offences for different forms of violence (coercive control, for example), but also the introduction of changes to legal processes, such as those designed to facilitate the giving of evidence in sexual offence trials.

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 defined 'consent' for the first time and provides that consent 'may be withdrawn at any time before the act begins, or in the case of a continuing act, while the act is taking place' (Ireland. *Criminal Law Act*, 2017: S48). The Domestic Violence Act 2018 criminalised 'coercive control' and has been described as 'one of the most significant family law statutes introduced in the past 20 years' (Walsh, 2019), with the first successful prosecution under the Act made in 2020 (Maguire, 2020). More recently, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, otherwise known as 'Coco's law', has criminalised the sharing of intimate images without the consent of the person in the images.



## 2.5 Conclusions

National and international literature draws attention to the significant and persistent incidence of men's VAW as it is enacted amongst young people. Making sense of gendered attitudes to VAW, including how societal gender scripts and norms inform ideas about what it is to be a 'man' or 'woman', is therefore a vital task in understanding and tackling the problem of VAW. This is particularly the case when research indicates that notions of dominant or hegemonic masculinity appear to be alive and well amongst young people internationally, and that these can lead to the acceptance, excusing and justification of men's VAW. Recent policy and legislative changes in Ireland suggest an awareness of the need to tackle these gendered attitudes, but there has been relatively little focus specifically on exploring young people's understandings of dominant ideas around masculinities. We therefore suggest there is need to explore further the discourses that young people use in speaking about masculinities and wider gender roles, and how these intersect with their attitudes towards VAW.



## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach of PositivMasc pertaining to the Irish data. PositivMasc involved two phases. The first phase comprised semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and young people. Common to both interviews was a concern to explore perceptions of how VAW was understood in Ireland, how attitudes towards gender roles and norms informed these perceptions, and how we might go about preventing VAW. The second phase involved the Concept Mapping process, which was designed to be a participatory process to explore how we might promote anti-violence masculinities in tackling VAW. The research received ethical approval from UCC's Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC).

### 3.2 Phase 1: Qualitative research with young people and stakeholders

Phase 1 consisted of qualitative research with stakeholders and young people.

**Stakeholders:** Fourteen individuals who work directly in or a cognate area relating to VAW were recruited from October 2019 to April 2020. Stakeholders were recruited by contacting key individuals and organisations directly through email. These

included community and voluntary sector organisations working in the area of VAW or domestic violence; organisations working with men; government policymakers working in the arena of gender-based violence, and individuals working with youth organisations. A list of organisations interviewed is provided in Appendix 1.

The interviews themselves focused on how each stakeholder's organisation works to prevent VAW; their ideas about what more could be done to combat VAW in Ireland; and how the organisation understands and/or works with the idea of gender as a social construction. The topic guide is provided in Appendix 2.

**Young people:** A convenience sample of twenty-seven young people (12 men and 15 women) aged 18-24 were recruited for interview between January and May of 2020 using a paid Facebook advert, an email advert sent to all students at University College Cork and snowball sampling. Due to the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, 12 of these interviews were conducted by telephone. In recruiting participants, we specifically articulated that the study was about 'violence against women' and the 'role young men can play in combating violence against women.' We acknowledge that given that interviewees self-selected for interview,



they possibly comprised a specific sample who have some concern and knowledge about the problem of VAW.

As the interview guide (Appendix 3) shows, the interview focused on a number of themes including young people's perceptions of gender, their understanding of the term VAW, perceptions of VAW and their views on how to promote positive and non-violent forms of manhood among young men. Regarding their perceptions of VAW, we used a series of scenario-based vignettes and statements to elicit discussion and to explore their attitudes towards the scenarios. Consistent with other research in this area on young people (MacNeela et al., 2014), the vignettes were highly valuable in eliciting perceptions and attitudes.



### 3.3 Phase 2: Concept Mapping

Phase Two of the study involved the use of the Concept Mapping (CM) methodology (Kane and Trochim, 2007) to seek young people's and stakeholders' views on how we can reduce men's VAW and promote positive and non-violent forms of manhood. CM is a mixed methods participatory approach involving the identification of a specific issue and seeks the contribution of participants to generate ideas in single, clear statements on how the issue can be addressed. The issue PositivMasc sought to address is men's VAW and our brainstorming questions (see below) were designed to elicit participants' ideas on **how we can reduce VAW through supporting the development of 'anti-violence' masculinities**. Although the interview material was used for part of the CM process, the process was predominantly undertaken through a web-based application called groupwisdom™ (The Concept System® groupwisdom©, 2021) which produces and represents the results of the activities which we discuss below in visual form. The CM process is undertaken through a series of sequential steps, which we now outline.

#### Step 1: Brainstorming

This phase of CM involved the interview material. Both stakeholders and young people were asked the following two questions at the end of their interviews:

1. What can be done to promote what has been called here anti-violence masculinities amongst young men?
2. What can be done to support men who have an active stance against violence against women?

Through these questions, participants were invited to 'brainstorm' ideas and provided numerous suggestions and responses. In collaboration with the research teams in the other three countries, we collated the ideas from all participants, edited them, and reduced them to a list of 41 clear statements (Appendix 4) which answer the following 'focus prompt':

*In order to reduce men's violence against women and promote positive and non-violent forms of manhood among young men we should...*

#### Step 2: 'Sorting' the statements

While the brainstorming step involved the analysis of the 41 Irish interviews, the next step required a further round of recruitment involving both previous and new participants, stakeholders and young people in Ireland. Previously interviewed participants were sent an email inviting them to participate in this web-based quantitative phase of the project. The recruitment of new stakeholders was undertaken through snowballing and direct email contact with key individuals and organisations. Our aim was to invite a wide variety of individuals working in diverse organisations related to VAW. The recruitment of new young people primarily involved the use of a Facebook advertisement. Recruitment was also facilitated by some organisations who forwarded an email advert to their membership lists.

In all cases, participants who expressed interest in participating clicked a link provided by the research team which led them to the login page of the groupwisdom™ application. They were

presented with a short demographic survey (Appendix 5), one of the main purposes of which was to distinguish young participants from stakeholders to facilitate comparative analysis between these groups later on.

In this 'sorting' step, participants were invited to individually group or 'sort' the statements 'in a way that makes sense to you'. In other words, using a click and drag function, the groupwisdom™ application enabled participants to group the statements into different themes. Participants then had to label each group.

#### Step 3: 'Rating' the statements

The next step of the CM process required the recruitment of significantly more participants than the sorting activity. Though some of those who completed the previous 'sorting' step participated in this 'rating' step, many of those who participated in this step were only required to complete the rating questions outlined below. In this rating step, participants were invited to rate each of the 41 statements twice using a 1-6 Likert scale. Participants were asked to think about the ratings of each statement **relative to each other**, as we did not want participants to simply consider each statement as 'very/highly important', which would not have generated any meaningful knowledge. The first rating survey asked participants about their perception of the importance of each statement:

*"On a scale of 1 to 6, please rate how important you think each idea is to promote non-violent forms of manhood. A rating of 6 indicates that you found the idea very/highly important; a rating of 1 that you found the idea not important at all."*

#### Example

'Statement 40: Provide a non-judgmental space for men to reflect on how their behaviors can foster violence against women'



Not important at all

Very/highly important

The second rating survey asked participants their perception on the applicability of each statement:

*"On a scale of 1 to 6, please rate how easy or hard you think it would be for this idea to be applied in your community context. A rating of 6 indicates that you found the idea very easy to apply; a rating of 1 that you found the idea very hard to apply in your community context."*

#### Example

'Statement 40: Provide a non-judgmental space for men to reflect on how their behaviors can foster violence against women'



Very hard to apply

Very easy to apply

The purpose of the second 'applicability' rating scale was to ascertain participants' perceptions about the relevance of each idea in their respective countries. Some statements for example, may be perceived as very important, but also difficult to implement due to perceptions around cultural values and/or political will.

The number of participants who took part in both the sorting and rating is shown in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Concept mapping sample

Activity	Young people	Stakeholders	Total		Total
			Men	Women	
Brainstorming	27	14	20	21	41
Sorting	25	13	15	23	38
Rating 1 (importance)	73	23	27	69	96
Rating 2 (applicability)	55	23	24	44	78





#### Step 4: Mapping the data

The next step involved producing the various maps and tables to represent the results of these activities. This is done using the groupwisdom™ application, and the research team decided on what types of maps to create in order to compare various demographic variables (e.g., comparing young men versus young women). We discuss the most relevant maps and tables in Chapter 7. As part of the interpretation of the data, we held two interpretation meetings with key stakeholders who work in the area of VAW, one with all the country partners present and with stakeholders from across the four countries, and the other specifically with the Irish research advisory group. In both meetings, participants were presented with some of the analysis of the CM process and asked for their interpretation of the results.

#### 3.4 Phase 3: Knowledge dissemination and translation

Phase 3 of the research involved knowledge dissemination and translating the research into key outputs to promote and support anti-violence masculinities in tackling VAW.

This report constitutes one such output. Another key output is the *Educational Intervention Guide*. Previous research on young people's responses to sexual consent using vignette methods has highlighted the effectiveness of vignettes in knowledge generation (MacNeela et al., 2014). Furthermore, MacNeela et al (2014: 60) highlight that 'One of the key recommendations' made by young people in suggesting strategies for education around sexual consent 'was for the scenario-based approach to be utilised as a strategy for critical reflection'. Given that we have similarly found vignettes useful for provoking discussion and reflection, and for highlighting disjunctures in young people's responses, we created the *Educational Intervention Guide* (Nardini et al., 2022) that uses scenario-based vignettes as a key educational tool. Another key output is a policy brief which contains key conclusions and recommendations from the multicountry results as a whole and conclusions and recommendations for policymakers and educators and stakeholders that are relevant for each individual country (Vives-Cases et al., 2022).



## The Problem of Violence Against Women: Young People's Perceptions

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins our exploration of young people's perceptions of the problem of VAW in Irish society. In the interviews with young people, we were first interested in ascertaining how they perceive the term 'violence against women', including what words or images they associated with it, who perpetrates it, and also whether they were able to identify different forms of VAW. However, we were also interested in their perceptions of the problem of VAW overall in Ireland, including their views about the extent to which it happens and attitudes towards VAW. To this end, the vignettes served as a very useful tool to explore these attitudes in more depth in the context of specific scenarios. What emerges from the research is a clear narrative that sexual violence against women (SVAW) is a key issue for young people (and young women in particular) in Ireland; this includes issues such as sexual objectification and other experiences that fall within the continuum of sexual violence and abuse.

### 4.2 Understandings of VAW

#### 4.2.1 What is violence against women?

We began by seeking to ascertain how young people understand the term 'violence against women' itself and what behaviours or acts they associate it with given the continuum of violence that exists. Perhaps unsurprisingly, young people most commonly linked physical and domestic violence to VAW - in other words, physical violence that happens in the home - which is consistent with other studies that have explored how young people construct intimate partner violence (Burman and Cartmel, 2005; Harris et al., 2015). As Brian (male, 24) explained: 'Domestic violence is ... the most well-known and probably historical image of violence against women'. However, young people also demonstrated an awareness of other types of violence and identified the dangers of not recognising certain types of violence. Some participants for example suggested that young people can too often associate violence in a relationship with physical violence, with others arguing that many people experience psychological abuse but 'don't even realise it' (Eoin, male, 18).

Our analysis found however, that more than two-thirds of young people interviewed raised the issue of psychological violence



without having been explicitly probed or asked about it; they were able to name specific acts and behaviours associated with psychological and emotional abuse, such as checking up on where the woman is' (Darragh, male, 19), 'looking at you in a certain way' (Kate, female, 23), 'controlling and domineering' (Michael, male, 22), 'emotional blackmail' (Aoife, female, 24; Emer, female, 18), 'gaslighting' (Philip, male, 23; Julie, female, 20), 'screaming' (Grace, female, 18; Kate), 'making comments' (Carrie, female, 22), 'gossip' (Eoin, male, 18), 'insulting' (Philip) and as Sarah (female, 18) explains, 'violence through texts, like bullying, so putting someone down ... [making] up things about something that isn't true' (Bolton et al., 2023: 10).

Over half of the young people also referred to sexual violence in their understanding of VAW; we found young women were more likely to raise the issue of sexual violence unprompted than were the young men. It is notable also that all but one of the young people who referred to sexual violence 'disclosed having personally experienced, witnessed, or heard about instances of sexual VAW within their close contacts' (Bolton et al., 2023: 10). As one participant stated:

*'Well, this whole side of sexual abuse is massive...I couldn't name a woman now around my age who has not experienced some sort of sexual violence in the past'* (Grace, female, 18).

We found that young women were more nuanced in how they spoke about or defined sexual violence: for example, while young men more commonly referenced 'rape', young women in our interviews made reference to a wider continuum of acts that could constitute sexual harassment, including 'inappropriate touching' (Amy, female, 24) 'smacking someone's ass' and individuals who 'will put their hands on you' or violate 'your personal space' (Carrie, female, 22)' (Bolton et al., 2023: 11).

