



Focusing on Perpetration:

The who, how and why for prevention
of gender based violence

EVALUATION REPORT

of a webinar 16 April 2024

Webinar Evaluation

Focusing on Perpetration

Background

The history of the women's health services is one enmeshed with the women's liberation movement and setting up of refuges for women experiencing domestic violence. In the decades since, there has been painstakingly hard-won funding for frontline services for victim survivors and there is always more that can be done. In the process, there has been a focus on victim survivors, who they are, and where they come from. Yet, the same data has not been collected from people who use violence or about perpetration itself. There has also been an understandable resistance to spending money on perpetration due to the fact that funding is so scarce.

In 2022, Professor Michael Flood, Chay Brown, Lula Dembele and Kirsti Mills published a paper titled: "Who uses domestic, family, and sexual violence, how, and why? The State of Knowledge Report on Violence Perpetration."¹ In this paper, the authors argue that in the absence of robust and consistent information on the perpetration of domestic, family and sexual violence, our ability to effectively prevent and reduce this violence is severely limited.

As the authors state in the report, "There are no nationally representative Australian data on the prevalence of violence perpetration, and there are negligible data on the patterns and dynamics of perpetration. In short, at this point we know little in Australia about who uses domestic, family and sexual violence, how, and why" (p. 54).

In this webinar, we discussed with participants the findings of the report and what this could mean for primary prevention of domestic, sexual and family violence. This is a topic that partners have been requesting to hear more about for some time and the learning will be discussed in future Promoting Respect and Equity Together regional partnership meetings and other prevention network meetings in the future.

Flipping the script from focusing on victim/survivors and what they can do to keep themselves safe, to a focus on the perpetration of violence, who is using it and why; is an important and fundamental change to how we frame the story of gender-based violence from 'how to keep safe' to 'how to stop violence'.

Who completed the survey?

Of the 78 people who attended the webinar, 25 (88% women, 12% men) completed the survey following their attendance. This represents a response rate of 32%.

¹ Flood, M., Brown, C., Dembele, L., & Mills, K. 2022. *Who uses domestic, family, and sexual violence, how, and why? The State of Knowledge Report on Violence Perpetration*. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology.

The survey respondents worked in the women's health sector, the family violence sector, community organisations, local councils, state government, university/TAFE, and the legal sector.

Findings

Changes in understanding

Four questions measured changes in understanding of family violence and perpetration of family violence. Figures 1 to 5 show that overall, levels of understanding increased.

Figure 1 shows that the webinar effectively increased confidence in understanding what comprises family violence and all forms of violence against women. This is evident from the increase in the number of respondents who reported feeling *very confident* after the webinar and the absence of any *fairly confident* responses.

As can be seen in Figure 2, there was an overall increased understanding of the drivers of family violence. More people said that they felt *very confident* in their understanding following the webinar and no one felt *fairly confident*.

The webinar successfully improved understanding of what perpetration of gender-based violence means. As can be seen in Figure 3, there was a large increase in *very high* responses and no one felt their understanding was *neither low nor high* following the webinar.

The webinar also had a significant impact on level of agreement with the statement regarding the focus of primary prevention efforts in gender-based violence. The notable increase in *strongly agree* responses and the corresponding decrease in *agree* responses indicate that the webinar effectively reinforced the belief that greater emphasis should be placed on the perpetration of violence and accountability of perpetrators in prevention efforts (see Figure 4). The proportions of people who *strongly disagreed* did not change which suggests that while the webinar was effective for the majority, it did not change the views of those who were strongly opposed.

Figure 5 shows that the webinar improved peoples' understanding of how primary prevention of violence can engage with the body of knowledge on perpetration. The data shows a clear shift towards higher levels of understanding, with increases in *very high* and *high* ratings and a reduction in *neither low nor high* and *low* ratings. This indicates that the webinar was successful in increasing understanding in this area.

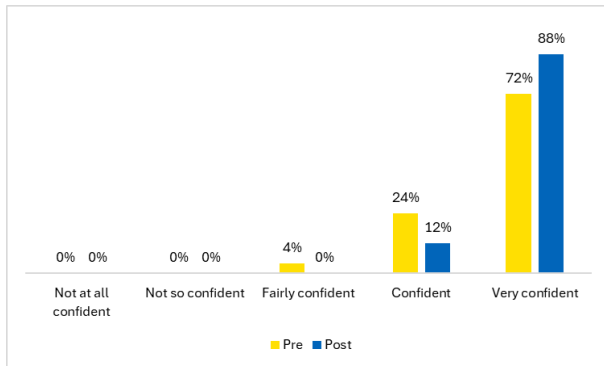


Figure 1. Pre- and post-webinar ratings of confidence in understanding what comprises family violence and all forms of violence against women.

