

ASK A MATE

ASK A MATE DAY 2026

Fact sheet

WHY NOW?

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askamate.com.au
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Recent media coverage and public conversation, from Adolescence to Louis Theroux's documentary *The Manosphere*, have sharpened attention on the messages shaping boys and young men, from misogynistic online content and algorithms to confusion around consent, relationships and masculinity. The research is clear that many boys are navigating these questions with uncertainty, and that the people around them still play a powerful role in shaping what feels normal, acceptable and possible. This fact sheet brings together key findings from recent Australian research that help explain why early, practical and visible role modelling matters.

Now, more than ever, we need the men already showing up in thoughtful, respectful and grounded ways to be more visible, so their influence carries further than the harmful voices competing for young men's attention.

Key facts from recent research

Jesuit Social Services

The Adolescent Manbox Survey

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

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Reasons for hope

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

Challenges we must confront

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

[The Adolescent Man Box – Jesuit Social Services](#)

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Our Watch

The Line Comfort Zone Campaign Survey of Young People

In March 2025 Our Watch commissioned research into young people's understanding of healthy relationships, boundaries and controlling behaviours. The study was nationally representative and surveyed 1,000 Australian young people aged 14–20 years old.

The research found

- The majority of young people claim to understand healthy boundaries (88%) and controlling behaviours (92%).
- Three quarters of young people claimed they could confidently tell the difference between the two.
- 29% of young people confuse controlling behaviours as signs of healthy boundaries:
- 27% thought being told you cannot walk away from an argument was a healthy boundary, and 29% thought forcing physical touch out of love was a healthy boundary.
- Only 29% of young people feel completely confident communicating their boundaries.
- Just 22% feel completely confident knowing what to do when they feel uncomfortable, disrespected and/or unsafe in a relationship.
- Only 24% feel completely confident taking action in resolving it.
- A third of young people misidentified unhealthy relationship behaviours as healthy after 31% identified 'I have a right to know where my partner is most of the time' as a healthy relationship behaviour and 27% identified 'it's okay to be jealous because it means I care about my partner' as a healthy relationship behaviour.
- Only 18% of young people claimed they know what makes a relationship healthy.
- Half, 49%, of young men aged 14 to 17 are unsure, or don't know, what makes a relationship healthy.
- One in three young people do not recognise consent violations as 'very serious':
- 35% identified 'a guy and girl were kissing, he was being really pushy trying to convince her to have sex' as not 'very serious',
- 35% identified 'a guy keeps asking his girlfriend to try something he'd seen in porn even though she's uncomfortable' as not 'very serious'.
- Over half, 54%, of surveyed young people believe that if a guy wants to have sex with a girl, it's up to the girl to make it very clear she doesn't want to.
- 15% of young people agreed that 'if a girl is drunk or affected by drugs, she is at least partly responsible for unwanted sex'.

[The Line Comfort Zone Campaign
Research Summary](#)

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• **The Australian Institute of Family Studies**

Ten to Men– The Australian Longitudinal Study of Men's Health

- In their nationwide sample, around 1 in 3 men (35%) reported they had ever used a form of intimate partner violence, as an adult, by 2022; this is up from 24% who had ever reported use by 2013–14. These estimates provide the first longitudinal data on the use of intimate partner violence from a representative sample of Australian men.
- Emotional-type abuse (32% by 2022) was the most common form of intimate partner violence used, followed by physical violence (9% by 2022) and sexual abuse (2% by 2013–14).
- Men with depressive symptoms and those who had reported suicide related experiences by 2013–14 were more likely to have started using intimate partner violence by 2022.
- By 2022, 25% of men reported ever using and experiencing intimate partner violence, more than twice the proportion who reported using violence but never experiencing it (10%).
- Social support and paternal affection were protective against intimate partner violence use.
- Men with higher levels of social support in 2013 14 were 26% less likely to start using intimate partner violence by 2022 compared to men with lower levels of social support

[Ten to Men Insights #3 Report: Chapter 1 The use of intimate partner violence among Australian men](#)

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Taken together, these findings point to a clear need for earlier, more practical support for boys and young men, as well as stronger everyday role modelling from the adults around them.

They also reinforce the importance of creating spaces where young men can ask questions, build confidence and develop healthier understandings of relationships, consent, respect and masculinity over time.

Ask A Mate is designed to be part of that response.

If you have ideas to add, or want to share how you're using this in your school, club or community, email heymate@askamate.com.au

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Media contact:
Carolyn Robinson
Founding Director, Beyond DV
0412321236
carolyn.robinson@beyonddv.org.au