There are however, also disjunctures in how some young people named (or did not name) sexual violence. Around half of participants constructed VAW as predominantly occurring within the

context of a relationship which occurs 'behind closed doors' involving physical forms of violence. Yet when they were presented with the assault vignette, they then highlighted the ubiquity of their own experiences of unwanted touching and sexual assault. Chloe's (female, 22) narrative highlights this disjuncture well:

*'Like I would never have witnessed violence against women particularly in public. Like I think it is quite a private thing. Like I would consider violence against women to be taking place in the home. But then in terms of sexual assault, like, I would have known a lot of stories that would have happened at house parties or things like that, which would definitely fall into that category. And that would have been much more public, but I suppose equally is private because everyone thinks it's nobody's business'.*

We suggest that this group of young people did not immediately link VAW to the forms of groping and sexual microaggressions that occur in house parties or nightclubs because they are so normalised that they are not perceived to be an act of 'violence'. In this context then, some **young people struggle to name and recognise sexual microaggressions.**

#### 4.2.2 Who perpetrates violence?

In terms of their perceptions of who perpetrates VAW, young people in the study **generally identified men as the main perpetrators of VAW** and invoked personal experiences in forming these constructions. The explicitness of this link fell on a continuum. Young women were more assertive about noting that women can also 'technically' perpetrate violence, particularly bullying and psychological violence against other men. Some young men evidenced a more gender-critical framework in terms of referencing that VAW is about 'an inequality of power' between men and women (Darragh, male, 19).

The vignettes also provided the space to explore young people's perceptions of the extent to which the perpetration of VAW is gendered. In terms of the harassment

vignette (Appendix 3), young people did not perceive straightforward gendered attributions of perpetration (i.e. that it is not just men for example who enact harassment). Some participants reported either having experienced or known about instances of women continually harassing, stalking or messaging their male ex-partners following a break-up. Amy (female, 24) and Kate (female, 23) argued that harassment of women by men following a break-up is linked to notions that men need to 'chase' women or to 'win' a partner back.

Similarly, with the digital violence vignette (Appendix 3), participants spoke about knowing cases of couples who voluntarily share passwords. Two young women admitted to this type of behaviour and others reported knowing cases of both men and/or women asking or demanding to access the account of their partner. In terms of the vignettes that relate to sexual violence however, clearer attributions of gendered perpetration were evident, with participants more clearly linking men as the predominant perpetrators of different forms of sexual violence.

### 4.3 Experiencing VAW: the ubiquity of sexual violence against women

We did not set out to ask young people directly about their experiences of VAW in this research, but through our discussions with them and their responses to the vignettes, they articulated that **sexual objectification, harassment and violence is a key issue for young people in Irish society.** Throughout the interviews they spoke about how they have experienced it, witnessed it, and have heard that it has happened to others in their close social networks. Two young men who came forward for interview for example did so because they had known a close woman to them who had recently experienced sexual violence.

Although young people spoke about the problem of SVAW throughout the interviews, the issue particularly came to the fore when responding to the 'assault' vignette (Appendix 3). The vignette described a hypothetical scenario of a young woman being grabbed by the buttocks at a house party. Young women spoke consistently of how such forms of unwanted touching are a ubiquitous and a pervasive part of the night-time economy:

*'This is such a big thing... Oh, it's so common, yeah. Yeah, oh, I can't tell you how many times I've been on a night out and someone's just like **grabbed my ass or something** for no reason... Yeah, it's rotten. It's actually a really big problem, yeah... The majority, like actually I would say all, of the girls I know have gone through this like a million times. It's not even so—I mean, it's happened and you don't even turn around. It's just—what are you going to do? ... **I mean, it happens to so many people ...but because again it's so dark and there's so many people, you probably didn't even see who did it. What can you do only take it?'*** (Eva, female, 22)



*'I suppose, yeah, just in terms of like the fact—I don't know, like, in terms of like every single question you asked I have a story from one of my friends or myself that has like experienced it. And I've things like—I would have like a lot of close girlfriends, but like we're still—I'd only be like super-close to maybe like twenty girls and like every single girl that I'm friends with has a story like that. You know, like I think it's happened—I think it's probably happened multiple times to every girl I know in Ireland'* (Chloe, female, 22).

Eva's statement that 'you don't even turn around' exemplifies how SVAW is normalised in Irish society, where microaggressions are passed off as unremarkable, with some young women simply accepting and expecting that they will experience unwanted touching. As Emer (female, 18) noted:

*'And women don't give out about it because, you know, it happens so much regularly now, like. It is. And, like, I mean, I go into town there once a week, whatever, if I'm going on a night out or, you know, whenever I go out, and I know, like, I know for a fact that it's going to happen. Like guaranteed, like'.*

Some young men also identified the problem of SVAW that may occur in the night-time economy:

*'If I was a girl, I wouldn't be going out, basically, is what I'd say. It would be too much for me. I wouldn't be going out [...because of] constant haranguing, constant harassment, constant'* (Philip, male, 23).

Although the assault and image vignettes were intended to depict scenarios that may happen to women of at least 18 years of age, participants were also keen to point out that SVAW happens at a young age:

*(Referring to the assault vignette) 'It's definitely a part of outgoing culture, like. Like this is like one of the most common things ever.*

*Like even like when I was going to like discos when I was 13, like, this used to happen all the time still, like. So it's something that's constantly happening, like. There's no kind of like the one-off shocking moment. It's kind of like so normalised in outgoing society, like, it's crazy'* (Philip, male, 23).

*(Referring to the image vignette) 'It actually happened to one of my friends. It's weird that a lot of this I've seen in my life. That's worrying. Yeah, she was only 13, 14. And I can remember like he put them on his Snapchat story like it was nothing, and we all just went online... You know, like, just imagine going on my Snapchat and just click and there's my naked friend, you know. And that's what I saw... You know, I don't know how many people saw that picture. I don't know how many people screenshotted that picture. And neither does she. You know, like it kind of comes up every now and again. You know, I could be talking about whatever we're talking about, bad things that have happened to us, and she'd always say that that was like her claim to fame in abuse...'* (Eoin, male, 18).

#### 4.4 A 'supportive' culture of sexual violence against women

Young people perceived a range of norms and practices that provide a supportive culture for the perpetration and tolerance of SVAW. There was a sense by some participants that reporting sexual violence and harassment will not lead to action, as SVAW is not taken seriously. Thus, they perceived that there would be few formal or informal consequences for perpetrators. Chloe (female, 22) spoke of an example of a close friend who was sexually assaulted in a night club:

*'And she went and got the bouncer and the bouncer like kind of half-trying to find him and then came back and said, you know, like, listen, **we're not going to find him, like come back tomorrow. So, she went back tomorrow, like expecting there to be like CCTV footage and like an investigation, and the owner of the club just said, listen, come back next time and we'll get you in for free. So nothing was done about it.'***

*(Eva, female, 22)*





There was a view that bystanding intervention needs to be supported by venues and institutions themselves. In light of a perception that SVAW is not taken seriously, young people argued for the need for nightlife venues to implement clear reporting procedures and policies. One stakeholder also argued for the need for a ‘whole of institution’ approach to tackle the culture of sexual violence at universities by involving management, developing go-to individuals for reporting, and training all staff around reporting and disclosure procedures.

Young people saw sexual objectification as another aspect of the problem of SVAW as it reduces men’s capacity to see women as people. Carrie (female, 18) remembered for example ‘a friend saying she would have walked into school, and she knew she was going to be rated by lads’ and spoke of a more recent example where she had come across of ‘a group of lads of a college group age’ who ‘had been rating women online and putting up photos’. Indeed, such practices have been reported in Irish media where for example, a ‘rape list’ which included the statement that the young woman ‘with the most ticks will get raped’ was found in a Cork secondary school in 2018 (Kelleher and O’Brien, 2018).

Objectification of women was perceived as functioning to **amplify young men’s heterosexual masculine status** amongst peers and verbal objectification was

reported as being a **humorous practice between men in peer groups**. Speaking about male peer groups and competition, for example, Laura (female, 23) stated: ‘Just like treating women like a piece of meat and like one saying something, the other could last [or] outdo the other one and all chiming in about this one particular girl’s appearance, whatever’. Participants perceived that double standards still operate in Irish society to regulate women’s sexuality yet at the same time, raise men’s masculine status (see also Chapter 5).

Young people also recognised and argued that part of the problem of SVAW are the victim blaming discourses that circulate, particularly around the notion that victims ‘ask for it’ and somehow deserve their victimisation: ‘... these stories come up every single week and you always have these people, ‘oh she’s asking for it,’ you know, that whole thing. But like the reality of it is you should be able to wear whatever you want whenever you want’ (Laura, female, 23). Victim blaming discourses also arose within young people’s own responses to the assault vignette. The assault vignette was deliberately written in a stereotyped and ‘problematic’ way, where the victims’ clothing style, level of intoxication and perceived flirtation are raised as excusing or even justifying perpetrator responsibility. The vignette elicited much commentary and discussion around young people’s perceptions of the broader culture that provides a supportive context for the

perpetration of SVAW, but it was also useful in illuminating young people’s own attitudes around SVAW and who they implicate in the responsibility and blame for SVAW.

We caution that all participants in this study perceived VAW to be a problem in Irish society and elaborated on many facets of the problem, barriers to addressing it, but also steps that could be taken in preventing it. Analysing young people’s responses to the assault vignette, however, some participants invoked problematic discourses around SVAW. Though recognising that young women have the right not to be touched or sexually assaulted, consistent with a recent study (Safe Ireland, 2019), some participants deployed a **continuum of blame in relation to women who find themselves in these situations**. For example, they argued that women should engage in conscious calculation about the consequences of various decisions when participating in the night-time economy, such as how they dress, their own flirtatious behaviour and how they choose to get home. We noticed that participants who constructed the male sex drive as uncontrollable were more likely to blame women, which is consistent with the literature in this area (Tinkler et al., 2018; Weiss, 2009). Implicit in their responses therefore was the view that since the problem of sexual assault is inevitable, it is women, not men, who need to change their behaviours and adapt. Participants who deployed what we call ‘victim-blaming discourses’ then, saw sexual harassment as

something normal and ‘natural’. The opposite was true for those participants who put blame solely on male perpetrators of sexual VAW.

#### 4.5 Conclusions

Young people in our study associated VAW with domestic, physical, psychological and sexual violence. There were, however, a specific group of young people who associated VAW with acts that occur ‘behind close doors’, and who appeared to struggle to name a broad continuum of violent acts, most notably related to sexual harassment and micro-aggressions. Indeed, it was only when presented with the vignettes that they disclosed their own experiences of sexual microaggressions within nightlife settings such as clubs and bars and did not initially associate these kinds of act with VAW. We interpret this as evidence of the normalisation of SVAW, where common microaggressions are so chronic and ‘normal’, they are not associated with ‘violence’. This is concerning as young people cited that such sexual aggression and harassment is a significant and concerning issue for them in Irish society and which occurs at a young age.

Underpinning the normalisation of SVAW are discourses around victim blaming and victims not being believed. Norms relating to dominant constructions of masculinity and the pursuit of masculine status were also linked to the perpetration of SVAW. We go on to explore the construction and effects of these norms in the next chapter.





## 5 Constructing Gender, Masculinities & Femininities

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we continue our discussion of young people's understandings of VAW by connecting it to their attitudes and understandings of gender, masculinities and femininities. In other words, we seek to explore how young people's understandings of gender intertwine with their perceptions and explanations of VAW. We first explore their conceptualisations of masculinities and femininities, and then go on to document what they told us about how gender roles have changed (or not), and where and how they learn about norms around gender and sexualities. This is significant in terms of thinking about how we might challenge unhelpful gender norms and ideas about dominant masculinity which provide a supportive culture for VAW.