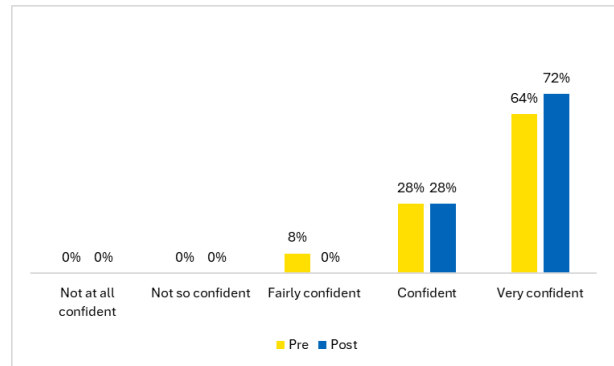


Figure 2. Pre- and post-webinar ratings of confidence that they understand the gender factors (drivers) that lead to family violence.

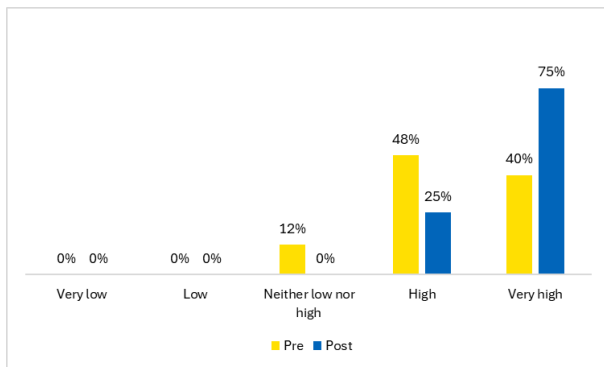


Figure 3. Pre- and post-webinar ratings of understanding what perpetration of gender-based violence means.

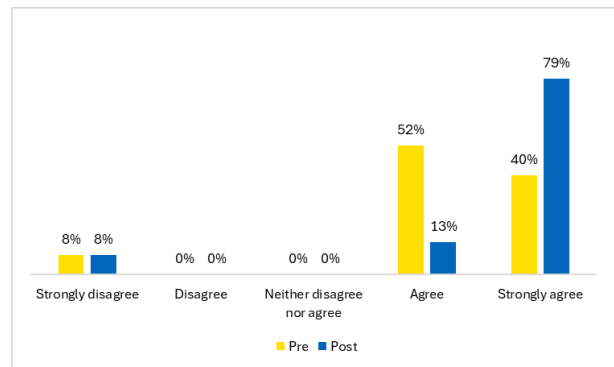


Figure 4. Pre- and post-webinar ratings of agreement that primary prevention of gender-based violence efforts need to focus more on perpetration and accountability of perpetrators.

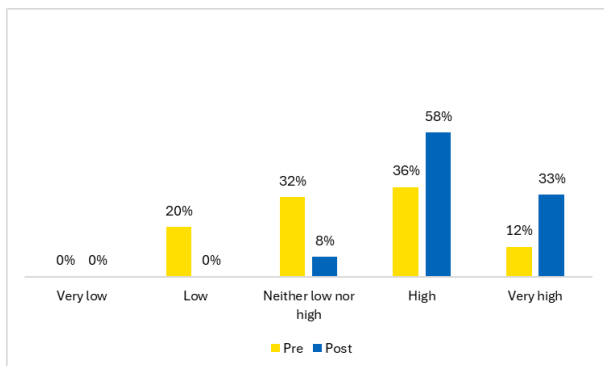


Figure 5. Pre- and post-webinar ratings of understanding how primary prevention of violence can engage with the body of knowledge on perpetration.

Changes in confidence

Three questions measured confidence to apply the learnings from the webinar. The responses are displayed in Figures 6 to 8.

Figure 6 shows that people reported an overall increase in confidence to undertake primary prevention of violence against women in their work. More people felt *very confident* and *confident*, and noticeably fewer people felt *fairly confident*. Following the webinar, no one said they felt *not so confident* to undertake primary prevention of violence against women in their work.

