

***The Line campaign***

*Summary of research findings*

Prepared for Our Watch

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Table of contents

[EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3](#_Toc420425138)

[KEY FINDINGS 4](#_Toc420425139)

[BACKGROUND 5](#_Toc420425140)

[METHODOLOGY 6](#_Toc420425141)

[FINDINGS IN DETAIL 7](#_Toc420425142)

[Youth relationship norms and mores 7](#_Toc420425143)

[Role of social media 9](#_Toc420425144)

[Formative influences: parents and schools 10](#_Toc420425145)

[Do or can schools help shape healthy relationships? 10](#_Toc420425146)

[A focus on (cyber) bullying blurs the narrative 10](#_Toc420425147)

[Parents are characterised by their passivity 11](#_Toc420425148)

[Young people in families where there is violence, gender inequality and disrespectful relationships 13](#_Toc420425149)

[Getting men to speak up 19](#_Toc420425155)

[A risk-based segmentation 20](#_Toc420425156)

[Helping young people draw the line 23](#_Toc420425157)

**Information and enquiries**

This research study was commissioned by Our Watch, to inform *The Line* campaign strategy. The views expressed are the authors’ and do not necessarily represent those of Our Watch.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In essence, the study has shown that the social mores that continue to define youth relationships, along with the significant influence of social media, pornography and porn-inspired popular culture, are poor preparation for young people learning to negotiate sexual relationships.

Parents rarely talk about healthy relationships, especially to boys, and many would lack the language to do so. Some schools enter this space, however other schools don’t go beyond a very inadequate reading of the biology of reproduction and risk of sexually transmitted disease. Where relationship programs have been instigated, generally positive results are reported (especially   
by girls).

This situation leaves even those young people who have access to healthy relationship models struggling to work out how they should conduct themselves. Young people coming from homes characterised by violent relationships or very unequal notions of gender are even more in need of positive interventions.

Rather than listing examples of ‘bad behaviour,’ (which young people believe is committed by both genders), the suggestion is to add a clear gendered message, that: *actions that make women feel frightened, intimidated or diminished are always wrong*.

The communications ‘voice’ will also be important. A review of previous campaigns on the topic indicates that communications messaging is mostly articulated by and directed to women. However, young men need to also hear male voices against violence and about promoting gender equality, to help make the topic relevant to them.

# KEY FINDINGS

Our Watch commissioned Hall and Partners Open Mind in 2014 to conduct research to inform *The Line* campaign’s approach from 2015. Researchers surveyed 3,000 people, including 2,000 12 to 24 year olds, conducted 49 focus groups and undertook depth interviews with young people and parents, and interviewed experts and stakeholders.

The research reveals that young people are struggling to work out what healthy, respectful relationships look like.

* 1 in 3 young people don’t think that exerting control over someone else is a form of violence.
* 1 in 4 young people don’t think it’s serious when guys insult or verbally harass girls in the street.
* 1 in 4 young people think it’s pretty normal for guys to pressure girls into sex.
* 15 per cent of young people think it’s ok for a guy to pressure a girl for sex if they’re both drunk.
* 1 in 4 young people don’t think it’s serious if a guy, who’s normally gentle, sometimes slaps his girlfriend when he’s drunk and they’re arguing.
* More than one quarter of young people think it’s important for men to be tough and strong.
* 16 per cent of young people think that women should know their place.

Gender stereotypes appear to be having a significant negative impact on young people’s expectations and behaviours when it comes to intimate relationships.

Parents aren’t talking to their children about the issues, it’s not being adequately covered in the education system, and community leaders are not addressing it.

As a result, young people are left in a vacuum and require information and guidance from parents and teachers.

In the absence of other sources of information, social media is playing a central role in young people’s relationships; actions are being played out publicly, and previously unacceptable behaviours offline become easier to do online. This is giving young people even less opportunity to learn to understand and negotiate respectful, healthy and equal relationships.

Young people are left to figure it all out for themselves from other sources: their friends, their ‘heroes’, the media’s portrayal of women, pornography, and porn-inspired popular culture.

Encouragingly, the research reveals that young people universally agree that behaviours that make a girl or woman feel frightened, diminished or intimidated ‘cross the line’ and are unacceptable.