### 5.2 Perceptions of masculinity

Throughout the interviews, young people argued that the idea of exerting control and resisting being controlled (see Schwalbe, 2014) is a key feature of being a man. Our analysis suggests that this can be split into what we term *intrapersonal* and *interpersonal* control. *Intrapersonal*

control refers to the control of the self and body. We found that young people perceived **emotional regulation and the rejection of vulnerability to be central elements of dominant masculinity** and is a key part of understanding men's VAW. The link between emotional regulation and masculinity was a repeated point made by young people when asked about their perceptions of masculine norms. As Liam (male, 24) summed up, the norm felt by young men is

*'that you have to be tough as nails... there's a complete like rebuttal of vulnerability... which I think is really damaging'.*

It was also a point raised by stakeholders:

*'When men—and even talking of my own personal experience. When I was a kid, I was at a funeral of my aunt, whom I loved dearly, and I cried. And two women came up to me and said, 'Pull yourself together. Be strong for your mother.' It's a small incident in my life that I've never ever forgotten. It really stuck with me. Even as a 14-year-old or a 13-year-old, something in my head was*

*going, Shut up and leave me alone. There's nothing wrong with me crying. I don't have to be strong for my mother. My mother's okay. And she was. Not that I didn't look after my mother and I was aware that it was impacting her more than me, you know, without putting a 50-year-old brain in a 13-year-old brain' (Stakeholder 7).*



Relatedly, some young people felt that some **men cannot name, understand and/or recognise a broad spectrum of emotions**, as Brian (male, 24) noted: 'especially with men, it goes back again to that idea that just not being open or even just understanding the feeling they're having'. Young people connected some of the key causes of VAW to various emotions that men may (un)consciously experience, such as feelings of insecurity and powerlessness, anxiety, jealousy, unconscious projection and built-up anger. The link participants made between men's VAW and various emotional dynamics was particularly evident in how young people interpreted

the causes of perpetration depicted in the vignette scenarios. The 'harassment' vignette (Appendix 3) was linked to the (lingering) attachment to the relationship and the painful emotions associated with a breakup. The 'digital violence' vignette was strongly associated with feelings of jealousy, insecurity and paranoia, all of which were also strongly linked to trust in the relationships. Lastly, the image vignette was strongly associated with vengeful and angry emotions. Overall, it was clear that young people felt that the regulation and suppression of emotions has a meaningful relationship to men's perpetration of violence, where violence serves to diffuse and/or bypass emotional tension, which is itself linked to norms of masculinity. As Grace (female, 18) noted in talking about the harassment vignette:

*'And I definitely think it is more—for this one—more men would do that, who would continuously, even when rejected, continuously try and attempt and—it's like men, you shot your shot, it's over, move on. But I know a lot of guys who don't have the capability to move on. They get angry before they're able to get happy, you know'.*

The theme of intrapersonal control also relates to control of the body. Some young people reported that young men feel the need to project and maintain a good physique as well as a good body image. They felt social media has facilitated a rise in the use of gyms and has placed pressure on men to develop well-toned muscular bodies:

*'As soon as you go on Instagram all you see is people just taking pictures. On both sides, like, men and women, in the mirrors, like. They always tend to—men just love to show off their shoulders and arms and that, and then women tend to show off their behinds, if you like. I always notice that' (Cormac, male, 23).*

*'... Yeah, I go to the gym. And it's really interesting. I go to a small gym inside in town and usually it's full of, you know, dudes, men and they're all like 25, 30% of them staring at themselves in the mirror half the time...Flexing their biceps. And I'm*

just looking at them like no woman would ever. And the last time I was in there a girl came in, sat on the exercise ball in front of the mirror, took pictures, and left' (Grace, female, 18).

There was a sense that young men are increasingly becoming more sensitive about their shape, body image and style. This was perceived to be related to body ideals young men may view on social media with some of the dominant images showcasing men of 'Six foot tall at least, probably tanned, very muscular, or like reasonably toned, like not overweight or not too skinny, not anything one way or the other' (Michael, male, 22). Interestingly, Michael adds that men may also feel they cannot take too much care for their body image: 'Like there's like being a fine balance in being like overly like looking after yourself and then like barely washing. There's a fine line you cannot transgress if you're a man'.

The link between dominant ideas about masculinity and *interpersonal control* is also evident in participants' narratives. This refers to the control of others. Specifically, participants suggested that a key feature of masculinity relates to performing or at least displaying the *capacity* to perform the more dominant role in interpersonal interactions. The theme of interpersonal control was particularly evident in how participants linked VAW to men's sense of entitlement and supposed 'right' to control women. Referring to sexual assault that may occur in nightlife settings, Michael (male, 22) for example argues these behaviours are:

'... like the pinnacle of masculinity that oh, God, I'll have you whenever I want you, like. Not even sex, but like you'd even see it in like nightclubs whatever. This absolute curmudgeon of a lad will come up to a girl and insist that they shift (kiss) in a really weird way, and it's a kind of an oh, look. And then he'll go back to his friends and like, 'Oh, look what I just pulled.'... And that's just a shift. And the same kind of person is quite liable to like say, oh, well, I can have sex with you whenever I want. You know, like, they won't draw the line'.

In response, some participants suggested that these perceptions need to be challenged: Julie (female, 20), for example,

argued that 'men need to be taught that they're not entitled to everything.'

Related to interpersonal control, some participants also linked norms of masculinity to an **expectation that men should be assertive, confident, brave, be decision makers, leaders and to be successful** or at least convey success:

*'I do have a feeling like we expect men to be tougher and to be, you know, kind of leaders and wearing pants in the house and taking care of their housewives and children. Like absolutely I do think that they are kind of steered in that direction from when they're very small even' (Siobhan, female, 22).*

A final theme that participants linked to dominant masculinity was heterosexuality. Young people argued that there is a gendered double standard, where male heterosexuality is a key marker of manhood and masculine status for some men, whereas active female heterosexuality is stigmatised. Talking about the link between heterosexuality and manhood, Cathal (male, 24) argues that:

'Like it was a lot of kind of oh—like if you got with a girl, your buddies are constantly on you asking you when you're going to have sex with her straight away, the whole time. So this is the kind of stuff. So each—like this is the thing—each young Irishman is in this position of he gets a girlfriend, all his buddies are on him. Well, not all his buddies. The guys who are sound aren't. But like there's a good chunk of the lads who are on him the whole time. When you going to do it? Blah, blah. And every Irish lad is in that scenario and they're all kind of pressurising each other into this kind of expectation. And then there's a huge amount of pressure on Irish young men in that regard actually, yeah'.

Cathal's narrative exemplifies how participants spoke about the key influence of **male peer groups and peer pressure in shaping dominant forms of masculinity**. In some contexts, they explained that young men pay unhealthy deference to peer group norms and to particular 'popular' individuals. Some young people referred to popularity hierarchies in schools whereby the popular

students are able to get away with bullying behaviour and where there is a desire amongst some boys and young men to emulate the beliefs and behaviours of more popular young men. Indeed, some argued that not all young men in tightly knit peer groups have equal sway over the masculine meanings and practices of the group, but rather, some young men become the 'leader of the group' (Stakeholder 14). Essentially, participants felt that boys and young men generally enact more deference to one member of the peer group than others (i.e., a 'dominant personality' exists in peer groups).

In contrast to views that 'being your own person' have become increasingly valued, then, participants spoke about how masculinity is validated through the approval of other men and male peer groups. They argued that this peer pressure among men acts a straitjacket that prohibits young men as individuals from expressing their own values:

*'... like lad culture, a lot of it is almost staying within people's roles in like a social hierarchy within groups, I find... there is a real sense of following whatever's going on. So a lot of the time that's not speaking up about something seen lots of the time. That is—like also a sense of kind of like, you know, you don't talk out against the lads. You go with what the lads or saying or, you know, you can disagree but quietly' (Carrie, female, 18).*

Although some participants were conscious that such groups may provide young men with a sense of belonging and meaning, there was a sense that this belongingness can too often be based on socio-negative attitudes and practices that are conducive to VAW, particularly sexual violence and harassment.

### 5.3 Perceptions of femininity

In terms of women and norms of femininity, some young people perceived that women are becoming more independent in modern Ireland and more empowered to be successful and focused on careers, where traditional roles associated with femininity such as caring or working in administration sectors are declining (see

also, Safe Ireland, 2019). While participants believed that gender roles are changing and women are gaining greater opportunities for independence through entry into the workplace for example, they also spoke about dominant norms of femininity that have a long history. They argued for example that femininity is still linked with caring and nurturing values, which mean women can often be left undertaking the emotional labour of looking after others. Participants consistently argued that a key expectation on women is to have **good body image and shape and that this ideal is fuelled by media images, celebrity culture** and the way in which young people are able to use score-based features (e.g., Snapchat scores and Instagram 'likes' and 'follows') to assess others' judgement of them. Some young people argued that young women's consciousness of their body image can accelerate at around 12 and 13, as Grace (female, 18) described in speaking about teenage discos:

'The girls—I don't know—that's a huge difference. The effort the girls put in for these discos. They spend hours putting on the makeup and the shirts that look like bras and their shorts that barely covered their rears. Like it is—it's such a difference. It's like Love Island... It is, it's very similar. Like the girls will spend hours putting on the makeup, putting on, you know, skimpy, very skimpy clothes, and the guys will throw on whatever jeans and nice top that they have.'

Related to the previous section on dominant masculine norms, young people also reported on what they perceived to be entrenched double standards relating to female sexuality. They believed that female sexual expression is stigmatised using gendered insults such as 'slut', 'slag' and 'tramp', whereas the opposite is the case for men who engage in sexual activity, who are seen as 'players'. This also relates to a perception that there is, in Carrie's (female, 22) words, 'a lot more shame around the female body than there seems to be with men'. This argument emerged when young people were presented with the 'image' vignette which depicted a case of image-based sexual abuse where it was argued that being victimised by this practice has more harmful meanings and consequences for women than for men. As one young man stated:



*'Like, for example, if my nudes are leaked somewhere, I'll get over it, like. Whereas I feel with a woman—like, for example, like for lads it's not abnormal to be naked a lot of the time. Like, for example, in a gym, in a changing room, most would be naked while they're getting changed. It's not a huge thing, like'* (Michael, male, 22)

#### 5.4 Learning about gender and sexuality

How and where young people learn gender and sexual norms and how they might be changing was also a theme that arose during the interviews. Young people perceived that **considerable social change has occurred in relation to gender roles, sexuality and attitudes relating to VAW.**

Some participants argued that gender roles are being released from the previously 'bucketed' (Aaron, male, 23) categories of the past. Young people drew a distinction between traditional values that belong to an 'older cohort' (Aoife, female, 24) of the population and more 'modern' values of equality that are held more predominantly among young people. For example, they strongly associated the attitudes reflected in statement 1 (i.e., A friend says to you: *'A good wife/girlfriend should obey her husband/boyfriend even if she doesn't agree with him'*) as an 'extremely traditional' belief that 'doesn't match society in this day and age, especially this country anyway now...' (Aaron, male, 23). Similarly, they associated the attitudes of Richard in the 'sexual coercion' vignette (Appendix 3) with 'an old-fashioned era' (Cathal, male, 24) where 'these attitudes are along the same lines of 'a woman's place is in the kitchen' and which 'is [a belief that is] no longer as common' (Sorcha, female, 24), in an explicit sense at least. Among the narratives by young people there was a tone of condescension towards the past, a sense that Ireland - or at least some parts of it - remains 'backwards'. As Eoin (male, 18) articulates in relation to the continued stigma attached to men's vulnerable emotions:

'Yeah, and just to never be upset. I think that's the biggest expectation on men my age. Like there's no—it's just weird to see someone my age upset, like, whereas I don't think it's weird to show your emotions. A lot of people do and I don't get it. It's very kind of 1970s Ireland'.

Despite recognising that emotional regulation was still a key aspect of masculinity, young people also argued that a key change in gender role expectations related to a perceived greater awareness and openness around mental health issues, particularly for men. Some young people also noted that there is more of a focus around 'being you own person' and is something some young people themselves advocate for and believe in.

How did participants explain these changes in gender roles? There was a strong belief that social change was significantly driven by social media and the internet. Participants pointed to the influence of these technologies as facilitating greater awareness of the problem of VAW through the reporting of key events such as #MeToo, and the Belfast Rape Trial in Ireland, to name a few. Yet, while participants cited social media and electronic communication technologies as key sources of positive social change, they also argued that these have facilitated and contributed to problematic attitudes and abuse. Both young people and stakeholders perceived that various media forms (e.g., film and television, music and music videos, pornography), electronic communication technologies and celebrity culture are **problematically mediating children's and young people's entry into**

#### the gendered and socio-sexual world.

The availability of phones and the resulting access to social media and the internet was cited as a problematic form of learning about gender and sexuality. Referring to the older teenage and young adult cohort, Cathal (male, 24) cited television programmes such as *Love Island* and *Geordie Shore* as transmitting values which objectify women and imply that manhood is about acquiring many female sexual partners.

Participants also cited the easy availability of pornography as particularly concerning. There was a perception that young people as young as 12 and 13 are learning about sex from pornography where they believe pornography accurately represents sexual activity. Fiona (female, 24) for example, drew upon her own experience of watching pornography and how it impacted on what she saw as 'normal' within her relationships:

*'But like I played out those kind of things, and because I saw it in porn I just thought they were normal. Or not normal, but like it didn't seem like, oh, God, this is so taboo and so awful... Like I've been in lots of like challenging sexual situations like that and—but I consented to it, and there was never anything that happened that I didn't consent to. But I feel like actually like I was violent towards myself because I let myself into those situations, if that makes sense'.*

Stakeholder 12 also spoke about their experience in teaching sex education and the dominant norms that children and young people are receiving from pornography:

'And I know because of my previous role that absolutely there's no shame. And when you're talking to younger people in particular, I think they don't get more educated, they get more confused as time goes on. If you talk to them in sixth class, they'll say mad stuff. Girls love when you pull their hair or they love it when you spit on them...And then as I get older, I actually think it becomes more confusing for them'.