There was a clear increase in confidence to incorporate primary prevention practices to address perpetration of gender-based violence in their own work. Most people felt *confident* following the webinar and no one said that they felt *not at all confident* or *not so confident* (see Figure 7). There was an increase in people who felt *very confident* and also a decrease in moderate levels of confidence. These responses suggest that the webinar was effective at addressing people's uncertainties and boosting confidence.

The webinar also increased the confidence of people to encourage colleagues to incorporate primary prevention practices to address perpetration of gender-based violence in their own work. Figure 8 shows a substantial increase in *very confident* responses and a reduction in lower confidence levels, including zero *not at all confident* responses following the webinar. This positive shift demonstrates that the webinar was successful in achieving its educational and empowerment goals, effectively boosting peoples' confidence to advocate for primary prevention practices in their professional environment.

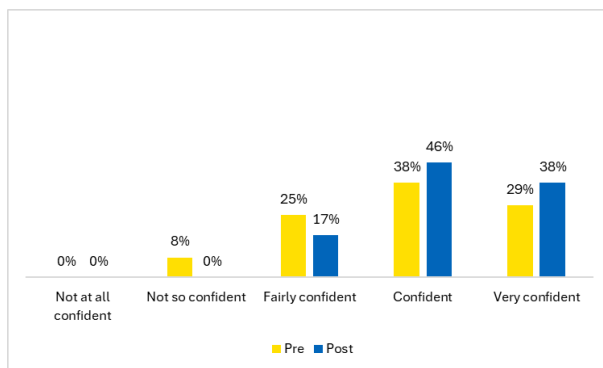


Figure 6. Pre- and post-webinar ratings of confidence to undertake primary prevention of violence against women in their work.

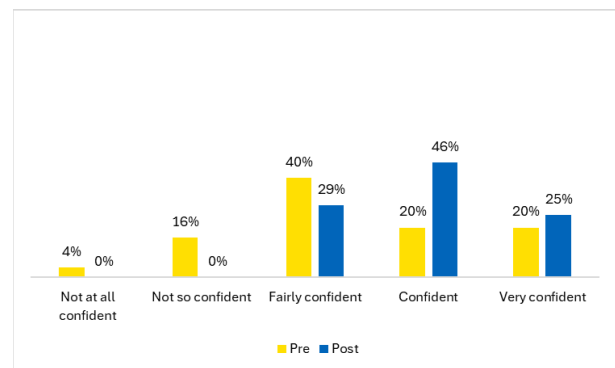


Figure 7. Pre- and post-webinar ratings of confidence to incorporate primary prevention practices to address perpetration of gender-based violence in their own work.

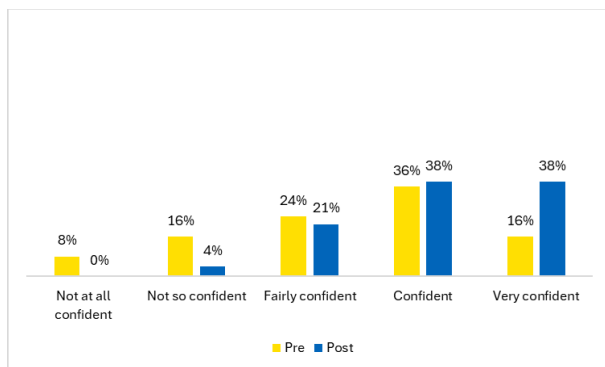


Figure 8. Pre- and post-webinar ratings of confidence to encourage colleagues in the sector to incorporate primary prevention practices to address perpetration of gender-based violence in their work.

Key learnings from the webinar

People shared key learnings from the webinar. Several key themes emerge from the comments, highlighting both the content and the delivery of the webinar, as well as its effect on peoples' understanding and attitudes.

Reframing and focusing on perpetration

A significant theme that emerged from the comments was the shift in focus from victims to perpetrators. People learned the importance of reframing the discussion to emphasise perpetration. For instance, comments such as, "Pivot to focus messages around perpetration" and "Perpetrators need to be focused on" highlight a paradigm shift encouraged by the webinar. Another person stressed the need to "Flip the stats. Engage men in the solutions, this is not a 'women's problem'."

This shift was seen as crucial in changing the discourse around gender-based violence. By focusing on the perpetrators, the webinar attendees recognised the need for structural and systemic changes that address the root causes of violence rather than just its symptoms.