However, the research shows there is a group of young men who are more likely to justify and potentially perpetrate violence against girls and women in the future.

# BACKGROUND

*The Line* is the nation’s long-term, evidence-based social marketing campaign.

*The Line* encourages healthy, equal and respectful relationships by challenging and changing attitudes and behaviours that support violence against women.

*The Line* is for young people aged 12 to 20, and supports parents, caregivers, teachers and other influencers, too.

The campaign:

* defines crossing the line behaviours
* supports the development of healthy, equal and respectful relationships
* challenges social norms around rigid gender roles, gender inequality, and sexism
* will redefine a ‘strong’ man as never hurting a woman
* encourages young people to break the cycle of violence.

The campaign had been running for five years. It was previously delivered by the Department of Social Services.

In 2014, the Australian Government funded Our Watch to deliver the campaign to   
30 June 2017.

*The Line* is an initiative under the Australian Government’s *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*.

Our Watch commissioned Hall and Partners Open Mind in 2014 to conduct research to inform the development of *The Line* campaign from 2015.

# METHODOLOGY

The overall aims of the research were to inform the development of the next phase of *The Line* campaign, addressing the imperative to break the cycle of violence that women and their children experience.

More specifically, the research addressed:

* current relationship norms and mores among young people
* attitudes to what constitutes healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviour
* the segmentation required to effectively shape channel and message selection to specific audiences to ensure strong engagement with each
* communication strategies and techniques that can be adapted to improve engagement with young people, especially young men.

A two-phased study was adopted, involving evaluative and developmental phases. The evaluation phase comprised a review of existing campaign documentation, expert interviews with the domestic violence and youth sectors, and an online bulletin board with those in their early 20s who had been part of the core campaign target audience when it first rolled out.

The review outlined a number of inter-related factors to be addressed as part of the subsequent developmental research study. These were areas where *The Line* campaign was thought to either not reflect the current understanding of best practice among

domestic violence stakeholders, or where youth and youth advocates reported that the campaign was less powerful than it could or should have been.

These questions informed the development of research instruments for the subsequent qualitative-quantitative research phase, which comprised the following methodologies.

Qualitative:

* N=16 peer groups with teens and young men and women.
* N=10 groups with parents and influencers.
* Culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous Australian fieldwork (n=16 groups and n=16 depth interviews).

Quantitative:

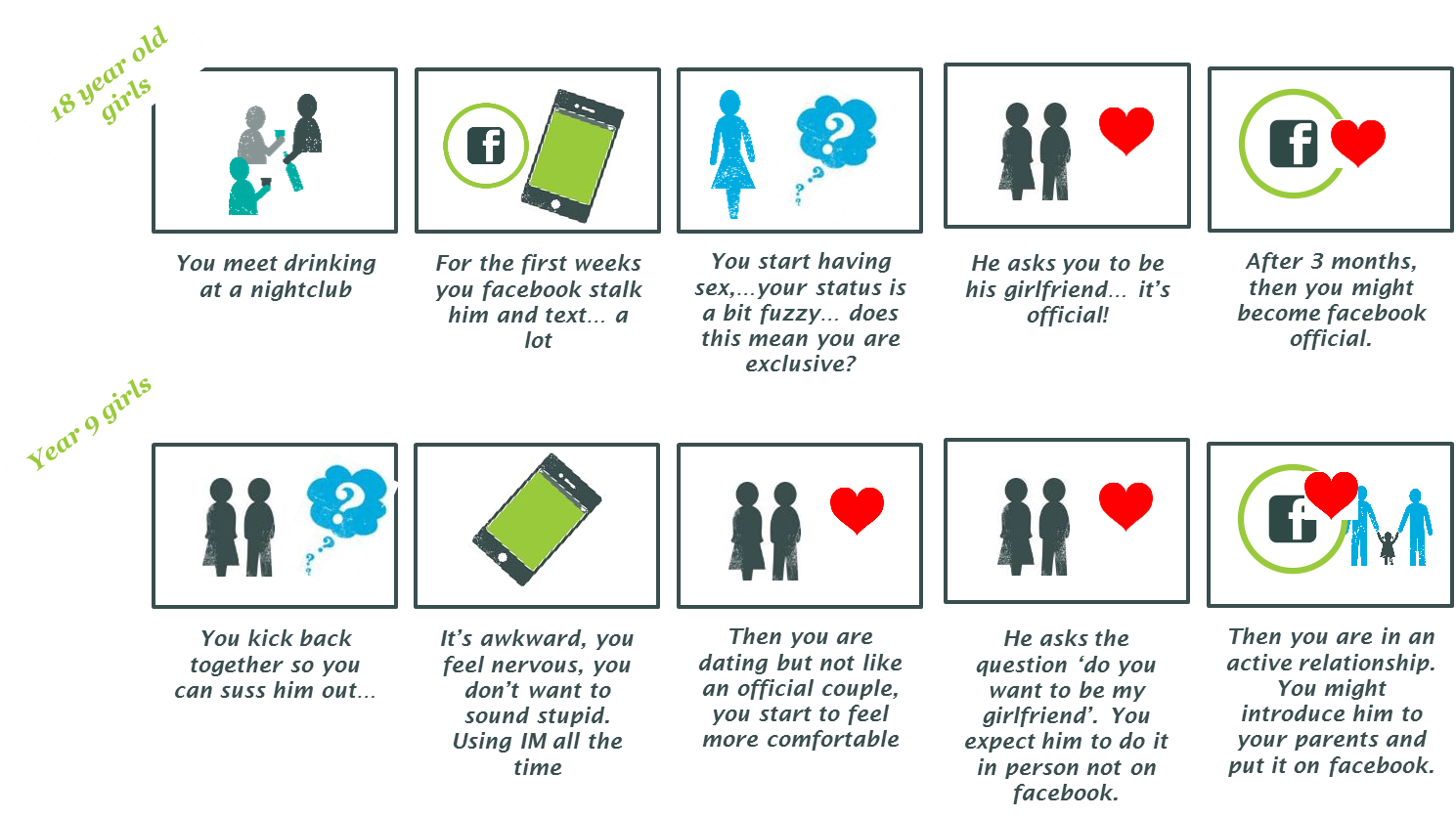
* N=3,000 online survey with teenagers, young adults and parents.

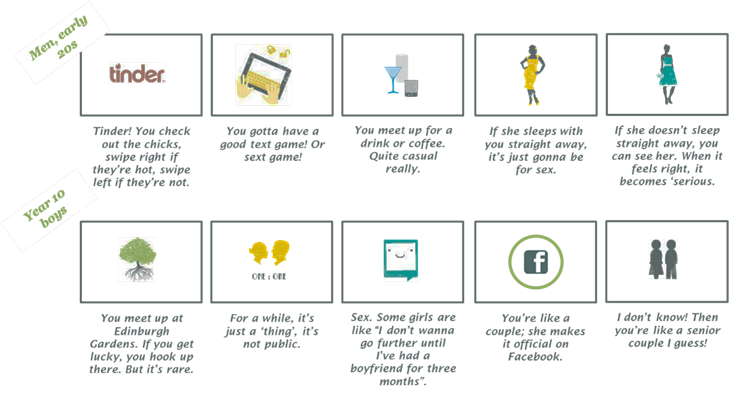
Fieldwork was conducted in April and May 2014.

# FINDINGS IN DETAIL

## Youth relationship norms and mores

As part of the qualitative peer group discussions, young people discussed their own relationships as well as what they considered to be typical relationships and relationship norms more generally. The following is drawn from an analysis of those discussions, with verbatim quotes included to illustrate findings. Group discussions kicked off with a storyboard exercise. In this exercise, teens and young people were asked to document what a typical relationship looks like. To set the scene, we’ve started off with some ‘modern romance ethnographics’ – examples of what they saw as ‘normal’ relationships…





Teenagers’ descriptions of their relationship patterns are highly revealing. Boys are understood to be driven by their desires and ‘always on’; girls are portrayed as having no desires of their own, but instead are charged with determining ‘how far he can go’. He shows his manhood by pushing; she shows her womanhood by gatekeeping. For girls, the fun part is often about the chase: the flirting and teasing that precedes any pairing off are acknowledged by both teens and young adults alike as the bit where women are in control. They direct the action, but covertly: a glance that might mean he should advance... though he won’t know if this will be met with encouragement or public humiliation.