Stakeholder 13 had similar concerns about pornography:

*'But I think porn is... doing untold damage to young women because boys are learning from it and they're enacting, you know, stuff that is not, you know, to intimacy for either of them and it can, you know, it can be really degrading and damaging for young women. So, I think porn... is a major, major, major issue and an impediment to developing healthy masculinities and intimacy and positive relationships, you know, and I think we're going to really start seeing that being more of an issue'.*

There was also mention of how teenage discos constitute spaces where young people explore sexuality in ways that may be concerning. For example, one stakeholder referred to the discos as spaces where objectifying 'games' may be played: 'There was a game in this disco in Dublin that it was common that they'd go round and put their hands out and try and hit as many boobs as possible...' (Stakeholder 2). Such examples speak to the young age at which harmful attitudes and behaviours can develop and the wide range of spaces within which such behaviours need to be addressed.

#### 5.5 Conclusions

Participants perceived that some change has occurred in relation to gender norms in Ireland, particularly around a growing discussion about men's mental health and greater independence for women. Recognising wider social and economic changes, they spoke specifically about the role that new media and electronic communication technologies are playing in society. These technologies and media, they argue, can help to increase awareness of issues relating to gender norms and VAW. However, they also perceived that they have brought significant problems, particularly in relation to pornography. Furthermore, participants argued that dominant gender norms still exist which link dominant masculinities to notions of control over emotions, the body and heterosexual 'success'. This 'success' continues to be seen as a key marker of manhood for men, but remains stigmatised for women. Underpinning these norms is a strong sense that they are highly policed by male peers and the dynamics within male peer groups.



## 6 Promoting Positive, Non-Violent Masculinities: Qualitative Findings

### 6.1 Introduction

PositivMasc aimed to explicitly elicit young people's and stakeholders' views on how we can promote positive and non-violent forms of masculinities to address VAW. The Concept Mapping element of this study (see Chapter 7) was developed to directly address this aim. However, we also addressed these questions in the interviews with young people and stakeholders, which yielded a significant amount of qualitative data on the topic. This chapter therefore explores the ideas discussed by both young people and stakeholders on how more positive or 'alternative' forms of masculinities can be promoted to address VAW.

### 6.2 The need to reconstruct masculinity

A key theme that emerged from the data was the need to reconstruct masculinity in ways that are not based on dominance, control and emotional repression. Participants drew on specific typologies of masculinities when relating masculinity to negative social practices. We found that young people had more terms for socio-negative versions of masculinity than they

did of socio-positive versions. For example, young people referred to typological notions of masculinities such as 'alphas', 'lad culture', the 'traditional man' the 'macho man', the 'top dog', the 'hard man', the 'strong silent type', the 'jock, and 'toxic masculinity'.

Consistent with recent research by Safe Ireland (2019), 'lad culture' was particularly singled out as (re)producing attitudes and practices conducive to VAW, and young people described young men engaging in 'lad culture' as objectifying women, being competitive and aggressive. Michael (male, 22) described a 'lad' as encompassing several characteristics: '... went to another all-male fee-paying school. Probably plays rugby, wears tracksuits, looks like a sports person all the time even when they're not playing sport. Like hangs around with mostly lads. Like has very few female friends'. As Carrie (female, 22) also said of the 'lad': 'That is—like also a sense of kind of like, you know, you don't talk out against the lads. You go with what the lads or saying or, you know, you can disagree but quietly'.

In terms of what attributes and practices should be reconceived towards new understandings of masculinities, some participants argued that masculinity should be 'very much about like trying

to be your true self' (Brian, male, 24). In other words, positive forms of masculinity should be based on authenticity. Related to this, a central theme was that boys and men should be enabled to articulate their emotions and vulnerability without shame or fear of emasculation.

### 6.3 The importance of education

Across the interviews, the topic of education in addressing problematic norms around masculinity was a consistently cited theme. Education as it takes place with young people in schools formed a lot of the focus of this discussion. However, it was recognised that education needs to take place in a range of spaces within society, and with a number of different audiences and groups, not just young people. For example, young people spoke of the need for education to promote attitudinal change among night-club bouncers towards women who report sexual harassment and violence within nightlife venues. Stakeholders also referred to the need for specialised training for those in the frontline of welfare and

justice services in order to gain greater understanding of VAW.

In terms of the formal education system, young people particularly drew attention to their experiences of what they perceived to be inadequate and poorly delivered sex and relationship education within the school curriculum:

'And like for all of fifth year we used to walk into SPHE and we had—it was a male teacher. We used to walk in, he would, you know, correct tests, send out emails, whatever he used to do. We never once did SPHE or RSE in fifth year... And I'd say it's the same in lots of groups. We walked in. You know, he was like, 'ah, yeah, do your homework, chat away quietly, don't do anything disruptive.' He'd leave, go make himself a coffee, and there was nothing' (Eoin, male, 18).

The legacy of Catholic values on the provision of RSE education was also highlighted by some young people:

*'I went to an [all boys Catholic] secondary school. and my RSE, my religion-slash-SPHE teacher was a former priest who just did not want to discuss any of that. So he'd say, 'You can read that for your homework,' and that was it. And actively told us, like, contraception is just abhorrent and things like that' (Michael, male, 22).*



Some young people perceived that this gap in sex education is filled by problematic sources such as the internet and pornography. Consequently, both young people and stakeholders strongly articulated the need for sex and sexual consent education.

Young people's experiences of poor formal education on sex, relationships and cognate topics related to gender-based violence was also implicitly backed up in how stakeholders reported on educational endeavours within schools provided by external actors and organisations. Though such endeavours may be highly regarded by the school administration and young people, one youth work stakeholder pointed out that some of this could be deemed a form of 'compensatory education' (Stakeholder 14), making up for provision that should already be provided the schools.

Some participants also detailed some specific topics that educational endeavours or interventions to address VAW should explore. Some advocated for online and critical media literacy education and which includes pornography literacy. Consistent with the difficulties some young people had in naming sexual violence (see Bolton et al., 2023), some argued that education should be provided around the topic of what constitutes different forms of abuse and healthy relationships:

'Like I know certain women who have been in like abusive relationships and they could be like, 'What do you think abuse looks like?' and everyone goes, 'Oh, a punch to the face, a black eye,' and they go, 'No, I've never been touched by a man, but I have been haunted by this abusive relationship my whole life and it has just been purely verbal.' Because I don't think if you asked any guy in my school, especially in that school who I went to, 'Is purely yelling domestic abuse?' and I guarantee you'd get about 93% no' (Grace, female, 18).

Consistent with the theme in the interviews that a central feature of dominant masculinity is emotional repression, participants argued for education on emotional literacy and regulation. This they suggested would enable young people to experience and have access to a broader



range of emotions and provide self-awareness relating to the emotional basis of socio-negative behaviours.

As well elaborating on what topics should underpin educational curricula to address VAW, participants spoke about the values and guiding principles which should inform educational endeavours on VAW and cognate subjects. There was a view that such educational programmes should be **compulsory** as young people perceived that those who 'really need' sexual consent education for example would not voluntarily attend programmes that are currently offered in some Irish universities. Participants also argued that education on VAW and cognate issues should **begin at a young age** and that such education should be **age appropriate**. They also believed that this education should be **consistent** as 'one-off' seminars, talks and workshops simply do not tackle the issues with the depth and consistency required.

Relatedly, there was a view held by some stakeholders that education on VAW and cognate topics should be holistic and made relatable to other relevant topics such as mental health and how to navigate relationships in a general sense rather than only romantic and/or sexual relationships. Whilst recognising how education around VAW particularly centres on issues such as gender inequality, some stakeholders argued that education in this area should be 'badged around **healthy relationships**' (Stakeholder 9) and which emphasise **alternative avenues for action** (i.e., about what individuals *can do*, rather than focusing on what they should not do). They argued that by focusing education around 'healthy relationships', the many other relationships that young people navigate in their lives can be explored.

Stakeholders also perceived and predicted difficulties in any initiatives or programmatic work that aim to explicitly address the topic of 'men's violence against women' in school.

They perceived difficulties in attempts to explicitly discuss and implement formal education on VAW in schools, citing issues such as men's defensiveness, differential pedagogical priorities, and public backlash against perceived feminist ideology. Thus, they argued for strategies to gain a 'buy-in' from young people, schools and the public (i.e., a 'healthy relationships' approach'), and an approach to pedagogy that avoids demonizing men. Furthermore, some stakeholders pointed to the need for a whole of school approach that would model and support the values that are being taught in education programmes designed to address sex, relationships, VAW and cognate topics.

Lastly, both young people and stakeholders pointed out the need for awareness and information campaigns relating to gender-based violence generally and VAW specifically. Some pointed out that some campaigns have been useful in raising awareness but argued that some government led campaigns could have been better designed. Participants argued that space needs to be given for campaigns to be well designed, that campaigns need to be clear in their messaging and be repeated, rather than running only for a short period of time. They also argued that campaigns that are addressed towards young people need to be relatable to their experiences.

#### 6.4 The role of bystander intervention and men's voices in addressing VAW

In recent years, there has been a growing discourse on the value of equipping young people with bystander intervention skills (Noonan and Charles, 2009) and Irish government frameworks to address sexual violence in HEIs have also drawn attention to the role of bystander intervention initiatives as one of many ways to address the issue (Department of Education and Skills, 2019; Higher Education Authority, 2022). Young people strongly recognised the benefits of bystander intervention. However, we were particularly struck by the complexity young people articulated in relation to intervening. Young people perceived and cited many barriers to bystander intervention and perceived that the decision to intervene was moderated by multiple individual and contextual factors. Consequently, young people



overwhelmingly argued for the need for the rolling out of bystander intervention educational initiatives toward a broader aim of creating an active bystander intervention culture. Participants also spoke of the need for venues and institutions to develop clear policies and reporting procedures to tackle sexual violence and harassment.

Participants drew attention to the importance for men to engage in active bystandering and they argued for the need to address the more specific gendered barriers to men's bystander intervention. They perceived for example that too often, some young men engage in confrontational and aggressive bystander intervention behaviour and argued for the need to equip men with alternative ways of diffusing and engaging with problematic scenarios:

*'I think as well lots of the time like when guys have done this [intervene], like, they've often got a hammering outside the pub or the boyfriend sees it (sexual harassment and/or assault against a woman), or the friend, and next thing it's a big violent act. So like it's a really kind of dangerous thing to do now... Personally I think, like, let's say if I was in a situation and the guy grabbed me with something and I had a boyfriend, the last thing in the world I'd actually do is say it (to the boyfriend). I think when men tackle men, it's a disaster, like' (Aoife, female, 24).*

Indeed, some young men interviewed reported using physical means to intervene and/or indicated they would approach 'bystanding' through a confrontational and physical approach.

Participants also perceived that it is important to promote men's voices and involvement in activism relating to VAW. However, some perceived that **stigma acts as a barrier to men's engagement as both active bystanders and activists and/or feminist allies:**

*'They don't want to look stupid in front of their friends or go against the grain. If the group of boys say*

*bad things and there's one or two of them that are thinking, 'This isn't right, but I might go along with it because these are my group and I don't want to look like a pussy or whatever' (Eva, female, 22).*

Darragh for example, spoke of how he 'would love to do something about it' (VAW), but felt he would feel like a 'wuss' if he was the only man on an activist march or protest. Relatedly, an implicit discourse in the interviews is the need to address pluralistic ignorance among men on the issue of VAW. Pluralistic ignorance is 'the term used to describe the phenomenon of incorrectly thinking that one is in the minority when one is in fact in the majority' (Berkowitz, 2011: 161) and some participants perceived that many men are in fact, discomfited by the problematic attitudes, beliefs and practices of other men. The problem, however, is that men do not know that other men share their discomfort and do not speak out for fear of peer shaming.

### 6.5 The need to promote empathy for women

As mentioned, some men who participated in this study did so because they had known about a case of violence against a woman within their close social network. In other words, **their empathy and concern about the subject of VAW was at least partly due to close female others having experienced VAW.** Within the interview situation, some young men responded to the issue and the vignettes specifically by invoking how they would feel if a close female friend or relative experienced violence and which provided them with the incentive to engage in bystander intervention. Describing a situation in which he intervened, for example, Shane (male, 23) stated: 'I think it was just from like being in relationships myself. If that was my girlfriend or a friend of mine, I wouldn't like them to be in that situation, so I'd be inclined to stop it'. Related to this then, participants argued that one way to positively engage young men in the topic of VAW is to **invoke close female others**, which can be the 'hook' (Stakeholder 3) to engage men. Some participants noted that recognising that close women in men's lives have experienced VAW can provoke consciousness-raising amongst men on the



issue of VAW. Others argued that invoking close females can help men who perpetrate VAW engage in self-reflection about how they would feel if a man did the same thing to a close woman in their lives. In contrast, there were also some participants who argued that even men who have women in their lives might not make the connection between their own problematic attitudes against women and VAW.