Understanding and data collection

Some of the key learnings reflected a deeper understanding of the need for consistent data collection and analysis. One person noted that they had "Increased understanding about why there is a need for consistent national level data collection on perpetration," which points to the webinar's effectiveness in illuminating the gaps in current data practices. Another highlighted a startling statistic, "Only 2% of family violence situations reach the courts - not a stat I'd heard before, illuminating." This demonstrated the awareness-raising aspect of the webinar.

Engaging men and boys

Several comments showed that people had learned the necessity of engaging men and boys in the prevention of gender-based violence. People learned that they need to meet men and boys "where

they are at" and the importance of understanding their experiences to support attitudinal and behavioural changes. For instance, one person stated,

We need to meet men and boys where they are at - seek to understand their experience, understand what they need that will support attitudinal, and behavioural change.

People learned that this approach will more effectively foster long-term change and prevent violence from occurring in the first place. The importance of primary prevention was also noted, with one person emphasising the need to engage men and boys "at a young age."

Societal and cultural context

Some people found it most interesting to learn about the societal and cultural factors that perpetuate violence. One person mentioned, "Even 'heroes' use violence in modern media," suggesting an awareness of how media representations can normalise violent behaviour. Another person pointed out that "Stereotype views about prevention of violence upholds and maintains the status quo that drives the violence," which indicates a recognition of the need to challenge and change societal norms and stereotypes.

Holistic and safe approaches

Some people spoke about learning that there need to be holistic and safe approaches to prevention. There was a recognition that "violence doesn't happen in a vacuum" and the importance of creating environments where people feel safe to engage and seek help without fear of making their situation worse. As one person succinctly stated,

People need to feel safe to engage, and not feel that seeking help (as either a perpetrator or victim) will make things worse and more dangerous for them.

Inspiration and continued efforts

Some people spoke about a sense of inspiration and motivation to continue working in the field of gender-based violence prevention. They expressed a renewed commitment and a sense of solidarity. For example, one person felt "Inspiration to continue the work," and another noted, "That I'm not alone in my thoughts and feelings about those who perpetrate."

Applying learnings from the webinar

The survey asked people to share how they might apply the learnings from the webinar to their role. The responses reflect a diverse and thoughtful engagement with the webinar content. People expressed a range of ways they intend to integrate their learnings into their professional and advocacy efforts. Several key themes emerged.

Reframing language and focus

One of the predominant themes was the reframing of language and focus from victims to perpetrators. Multiple responses highlight the importance of shifting the narrative to hold perpetrators accountable and emphasise their role in gender-based violence. For instance, one

person mentioned, "Reframing of victim-based language to perpetrator-based language," while another person plans to:

Share data on social media - perpetrator focus: - i.e. not '22 women murdered due to DFV' - rather '22 men who murdered the women who left them'.

People acknowledged that making this shift will change public perceptions and highlight the responsibility of perpetrators, rather than framing the issue solely around victims.

Advocacy and organisational change

Many participants shared plans to use their learnings to advocate for changes within their organisations and broader systems. For instance, one person noted,

The learnings will help to inform conversations within my organisation by supporting the need to rethink our current focus only on women and girls and incorporate engaging more effectively with men and boys.

Another participant aims to "Highlight the need for me to push government to finance research into perpetration." These responses show a commitment to influencing policy and organisational practices to incorporate a more balanced and perpetrator-focused approach.

Education and training

Several responses emphasised the role of education and training. One person intends to "apply my learnings in my training planning and delivery," while another focused on "Education for victims who are interested in advocacy or careers in primary prevention." This reflects an understanding that effective education can empower individuals and professionals to adopt a more informed and comprehensive approach to preventing gender-based violence.

Collaborative and community engagement

Engaging with men and boys, as well as working collaboratively with various projects and organisations, is another theme. One person spoke about the importance of "Changing how we have conversations with men in our work with majority male industries around primary prevention, and how we share data etc." Another mentioned plans to "shift language, work more closely with The Men's Project, talk more internally about how to engage men and boys." These suggestions demonstrated a proactive approach which included a community-based strategy.

Practical applications and strategic planning

Some people expressed intentions to integrate their learnings into their strategic planning and day-to-day operations. One person, for instance, will incorporate learnings into their "Municipal health plan when thinking about actions." These applications illustrate how the webinar has provided concrete frameworks and ideas that people can embed into their existing projects and plans.

Further support

The following requests were made for support to enable people to apply their learnings:

- Guidance on how to bring it all together
- Further conversations in partnership forums i.e., Community of Practice, Statewide working group
- Perpetrator focused data
- Support from Management
- Funding
- Copy of the slide deck