However, as the forming of a relationship moves out of the public eye and focuses just on the two of them, her control over the situation diminishes. She has to worry about what to allow, and at what pace: responsibility for whether this is going to develop into a ‘good’ public relations story (a longer term relationship; love; a sign of her desirability) or a ‘bad public relations story’ (a one night stand; she a slut, he a stud). He, on the other hand, has nothing to lose. There is little to support the idea of healthy relationships based on mutual pleasure and respect.

Among some better educated young men and women in their late teens and early 20s, researchers did hear more acceptance of the idea that girls can take the initiative and experience desire (Beyonce’s latest album was enthusiastically cited as addressing the age old double standard). However, this remains the outside view and still an area of risk for girls.

The two key frames that emerge in this telling are as follows.

*“Coz you’d be a stud wouldn’t you if you were doing lots of women but a girl is a skank.” F, 15 years*

**Frame 1: ‘Sex’ vs ‘Romance’.** Boys and girls described their first relationships in distinctly contrasting terms. Whereas boys try to achieve and derive status from sexual activity, girls idealise romanticised behaviour and the status of being in a relationship. Looking back from the vantage point of young adulthood, the more mature could acknowledge that over time they had moved from prioritising ‘status symbols’ to real intimacy, based on shared values, experiences and strong mutual affection. However, younger respondents in the study tended to rely on narrower ideas in order to place a value on their relationships. While understandable, this more limited view does not appear to be helpful in the development of healthy relationships.

**Frame 2: Girls as gatekeepers.** Girls on the other hand are expected to be gatekeepers of sexual activity. The issue is that no matter what the context of sex, girls can be held responsible, feeding into sexual stereotypes and rape myths (a message internalised by girls as well as boys).

*“A girl should know how to stand up for herself, you can't say anyone forced you.” 14 year old girl*

## Role of social media

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Facebook | Still the social media outlet with the highest penetration (74.8% use among 12-24 year olds), Facebook is valued because it is the main way young people curate relationships. The permanency of social media means that ‘Facebook official’ can be more of a commitment than publically kissing or indeed, having sex. |
| Twitter | More about curating personal interests rather than relationships. Hashtags and memes are used but are universally positive (i.e. wouldn’t be used to call out bad behaviour but rather highlight what a user likes). |
| Instant Messaging | Instant messaging, whether on mobile or fixed devices is a way to continue face-to-face contact (for some on an almost continuous basis throughout the day and night). Importantly, this allows for private conversation, although the potential for misunderstanding is also acknowledged. |
| Tinder | While most were not using tinder (3.2% among 12-24 year olds), there were those (slightly older – 21-24) in the qualitative sample who saw it as a natural part of relationships. Acceptance depended on attitudes to (more) casual sex or sex outside relationships. |
| Snapchat | Snapchat (used by 29.5% quantitatively) was valued for its less permanent and more private context. |

The role of social media is now absolutely central to the whole relationship ‘game’ for young people. They tell us that the ‘flirting game’ has shifted to a significant degree to social media: from the first indications of being singled out, flirty talk, moving things on to more sexual flirting, and then the official declaration of a ‘relationship’ on Facebook to the drama of the ‘coupling’ and ‘break-up’ phases.

All phases from build-up, to (versions of) coupledom, to the eventual break-up are played out very publicly. This gives young people even less opportunity to learn to understand, negotiate and work through what is, at core, intensely personal.

There is also a sense that social media lowers the bar, and that previously unacceptable behaviours (in real life) become easier to do online. The potential is that this erodes, rather than promotes, good relationship norms.

## Formative influences: parents and schools

Parents and schools are relationship ‘influencers’, but their impact is variable and can be positive, negative, or a combination   
of both.

### Do or can schools help shape healthy relationships?

In the evaluative and developmental stages of the study, we spoke to teachers and counsellors as well as those specialising in relationship education for teenagers. When asked about pastoral care work that promotes healthy relationships, teachers talk about bullying/cyber bullying, sexting, resilience education and sex education. This means that the lens applied to romantic relationships is:

* biological (sexual education)
* legal (sexting)
* gender-neutral (resilience education, bullying).