Toward cultivating men's empathy for VAW, participants also argued that we need to **promote opportunities for mixed gender interaction**, which young people in other studies also refer to (Hyde et al., 2008; Ustunel, 2020). They believed that this enables young men to reduce stereotypes they may hold about women (and vice versa) and promote young men's confidence building with engaging with women. Another point made is that the lack of interaction that men have with women at an early age can inflate problematic 'masculine traits' that are conducive to VAW. An interesting variation of this theme comes from Grace (female, 18), who argued that women's lack of interaction with boys and young men can promote a naivety among some women around men:

'Like the way I think about it it's like a lot of the girls who certainly hang out with girls and only see guys and people to be—like learn to be kind of nervous and shy around because, you know, they're cute and you

can date them or anything, they're typically the kind of girls who are very naïve about violence against women'.

In relation to this point, some young people advocated for the **abolition of single-sex schools** towards the promotion of all genders experiencing education on sex and relationships together.

Scholars do suggest some gender-specific strategies may be needed in programmatic efforts to tackle dating violence amongst young people (Noonan and Charles, 2009). Research finds however, that young people value learning about dating violence and cognate topics in mixed sex groups (Ustunel, 2020). Furthermore, research has also found that greater positive changes in young men's attitudes around sexual harassment and dating norms occur in mixed-group settings (Clinton-Sherrod et al., 2009). Harassment and violence against young women can occur in mixed-sex schools (Klein, 2006) however, and thus we would caution that mixed-gender interaction needs to be *meaningful* and very carefully designed and facilitated.

### 6.6 Guiding principles to promote positive masculinity

Within the narratives, young people and stakeholders evidenced ideas that constitute guiding principles that could or should underpin any initiatives to promote positive and non-violent forms of



masculinity to address VAW. One of these was the belief that ‘men listen to other men’, which should guide our thinking and approach to men’s VAW. This was particularly emphasised by women when they raised the issue of having to invoke an imaginary boyfriend to ward off unwanted sexual attention from men:

‘... unfortunately, like, men respect what men say much more... You know, whereas if it was a girl, they’d be like, oh, ha, ha, it’s just a laugh. Whereas with a guy it’d be like, oh, sorry, dude, I didn’t realise that was your girlfriend—stuff like that, which really annoys me. You know, unfortunately, like, men do listen to other men more. Like even if a guy is like hitting on a girl and won’t leave her alone, they’ll only leave her alone when she’s like, oh, no, I have a boyfriend. And then they like respect this imaginary guy more than the actual real person who’s just said no. Like it’s so annoying’ (Amy, female, 24).

The caveat here is that this deference is still based on a devaluing of women’s perspectives. What Amy and others imply through these points, however, is that men may be uniquely positioned to positively influence other men and this can be used as a resource to address other men’s beliefs and practice. Young women felt this was especially the case in terms of active bystanding:

‘Like if a man tells another man to stop treating a woman like that, he’ll be more inclined to listen because he’s a man. Whereas if a woman turns around and tells a man to stop treating a woman badly, they’ll just think it’s a girl power thing!’ (Julie, female, 20).

Beyond active bystanding, there was a sense that men are better positioned to engage other men in anti-violence advocacy as there was the view that ‘it’s very powerful for males to call out... their peers’ (Stakeholder 10). Participants argued that men can **raise the consciousness of other men** about the problem of men’s VAW. Brian (male, 24) for example, spoke about his personal experience of this in reference to casual use of misogynistic terms during his teenage years:

*‘... I have a friend who actually has educated me a lot. He is quite educated in this and, you know, very much reading up. And he explained to me like the origins of these words. And just even explaining like the social implications throughout history of like why we—like bitch is like because women were made to be—like they’re made to look and feel that they’re meant to serve and giving them these certain words almost made them less human almost, subservient almost’  
(Brian, male, 24).*

These points speak to the potential value of a strengths-based approach in working with men. Carrie (female, 18) for example, spoke about the problems associated with ‘lad culture’, yet she also believed that the sense of belonging and community that is embedded within such groupings can be used to cultivate more socio-positive behaviour. In other words, while deference to the peer group can promote and be based on socio-negative practices, socio-positive practices can similarly be based on tight knit social bonds.

Participants also felt that a positive approach should generally be employed in working with young men. In PositivMasc, we have used the phrase ‘anti-violence’ masculinity to refer to configurations of masculinity that do

not depend on the use of violence to solve interpersonal problems. A few participants took issue with the term, generally preferring the term ‘positive masculinity’, though in the broader academic debate this has been subject to its own critique (Waling, 2019). Indeed, the use of a positive approach is a theme that some programmes adopt and is considered a feature of successful interventions with men (Peacock and Barker, 2014; Taliép et al., 2021). A positive approach includes providing men with a safe space to be heard and opportunities to engage with positive male role models.

Unsurprisingly then, there was a view that what is key in working with young men is to create and emphasise alternative models of masculinity and ways of acting. The importance of positive role models was consistently raised where men are ‘shown in a positive light’ (Anne, female, 18). Participants inferred notions of positive reinforcement rather than punishment, shame and judgement. Young men need to know what they can do, instead of merely what they should not do:

‘And I do think that there’s an inherent value in looking for the positive reinforcement versus always the ‘don’t do this, don’t do that’, you know’ (Stakeholder 13).

‘Rather than saying, ‘You shouldn’t do that,’ and then go away. It’s like, okay, I know I shouldn’t do that, but when I get angry what should I do or when I get upset what should I do. You know, positive—’ (Stakeholder 8).

Some participants also mentioned that work with young men should be done in the spirit of positive regard, otherwise defensiveness may result where ‘they’re just going to basically cement their behaviour and it’s me against everybody else now’ (Brian, male, 24). Brian spoke about these values in detail. He commented on his own learning about VAW, about how his previous ignorance about the casual use of certain terms has now been replaced by a desire to subtly educate his own peers about problematic language they may use relating to women. In the interview, he emphasised how he engages with his peers’ problematic practices, rather than simply reacting with an assertive tone that may otherwise ‘lose them’ to defensive posturing.



## 6.7 Conclusions

Throughout the interviews, participants voiced many ideas that could be enacted to promote more positive and non-violent forms of manhood to address VAW. Participants linked norms associated with masculinity to the perpetration of VAW, particularly norms around emotional repression, heterosexuality and sexual objectification, as well as entitlement. Consequently, participants argued for the need to decouple these attributes as markers of what it is to be a man. They advocated ‘authenticity’ as a key alternative way of being a man and which would serve to loosen the role of peers as key moderators of men’s beliefs and practices.

The need for sex and relationship education was a strong theme throughout discussions, with some young people citing experiences of having received poor education in these areas throughout their school years. Participants also argued that education relating to VAW needs to be underpinned by certain principles, for example, it must be ongoing rather than a one-off session. Young people and stakeholders suggested that men have a positive role to play in addressing VAW but cautioned that various initiatives need to be developed to overcome some of the barriers to promoting and engaging men as active bystanders, feminist allies and activists. They argued that men need to develop empathy for women and that various guiding principles should underpin initiatives that aim to address men’s VAW.





## 7 Promoting Positive, Non-Violent Masculinities: Quantitative Findings

### 7.1 Introduction

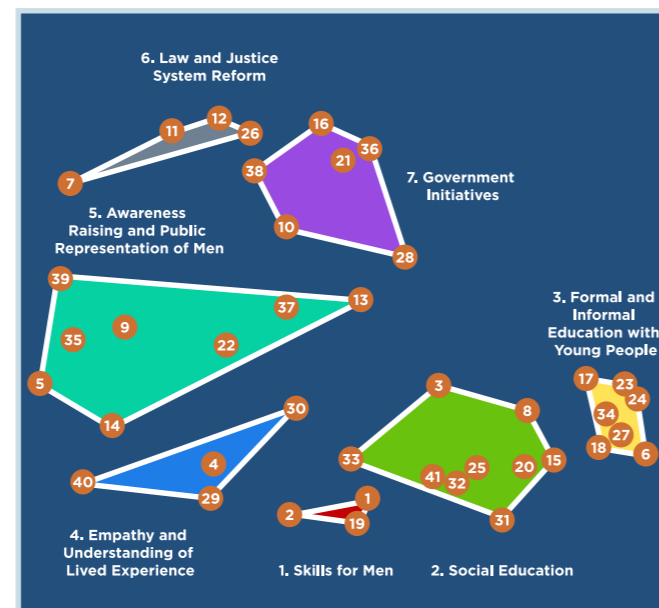
This chapter presents the results of the Concept Mapping exercise which comprised Phase 2 of our study. This phase addressed the question of how we can promote positive and non-violent forms of masculinity to address VAW (see Chapter 3). A list of 41 statements that address this question was created. We first outline and explain the cluster map that was generated from the sorting of these statements into groups by each individual participant. We then highlight and discuss what individuals perceived to be the most important statements to address VAW through the promotion of positive and non-violent forms of manhood among young men.

### 7.2 Cluster map

Thirty-eight participants individually sorted and grouped the statements in a way that made sense to them and labelled each group. The result of this sorting is represented in Figure 7.1. As this 'cluster map' shows, participants generally divided the statements in seven groups: 1. Skills for Men; 2. Social Education; 3. Formal and

Informal Education with Young People; 4. Empathy and Understanding of Lived Experience; 5. Awareness Raising and Public Representation of Men; 6. Law and Justice System Reform; 7. Government Initiatives.

Figure 7.1: Cluster map



This map was created using the groupwisdom™ application. Each point and respective number refer to the relevant statement, as outlined in Appendix 6. The further away statements are from each other, the **less likely** those statements were sorted together. The closer statements are

to one another, the more likely that these statements were sorted together. The labels of the clusters are largely inspired by the participants' own labelling during the sorting process.

As the labels imply, Clusters 1 (Skills for Men), 2 (Social Education) and 3 (Formal and Informal Education) are all associated in some way with education and skills. Cluster 1 contains statements that explicitly or implicitly relate to 'Skills for Men'. We agreed on the label 'Social Education' for Cluster 2 as these statements relate to education that is generally not limited to any particular age group or setting for such education. Cluster 3 on the other hand, refers to statements that focus on more specific educational settings (i.e. school) with young people.

Cluster 4 contains statements that relate to the idea of empathy, whether relating to perpetrators, non-perpetrators and/or victims. Cluster 5 contains statements that relate to the more public face of promoting positive masculinities and addressing VAW. Statements here refer to the promotion of men as positive role models, and activist and awareness raising initiatives that are concerned with promoting positive masculinities. Finally, clusters 6 and 7 include ideas and strategies concerned with government policy and institutions, including the justice system.

Table 7.1 displays the average importance and applicability for each cluster. The average importance and applicability rating of each cluster is derived by taking the average rating of the statements in each cluster. The table shows that there is an overall leaning towards statements associated with skills and education (represented in Clusters 1, 2 and 3) as the most important to promote positive masculinities to address VAW. It should be noted that participants have rated the statements in terms of their importance and applicability relative to others. Thus, it should not be interpreted that government initiatives (which is perceived as the least important) for example, have no place in addressing VAW. In fact, it could be argued that the majority of the statements could be underpinned by government initiatives and/or government support (Flood, 2011).

Table 7.1: Average cluster importance and applicability (by order of importance)

#	Cluster	Importance	Applicability
1	Skills for Men	5.23	3.83
2	Social Education	5.14	4.21
4	Empathy and Understanding of Lived Experience	4.96	4.05
3	Formal and Informal Education with Young People	4.92	4.26
6	Law and Justice System Reform	4.82	3.54
5	Awareness Raising and Public Representation of Men	4.65	4.23
7	Government Initiatives	4.60	4.03

### 7.3 Understanding importance and applicability of individual statements

In this section, we present more detailed results of the second task of the concept mapping exercise, which asked participants to rate the statements on the basis of how important they perceived each statement to be relative to other statements, and how applicable they perceived each statement to be to their community context relative to other statements. We focus the discussion mainly on the statements that participants perceived to be above average in importance relative to other statements.

#### 7.3.1 Key ideas for promoting positive, non-violent masculinities: most important statements

A key finding is participants' perceptions of the overall importance of each of the 41 statements relative to others. Table 7.2 below indicates all those statements which were rated above the average (i.e., above 4.89) rate of importance. Put simply, these ideas are perceived to be the most important for participants in promoting positive and non-violent forms of masculinities to address VAW. We can see from this table that the statement that was ranked as most important was statement 23, 'Implement mandatory sex education and sexual consent education in schools, universities and community programmes'. We explore these findings in more detail in Section 7.3.2, below.



**Table 7.2: All statements rated above average in importance**

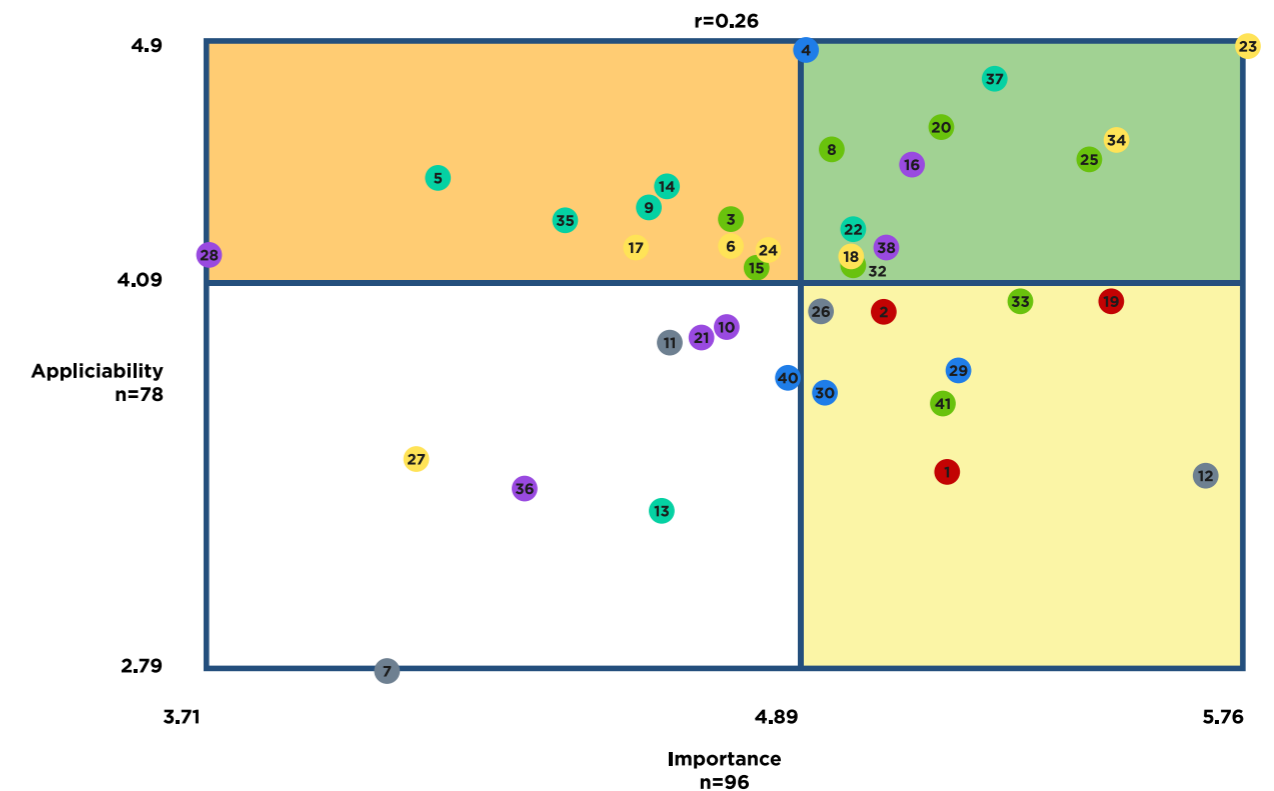
Rank	#	Statement	Importance
1	23	Implement mandatory sex education and sexual consent education in schools, universities and community programmes	5.76
2	31	Raise boys to respect women, reject violence against women and oppose unequal gender norms	5.75
3	12	Change the way the criminal justice system treats rape cases to understand the specific difficulties faced by rape victims, and to be more attentive towards their experiences	5.68
4	34	Ensure that age appropriate compulsory education about gender stereotypes and equality and violence against women is integrated across the school curriculum, starting at a young age	5.50
5	19	Develop men's and boys skills to recognize, manage and express feelings in a non-violent way	5.49
6	25	Educate men and women of how non-violent, trustworthy, and respectful romantic relationships look like	5.45
8	37	Raise public awareness about the problem and extent of violence against women, and the public responsibility in preventing it	5.26
9	29	Promote men's empathy towards women experiencing violence, including understanding its effects on their lives	5.19
10	1	Develop men's skills to help them reject peer pressure and macho norms	5.17
11	20	Provide education on what healthy, positive and non-violent forms of being a man looks like	5.16
12	41	Educate men to recognize how their upbringing, society, and life-experiences influence their attitudes, values and behaviors towards violence against women	5.16
13	16	Appoint more women in the process of policy decision-making regarding violence against women	5.09
14	38	Promote governmental support for men taking paternity leave and undertaking caregiving tasks/roles	5.04
15	2	Help men identify and recognize that they have the qualities and abilities to contribute in preventing violence against women	5.04
16	22	Promote age-relevant and relatable mass media representations of positive and non-violent forms of manhood	4.98
17	18	Educate young people to recognize and reject gender stereotypes in the media and popular culture	4.98
18	32	Educate men on how gender roles and violence against women can harm their own health, happiness, and wellbeing	4.98
19	8	Educate about prevention of violence against women in workplaces	4.94
20	30	Promote understanding among men and women on how different groups of women experience violence differently, based on class, race, ethnicity and citizenship status	4.93
21	26	Establish special units of police trained to identify and prevent violence against women	4.92

### 7.3.2 Reflecting on importance and applicability of statements

The 'go-zone' graph (Figure 7.2) displays the perceived importance and applicability of each statement relative to other statements. We have included a corresponding key (Figure 7.3) to help the reader examine these results for themselves. The groupwisdom™ application calculates the average importance and applicability of the statements overall and displays which statements were either above or below

this average (the overall average rating for the importance and applicability ratings is 4.89 and 4.09 respectively). In terms of interpreting the graph, the further the statements are to the **right** of the graph, the higher they were rated in terms of **importance**. Correspondingly, the further the statements are to the **top** of the graph, the higher they were rated in terms of **applicability**. The graph is divided into four corresponding quadrants, based on the point at which the average ratings for importance and applicability intersect.

**Figure 7.2: Go-Zone graph**



**Figure 7.3: Go-zone key**

Zone colour	Statements perceived as...
Green	Both important and applicable
Orange	Applicable but not important
Yellow	Important but not applicable
White	Both unimportant and unapplicable

In terms of this report, the green and yellow quadrants furthest to the right of the graph are the most important for our discussion. The green quadrant comprises

those statements which were rated as above average in both importance and applicability; the yellow quadrant reflects statements which were above average in importance, but below average in terms of applicability. To make the presentation clearer, we have identified the statements in these quadrants in Tables 7.3 and 7.4. Related to the green quadrant, Table 7.3 shows the statements that were rated above average on both importance and applicability relative to the other statements. In other words, **these statements were perceived to be both very important towards promoting more positive forms of masculinity toward addressing VAW and the easiest to apply relative to other statements.**



**Table 7.3: Statements rated above average on both importance and applicability**

#	Statements	Importance	Applicability
23	Implement mandatory sex education and sexual consent education in schools, universities and community programmes	5.76	4.90
34	Ensure that age appropriate compulsory education about gender stereotypes and equality and violence against women is integrated across the school curriculum, starting at a young age	5.50	4.58
25	Educate men and women of how non-violent, trustworthy, and respectful romantic relationships look like	5.45	4.52
37	Raise public awareness about the problem and extent of violence against women, and the public responsibility in preventing it	5.26	4.79
20	Provide education on what healthy, positive and non-violent forms of being a man looks like	5.16	4.63
16	Appoint more women in the process of policy decision-making regarding violence against women	5.09	4.50
38	Promote governmental support for men taking paternity leave and undertaking caregiving tasks/roles	5.04	4.22
22	Promote age-relevant and relatable mass media representations of positive and non-violent forms of manhood	4.98	4.28
18	Educate young people to recognize and reject gender stereotypes in the media and popular culture	4.98	4.18
32	Educate men on how gender roles and violence against women can harm their own health, happiness, and wellbeing	4.98	4.16
8	Educate about prevention of violence against women in workplaces	4.94	4.55

From this table the following points can be made:

- Ideas relating to education are perceived to be key and easy to apply relative to other ideas towards promoting positive masculinities in addressing VAW (i.e., statements 8, 18, 20, 23, 25, 32, 34).
- The role of the formal education system in contributing to sex and relationship education and curricula relating to VAW (i.e., statements 23 and 34) is perceived to be key toward addressing VAW. Statement 23 was rated the most important overall.
- The deconstructing of gender stereotypes (i.e., statements 18, 20, 32 and 34) is perceived to be an important component of any such education relating to masculinities and VAW.
- The statements speak to strategies at multiple levels of intervention across multiple settings (e.g., educational settings, work, media forms; government policy settings; home settings).

Table 7.4 displays the statements that were rated above average on importance but below average in applicability ratings relative to the

other statements (yellow quadrant). In other words, these statements were perceived to be very important towards promoting more positive forms of masculinity to address VAW, but more difficult to apply relative to the other statements. We want to stress several caveats in interpreting this table. First, as per Table 7.3 above, it is important to stress that these are based on participants' perceptions. Secondly, it is important to note that just because statements were rated below average in terms of applicability, it does not mean they cannot be implemented. What the applicability rating implies is that participants perceive that there are more and/or significant barriers to implementing these ideas relative to other statements. We suggest that in promoting positive forms of masculinity to address VAW, we need to understand what these perceived barriers are. They could be economic, cultural, political, legal and/or personal. This point is important because the growing consensus in the field is that multiple strategies, settings and scales of prevention are the most effective in addressing VAW (Flood, 2011). Toward maximising a 'comprehensive' approach to addressing VAW therefore, we argue that the statements in Table 7.4 (below) should be taken as seriously toward addressing VAW as those in Table 7.3.

**Table 7.4: Statements rated above average in importance but below average in applicability**

#	Statements	Importance	Applicability
31	Raise boys to respect women, reject violence against women and oppose unequal gender norms	5.75	3.85
12	Change the way the criminal justice system treats rape cases to understand the specific difficulties faced by rape victims, and to be more attentive towards their experiences	5.68	3.44
19	Develop men's and boys skills to recognize, manage and express feelings in a non-violent way	5.49	4.04
33	Develop women's and men's skills on how to recognize and actively prevent and stop violence against women	5.31	4.04
29	Promote men's empathy towards women experiencing violence, including understanding its effects on their lives	5.19	3.81
1	Develop men's skills to help them reject peer pressure and macho norms	5.17	3.46
41	Educate men to recognize how their upbringing, society, and life-experiences influence their attitudes, values and behaviours towards violence against women	5.16	3.69
2	Help men identify and recognize that they have the qualities and abilities to contribute in preventing violence against women	5.04	4.00
30	Promote understanding among men and women on how different groups of women experience violence differently, based on class, race, ethnicity and citizenship status	4.93	3.73
26	Establish special units of police trained to identify and prevent violence against women	4.92	4.00

From this table the following points can be made:

- As in Table 7.3, ideas relating to education (and skills) are perceived to be key in promoting positive masculinities to address VAW (i.e., statements 1, 2, 19, 30, 21, 33 and 41).
- Ideas that implicitly or explicitly target boys and men as the recipients of initiatives (i.e., statements 1, 2, 19, 29, 31 and 41) are perceived to be very important towards addressing VAW, but for some reason, more difficult to apply relative to other statements.
- The difference (of 2.44) between perceived importance and applicability for statement 12 ('Change the way the criminal justice system treats rape cases to understand the specific difficulties faced by rape victims, and to be more attentive towards their experiences') is stark. It is perceived to be the third most important idea overall (see Figure 7.2) but very low in terms of applicability. This suggests that while participants

see a vital role for the criminal justice system in promoting more positive forms of manhood to address VAW, they see these measures as hard to implement.



## 7.4 Conclusions

Participants identified multiple strategies within different groups, settings and scales that could be implemented to promote more positive forms of masculinities to address VAW. Reflecting the wider multi-country CM exercise undertaken as part of PositivMasc (Daoud et al., 2022), potential targets or recipients of these ideas were not just perceived to be men and boys, but multiple actors in society, including women, parents, educators, legal professionals and judges, sports people, social media influencers and the general public, to name but a few. The ideas also covered a range of different actions, with some aimed at prevention, others directed at dealing with perpetration of violence (through the criminal justice system, for example) and still others with societal and public awareness raising. In many ways, these diverse approaches are evidenced in the first three statements which participants viewed as most important overall: provide sexual consent and sex education in a range of educational settings; raise boys and men to respect women and change the way the criminal justice system responds to rape cases and survivors/victims of rape.

As we have shown, education in general and the role of the formal education system specifically were considered to be particularly important in addressing VAW. Educational skills and topics referenced in the statements included sex and relationships, exploring gender stereotypes, emotional regulation, peer pressure, healthy relationships, alternative and more positive ways of being a man, critical media literacy, bystander intervention skills and analysis of gender socialisation. It is apparent however that while participants perceived certain ideas to be important, they did not always see them as particularly easy to implement or apply; change in the criminal justice system is a particularly stark example of this. It is important to therefore explore the reasons behind these perceptions as a way of tackling the barriers to implementing strategies to address VAW.



## 8 Discussion and Implications

### 8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we pull together and reflect on the conclusions of the PositivMasc study. It is important to note in the past few years that there have been significant legal and policy developments in Ireland which recognise and respond to the kinds of issues that have been raised in this report. Non-governmental organisations continue to raise awareness and document the incidence of intimate partner violence, whilst a growing awareness about the ubiquity of sexual violence is leading to developments in particular sectors, most notably higher education where bystander and other initiatives around consent have been established. The findings from our study lend support to these developments but also suggest that more work needs to be done in terms of addressing and challenging problematic gender norms and dominant masculinities which underpin young people's attitudes towards and experiences of VAW.

### 8.2 How do young people understand VAW in Ireland?

Young people are able to identify a range of acts and behaviours as 'violence against

women'. However, they most commonly link VAW to physical and domestic violence. While many young people were able to identify different forms of psychological abuse, others were more ambivalent about naming incidents of sexual violence or harassment. Indeed, it is clear that many young people minimise acts of sexual harassment or sexual 'micro-aggressions' because they view them as unremarkable and 'normal'.

A concerning finding of the study is the ubiquity with which young people describe sexual harassment happening in their own lives and those of other young people they know. Young people are able to reflect on the reasons for this, including the development of a (gendered) culture which 'tolerates' sexual violence against women. While most young people stated that VAW is unacceptable, the use of vignettes exposed some level of ambiguity in their perceptions, particularly in relation to notions of victim blaming - that is, that young women may bring violence upon themselves if for example, they dress provocatively or are flirtatious. This backs up findings of other recent Irish studies and suggests a clear need to challenge victim blaming discourses amongst young people.



### 8.3 How do understandings of gender, masculinity and femininity shape attitudes to and experiences of VAW?

**Perceptions of masculinity:** Despite social changes which are leading to different understandings of gender and gender roles, young people were very well able to identify forms of 'dominant masculinity' in Ireland which they connect with particular negative attitudes and behaviours. Young people were more able to identify socio-negative representations of masculinity (encapsulated in terms such as 'the jock', the 'lad', the 'alpha male') than positive understandings.

The link between masculinity and the capacity to exert control and resist being controlled was a key theme within young people's perceptions of dominant norms of masculinity; emotional repression and poor emotional literacy were also cited as significant elements of normative masculinity and perceived to be key in understanding men's VAW. Participants associated (but disagreed with) **notions of masculinity with interpersonal control, assertion, confidence, bravery, decision making and success.** Active heterosexuality was also seen as key to masculine status and young people suggested that the pursuit of heterosexual success was a motivator for some forms of sexual violence against women. Male peer groups and peer pressure were cited as key mechanisms for the (re)production and regulation of masculine norms.

**Perceptions of femininity:** Despite a recognition that women have and continue to gain greater opportunities for independence and personal autonomy, young people believed women continue to be bound by an emphasis on maintaining a specific body image. Participants perceived that a sexual double standard continues to regulate female sexuality, where active female heterosexuality is a source of shaming for women but pride for men.

**Learning about gender norms and roles:** Young people perceived that considerable social change has occurred and is occurring in relation to gender roles, sexuality and attitudes towards VAW. They differentiated traditional values that belong to an 'older cohort' of the population from more

modern values of equality that are held more predominantly among young people. Participants perceived that social media and digital technologies have been key facilitators of social change relating to gender norms. However, they also suggest that these problematically mediate children's and young people's entry into the socio-sexual world, citing the availability of pornography as an example.



### 8.4 How can we promote 'anti-violence' or alternative forms of manhood to tackle VAW?

Combining the qualitative and quantitative elements of our study, young people and stakeholders had a multitude of ideas and strategies about how to promote more positive forms of manhood in tackling the problem of VAW.

Participants stressed the need for **dominant ideas about masculinity to be challenged and 'reconstructed' in multiple spheres of life.** It was proposed that this should not happen by working with men and boys alone, but all young people and indeed, society more widely to challenge problematic gender stereotypes and inequalities. Participants raised ideas that could take place at the level of the individual, amongst groups and local communities, and within societal institutions, including the education and justice system.

The clusters identified in the Concept Mapping exercise bear witness to the potential multi-site and multi-scalar strategies required to address VAW, including education with young people and

wider society, public awareness raising in terms of alternative forms of masculinity which challenge VAW, work to develop specific 'skills for men', and government initiatives, including change in the criminal justice system in terms of how it deals with both survivors and perpetrators of VAW. Our research therefore suggests that responses to VAW need to take place at the individual, community and societal level and in a myriad of diverse spaces.

#### 8.4.1 The vital role of education

Education – including formal education directed at young people in schools and other educational spaces such as universities and colleges, informal education (such as that which might be provided in youth clubs or other settings), and indeed, wider societal education – was overwhelmingly seen as the most important element in challenging gender inequitable attitudes and dominant forms of masculinity which underpin VAW.

Young people and stakeholders highlighted a number of **guiding principles that should underpin any educational endeavours** designed to challenge gender inequitable relations and dominant forms of masculinity. These included: that education should begin at a young age; that the pedagogy and teaching methods used should be age appropriate; that educational engagement on masculinities and VAW should be consistent, repeated, holistic and made relevant to other subjects; that it should be underpinned by a 'whole of school' approach; and that it should refrain from a negative 'what not to do' approach and rather focus on alternative avenues for action or ways of being in addressing VAW.

Within the formal education system, **sex and relationship education was perceived to be very poorly delivered in Ireland**, with participants strongly advocating for reform in this area. Sex and relationship education across multiple education settings (primary schools, secondary schools, universities, community programmes) was considered central in addressing VAW.

Education that enables individuals to critically analyse and interrogate gender norms was also raised as significant by participants. Other topics that were raised as important in potential educational initiatives included awareness about equality issues; critical media literacy; pornography literacy; emotional literacy and regulation skills; healthy relationships and the subject of VAW itself, including understanding different forms of violence.

Participants also raised other societal spaces and arenas in which education should take place: for example, some suggested there needs to be greater awareness of VAW in the workplace; that there should be education for all adults around what healthy relationships look like; and that education should be provided around how different groups of women and communities are impacted by VAW in different ways - based around, class, 'race' and socio-economic status, for example.

#### 8.4.2 Work with men and boys: promoting alternative forms of masculinity, building men and boys' consciousness and skills

Participants overwhelmingly linked dominant masculine norms and VAW to emotional repression and the rejection of vulnerability. Participants highlighted the need to develop boys' and men's skills to develop emotional literacy and to be able to articulate emotions in a non-violent way without fearing shame or emasculation.

Given the influence of male peer groups in regulating norms and practices that are conducive to VAW amongst boys and men, participants argued that boys and men need to be enabled to express an 'authentic' way of 'being a man'. They highlighted the need to **develop boys' and men's skills to question and interrogate peer pressure and macho norms.**

Participants also highlighted the need to educate men on how gender roles and VAW women can harm their own health, happiness and wellbeing; to recognise how their upbringing, society and life experiences influence their attitudes, values and behaviours towards VAW; and to promote empathy for women, by developing their understanding of the effects of violence on women's lives.

Implicit within participants' narratives were some guiding principles that should underpin work with men in addressing VAW. These include the need to: play to men's strengths; provide boys and men with alternative ways and models of action and of 'being a man'; promote positive role models and model positive behaviour; and approach boys and men with positive regard. Since it was suggested that 'men listen to other men', participants perceived that men are well positioned to act as positive role models and voices to engage with other men to address VAW.

Participants also raised the importance of men as actors and allies in addressing VAW. They argued for the delivery of bystander intervention initiatives toward the broader aim of creating a culture of active bystanding generally and which should be supported by the development of clear reporting and disclosure mechanisms and training across settings. They specifically advocated for the promotion of men's engagement in active bystanding and feminist allyship and activism. There is a need to tackle the stigma and peer shaming that act as barriers to men's active bystanding and involvement as feminist allies and activists.

#### 8.4.3 Increase public awareness of VAW and improve the representation of (non-violent) men

Results from the Concept Mapping study particularly highlighted the need to raise public awareness about the problem and extent of VAW, and the public's responsibility in preventing it. Participants also noted the need to promote age-relevant and relatable mass media representations of positive and non-violent forms of manhood.

In terms of the qualitative data, participants felt that information and awareness campaigns can be a useful and effective way to draw attention to VAW. However, they argued that such campaigns need to be well designed, repeated and relatable to people's experiences.

#### 8.4.4 Government initiatives and law and justice reform

The Concept Mapping study highlighted a range of actions which participants saw as significant in terms of government policies and intervention. Participants saw the need to improve the criminal justice system's understanding of, response to, victims and survivors of rape cases as particularly important. However, they also mentioned other initiatives and developments, including government support for men's paternity leave and men's increased involvement in caregiving, and the appointment and involvement of more women in the process of policy decision making regarding VAW.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: List of stakeholder organisations

Organisation
COSC - The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, Department of Justice
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre
Men's Development Network (3 interviews)
Traveller Visibility Group (2 interviews)
MOVE Ireland (2 interviews)
Bystander Intervention Programme, University College Cork
Haven Horizons
National Women's Council of Ireland
Women's Aid
Youth Work Ireland



## Appendix 2: Stakeholder interview protocol

Topic	Questions
<b>Introduction and VAW prevention</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tell us about your organisation/aim/target group/activities/programme?</li> <li>What is your role in the organization?</li> <li>How is VAW is being perceived and understood in your organization?  <b>Probe</b> - Physical violence, sexual violence, emotional, controlling behaviour, online violence, economic violence?  <b>Explore:</b> Who are the perpetrators? Family, partner, strangers?</li> <li>How does your organization work to prevent VAW? (Probe- If not addressed in the previous answers)  <b>Probe</b> - Intimate partner violence? Violence in general?  <b>Probe</b> - Are there specific actions targeting youth?  <b>Probe</b> - Can young men / women contribute to this work? How?</li> <li>What things do you think should be done in addition to what is already being implemented your organization and in society? (Probe: specific programs, changing attitudes, policy/law).</li> <li>How do you understand gender in your own organization?  <b>Explore</b> - Masculinities? Femininities?</li> <li>Does your understanding of masculinity/femininity and gender affect your work within the organization in any way? How?                      (How is the concept of masculinity understood in your organization and how does it inform practice?)</li> </ol>
<b>Antiviolence masculinities protection-promotion</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>What can be done to promote a way of being a young man that includes rejecting all forms of violence against women in their everyday lives?</i>  <b>Probe:</b> youth/family level, community (neighbourhoods), institutional (schools, universities, churches, sports clubs), government level , programs/campaigns/legislation  <b>Probe:</b> Who should do it? How so?   <b>Supporting men who are anti-VAW</b>                      Previous studies in other countries have shown that adopting behaviours or beliefs that reject all forms of violence against women (emotional, physical sexual, etc) can be hard for the individual young man.                       In other words, a young man may privately rejected violence against women, but may experience pressure from their peers, family or society to behave in a traditional or unequal way and to condone some forms of violence. For example, if they criticize other men’s inappropriate behaviour, they can face reprimand by their peers.</li> <li>Would you agree that this pressure to behave in a traditional way due to peer pressure is something young men in Ireland face today?</li> <li>What can be done to support young men that show anti-violence behaviours?  <b>(To help them to cope with pressure from the peers and family)</b>                      Explore: youth/family level, Community (neighbourhoods), institutional (schools, universities, churches, sports clubs), government level, programs/campaigns/legislation.</li> </ol>

## Appendix 3: Young people interview protocol

Topic	Questions
<b>Perception of gender: masculinities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the key words and images that come to your mind when you think about Irish men and manly behaviors in Ireland?</li> <li>Do parents, friends of men and the internet (e.g. social media also) place different expectations on men?</li> <li>What sorts of expectations are put on men do you think?</li> </ol>
<b>Perception of gender: femininities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the key words and images that come to your mind when you think about Irish women?</li> <li>Do parents, friends of women and the internet (e.g. social media also) place different expectations on women?</li> <li>What sorts of expectations are put on women do you think?</li> </ol>
<b>Understandings of VAW</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the first words and images that come to your mind when you think about the term ‘violence against women’?</li> <li>What are the different types/forms of violence against women?</li> <li>Who are the perpetrators of violence against women? What types of people come to mind?</li> <li>Where does violence against women take place in your view?</li> </ol>
	<b>Statements</b>
<b>Attitudes towards controlling behaviors by partner</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A friend says to you: ‘A good wife/girlfriend should obey her husband/boyfriend even if she doesn’t agree with him’.  <b>What do you think about that? How/why so?</b></li> <li>2. A friend says to you: ‘A good daughter must obey her father/parents/older brother even if she doesn’t agree with him’.  <b>What do you think about that? How/why so?</b></li> <li>3. A friend says to you: ‘A woman has the right to choose her friends, even if her partner/boyfriend/husband disagrees’.  <b>What do you think about that? How/why so?</b></li> </ol>
	<b>Vignettes</b>
<b>Scenario 1: digital violence vignette</b>	<p><i>Marian and Andrew have been dating together for a few months. They often check each other’s posts on Instagram. Andrew is upset that a certain John is always “liking” Marian’s posts. He confronts Marian about this, and she tells him that he is just a classmate. Andrew asks Marian to block John from her Instagram contacts and he demands to have Marian’s Instagram password.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you think is he thinking? What do you think is he feeling? What do you think about this situation? Do you think he is right? Why so?</li> <li>Do these types of situation happen?</li> <li>Who is likely to do this more often? Men (ex-boyfriends) or women (ex-girlfriends) or equally men and women?                      If I told you: Marian agrees to block John and gives her password to Andrew, her boyfriend.</li> <li>What do you think about Marian’s decision?</li> <li>What do you think is she thinking? What do you think is she feeling?</li> </ol>
<b>Scenario 2: harassment vignette</b>	<p><i>Imagine a woman broke up with her boyfriend a few months ago. He wants them to get back together, she does not. He has been continually messaging her through social media. She has asked him to stop contacting her.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why do you think he is doing that? What do you think he is thinking and feeling?</li> <li>Is this something that happens do you think?</li> <li>Who is likely to do this more often? Men (ex-boyfriends) or women (ex-girlfriends) or equally men and women?</li> </ol>

	Vignettes
<b>Scenario 2 (continued): image vignette</b>	<p><i>During their relationship, the woman had sent some naked photos of herself to her boyfriend. Despite her asking him to stop contacting him, he puts the photos on the internet without telling her, so that anyone can see them.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think about this situation?</li> <li>2. Why do you think he did this?</li> <li>3. Is this something that happens do you think?</li> <li>4. Who is likely to do this more often? Men (ex-boyfriends) or women (ex-girlfriends) or equally men and women?</li> </ol>
<b>Scenario 3: emotional violence vignette</b>	<p><i>Johana is 20 years old. She has been Ruben's girlfriend for the past 3 years. In the last year, Ruben and Johana have been arguing a lot. During those arguments Ruben has been yelling at Johana, sometimes insulting her telling her things that make her feel bad about herself (i.e., "ugly fat woman" or 'bitch') or humiliating her in front of others.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think of Rubén's behavior?</li> <li>2. Do you think the language that people (especially men) when talking about women (e.g. slut, bitch) is a problem?</li> <li>3. Do you think he might have had had a valid reason to treat her like that? <b>Explore:</b> refusing to have sex, unfaithful suspicion, discovers cheating, asks if he has another woman.</li> <li>4. Do you think he might have had had a valid reason to treat her like that? <b>Explore:</b> refusing to have sex, unfaithful suspicion, discovers cheating, asks if perceives flirting with someone else</li> </ol> <p><i>The last time that Ruben and Johana had an argument he shoved and slapped her.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think of Rubén's behavior?</li> <li>2. Do you think he might have had had a valid reason to treat her like that? <b>Explore:</b> refusing to have sex, suspects she is unfaithful, discovers cheating and Johana says she has another man.</li> </ol>
<b>Scenario 3 (continued): sexual coercion vignette</b>	<p><i>One-night Ruben wants to have sex with Johana but she doesn't. He keeps insisting and tells her that if she loves him, she must have sex with him. He thinks "when a man and a woman are in a long-term relationship, it is acceptable for the man to expect sex from the woman whenever he wants".</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think about that? How so?</li> <li>2. Do you think this attitude still persists?</li> </ol>
<b>Scenario 4: Assault vignette</b>	<p><i>A young outgoing college aged woman, we will call her Anna, likes to dress in short skirts and tight tank tops on nights out. She likes parties, clubs, and drinking, and likes to flirt. At a party one night, a guy grabbed her buttocks without her consent.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think about that?</li> <li>2. Why do you think this happened?</li> <li>3. Who is to blame? How/why so?</li> <li>4. What can be done in that situation? (for Anna and also the man)</li> </ol>
<b>Scenario 4 (continued): Rape vignette</b>	<p><i>The same night, Anna walks home, clearly drunk after leaving the party. Some men she had been flirting with follow her and try to rape her down a side street.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think about that? <b>Explore:</b> Who is to blame (man, woman, other)? How so? - What do you think the men were thinking? - How could have this been prevented? - Should other people intervene? How so? Would you intervene? - Why wouldn't you intervene? - What would support you to intervene?</li> </ol>

	Brainstorming – Concept mapping questions
<b>Preventing VAW and promoting positive ways of being a man</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think can be done to prevent violence against women? (e.g. the role of communities, schools, Universities, sports clubs, governments)</li> <li>2. What can be done to support young men who have an active stance against violence against women? (in other words, what can be done to support who young men who see violence against women as a problem, but for some reason they are afraid to speak up and speak out about it)</li> <li>3. What can be done to promote antiviolence masculinities among young men? (in other words, what can be done to promote more positive ways of being a man and what can be done to help young men see that violence against women as a problem. What can be done to change their attitudes?)</li> </ol>



## Appendix 4: List of statements for Concept Mapping

Statement no.	Statements
1	Develop men's skills to help them reject peer pressure and macho norms
2	Help men identify and recognize that they have the qualities and abilities to contribute in preventing violence against women
3	Promote positive, non-violent and respectful forms of parenting in parents' groups during antenatal /post-natal care
4	Use personal stories of women who have experienced different forms of violence as an educational tool
5	Provide men who reject violence against women with a wider public platform to speak out
6	Educate parents, children and young people on the negative impacts of using pornography
7	Promote restrictive access for pornography only for adults
8	Educate about prevention of violence against women in work places
9	Promote continuous, fresh, and relevant male-led campaigns designed to prevent and reject violence against women and promote gender equality
10	Provide or expand rehabilitation programmes for men who perpetrate violence against women, such as anger management treatment
11	Have longer sentences for people who commit acts of violence against women
12	Change the way the criminal justice system treats rape cases to understand the specific difficulties faced by rape victims, and to be more attentive towards their experiences
13	Promote forms of manhood that reject violence against women in religious institutions, meetings, and congregations
14	Present male role models who reject violence against women to children and young people in families and communities and to give lectures, classes and programmes
15	Educate about positive and nonviolent forms of manhood and prevention of violence against women in sports organizations and clubs
16	Appoint more women in the process of policy decision-making regarding violence against women
17	Support teachers to question their own prejudices on gender norms and violence against women
18	Educate young people to recognize and reject gender stereotypes in the media and popular culture
19	Develop men's and boys' skills to recognize, manage and express feelings in a non-violent way
20	Provide education on what healthy, positive and non-violent forms of being a man looks like
21	Provide on-going financial security to activists and organizations which promote non-violent forms of manhood in preventing violence against women
22	Promote age-relevant and relatable mass media representations of positive and non-violent forms of manhood
23	Implement mandatory sex education and sexual consent education in schools, universities and community programmes
24	Support and train youth groups, youth movements, student unions, gaming clubs, and different associations to promote a culture of gender equality and reject violent forms of manhood

Statement no.	Statements
25	Educate men and women of how non-violent, trustworthy, and respectful romantic relationships look like
26	Establish special units of police trained to identify and prevent violence against women
27	Implement after school activities where students discuss norms around gender and violence
28	Establish an award and quality ratings for organizations and educational institutions that engage men for their work in preventing and tackling violence against women
29	Promote men's empathy towards women experiencing violence, including understanding its effects on their lives
30	Promote understanding among men and women on how different groups of women experience violence differently, based on class, race, ethnicity and citizenship status
31	Raise boys to respect women, reject violence against women and oppose unequal gender norms
32	Educate men on how gender roles and violence against women can harm their own health, happiness, and wellbeing
33	Develop women's and men's skills on how to recognize and actively prevent and stop violence against women
34	Ensure that age appropriate compulsory education about gender stereotypes and equality and violence against women is integrated across the school curriculum, starting at a young age
35	Recruit high profile public figures (actors, football players, film makers) to promote gender equality, and non-violent forms of manhood, that reject violence against women
36	Establish a central government unit to improve coordination between different organizations, services and programmes working towards non-violent forms of manhood
37	Raise public awareness about the problem and extent of violence against women, and the public responsibility in preventing it
38	Promote governmental support for men taking paternity leave and undertaking caregiving tasks/roles
39	Establish a wide activist movement that opposes violence against women and rejects violent forms of manhood
40	Provide a non-judgmental space for men to reflect on how their behaviors can foster violence against women
41	Educate men to recognize how their upbringing, society, and life-experiences influence their attitudes, values and behaviors towards violence against women

## Appendix 5: Demographic questionnaire for Concept Mapping participants

Question no.	Statements
1	<p><b>In which country do you currently live?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ireland</li> <li>• Israel</li> <li>• Spain</li> <li>• Sweden</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>How old are you (in years)?</b></p>
3	<p><b>How do you define your gender?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A man</li> <li>• A woman</li> <li>• Other</li> <li>• Choose not to disclose</li> </ul>
4	<p><b>Are you?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working for salary in a community organization (women's organization/ men's organization/youth organization) on the issue of violence against women or positive masculinity.</li> <li>• Working for salary in a state agency (government office) on the issue of violence against women or positive masculinity / ways of being a man.</li> <li>• Involved as a volunteer in activism around violence against women or positive masculinity / ways of being a man.</li> <li>• Not involved in activism around violence against women or positive masculinity / ways of being a man in any way.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>
5	<p><b>What is the last level of schooling you completed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No formal schooling</li> <li>• Secondary school/high school</li> <li>• College or university (BA, MA, PhD)</li> <li>• -Other training</li> </ul>
6	<p><b>What sex were you born with?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Other</li> <li>• Choose not to disclose</li> </ul>

## Appendix 6: Cluster map list

Cluster	No.	Statement
<b>1. Skills for Men</b>	1	Develop men's skills to help them reject peer pressure and macho norms
	2	Help men identify and recognize that they have the qualities and abilities to contribute in preventing violence against women
	19	Develop men's and boys' skill to recognize, manage and express feelings in a non-violent way
<b>2. Social Education</b>	3	Promote positive, non-violent and respectful forms of parenting in parents' groups during antenatal /post-natal care
	8	Educate about prevention of violence against women in work places
	15	Educate about positive and nonviolent forms of manhood and prevention of violence against women in sports organizations and clubs
	20	Provide education on what healthy, positive and non-violent forms of being a man looks like
	25	Educate men and women of how non-violent, trustworthy, and respectful romantic relationships look like
	31	Raise boys to respect women, reject violence against women and oppose unequal gender norms
	32	Educate men on how gender roles and violence against women can harm their own health, happiness, and wellbeing
	33	Develop women's and men's skills on how to recognize and actively prevent and stop violence against women
<b>3. Empathy and Understanding of Lived Experience</b>	4	Use personal stories of women who have experienced different forms of violence as an educational tool
	29	Promote men's empathy towards women experiencing violence, including understanding its effects on their lives
	30	Promote understanding among men and women on how different groups of women experience violence differently, based on class, race, ethnicity and citizenship status
	40	Provide a non-judgmental space for men to reflect on how their behaviors can foster violence against women
<b>4. Formal and Informal Education with young People</b>	6	Educate parents, children and young people on the negative impacts of using pornography
	17	Support teachers to question their own prejudices on gender norms and violence against women
	18	Educate young people to recognize and reject gender stereotypes in the media and popular culture
	23	Implement mandatory sex education and sexual consent education in schools, universities and community programmes
	24	Support and train youth groups, youth movements, student unions, gaming clubs, and different associations to promote a culture of gender equality and reject violent forms of manhood
	27	Implement after school activities where students discuss norms around gender and violence



Cluster	No.	Statement
	34	Ensure that age appropriate compulsory education about gender stereotypes and equality and violence against women is integrated across the school curriculum, starting at a young age
5. Law and Justice System Reform	7	Promote restrictive access for pornography only for adults
	11	Have longer sentences for people who commit acts of violence against women
	12	Change the way the criminal justice system treats rape cases to understand the specific difficulties faced by rape victims, and to be more attentive towards their experiences
	26	Establish special units of police trained to identify and prevent violence against women
6. Awareness Raising and Public Representation of Men	5	Provide men who reject violence against women with a wider public platform to speak out
	9	Promote continuous, fresh, and relevant male-led campaigns designed to prevent and reject violence against women and promote gender equality
	13	Promote forms of manhood that reject violence against women in religious institutions, meetings, and congregations
	14	Present male role models who reject violence against women to children and young people in families and communities and to give lectures, classes and programmes
	22	Promote age-relevant and relatable mass media representations of positive and non-violent forms of manhood
	35	Recruit high profile public figures (actors, football players, film makers) to promote gender equality, and non-violent forms of manhood, that reject violence against women
	37	Raise public awareness about the problem and extent of violence against women, and the public responsibility in preventing it
	39	Establish a wide activist movement that opposes violence against women and rejects violent forms of manhood
	7. Government Initiatives	10
16		Appoint more women in the process of policy decision-making regarding violence against women
21		Provide on-going financial security to activists and organizations which promote non-violent forms of manhood in preventing violence against women
28		Establish an award and quality ratings for organizations and educational institutions that engage men for their work in preventing and tackling violence against women
36		Establish a central government unit to improve coordination between different organizations, services and programmes working towards non-violent forms of manhood
	38	Promote governmental support for men taking paternity leave and undertaking caregiving tasks/roles

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