Only educators who have received specialist training and who are supported by whole of school strategies are equipped to deal with the complicated human emotions and interactions involved in sex. It appears that this type of education is not being accessed by the majority of teens. When asked about the possibility of introducing relationship education into schools, most teachers were hesitant. They said that the ‘crowded curriculum’ means that such an insertion would need to be top-down, mandated by principals and the education bureaucracy.

In addition, most felt that, even with specialist training, they would have strong personal hesitations in dealing with such a difficult subject.

Noted too is that individual teachers can hold views that reinforce rather than disrupt rape myths and gender stereotypes. Overall, this indicates that insertion in the national curriculum and delivery by educators who have received specialist training and support is necessary in order to ensure they have the skills required.

### A focus on (cyber) bullying blurs the narrative

The focus of schools on cyber bullying education appears to be encouraging a narrative in which ‘girls are as bad or worse’ than boys when it comes to behaving badly in interpersonal relationships. While in the context of online bullying this is possibly true, the idea that girls are ‘as bad’ was also being expressed in the context of violence in relationships, where it is manifestly not the case.

This analysis suggests that one of the key considerations is to clearly articulate that relationship violence is about controlling, abusive behaviours that make someone feel threatened, intimidated or diminished, and these are largely done by men against women.

### Parents are characterised by their passivity

Encouragingly, parents themselves appear to take a more mature view on a number of relationship issues, indicating the role that development plays in forming ‘healthy’ ideas about relationships. For instance, they were more likely than young people to consider situations involving harassment as serious, and significantly more likely to reject ideas of male control and dominance.

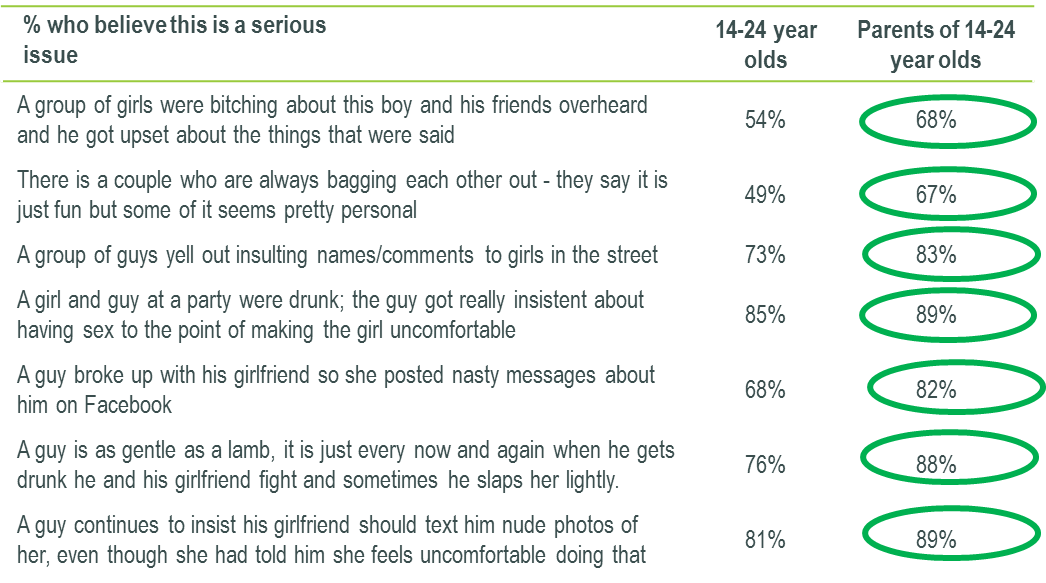
However, parents do not appear to be actively engaging with their children on the topic. This appears to be partly an issue of low salience. For instance, when asked as part of the quantitative study to rank a series of topics according to whether or not they pose a problem for people their children’s age, parents ranked unemployment, use of drugs and alcohol, violence outside the home and cyber bullying much more highly than issues relating to harassment, violence, sex and relationships.

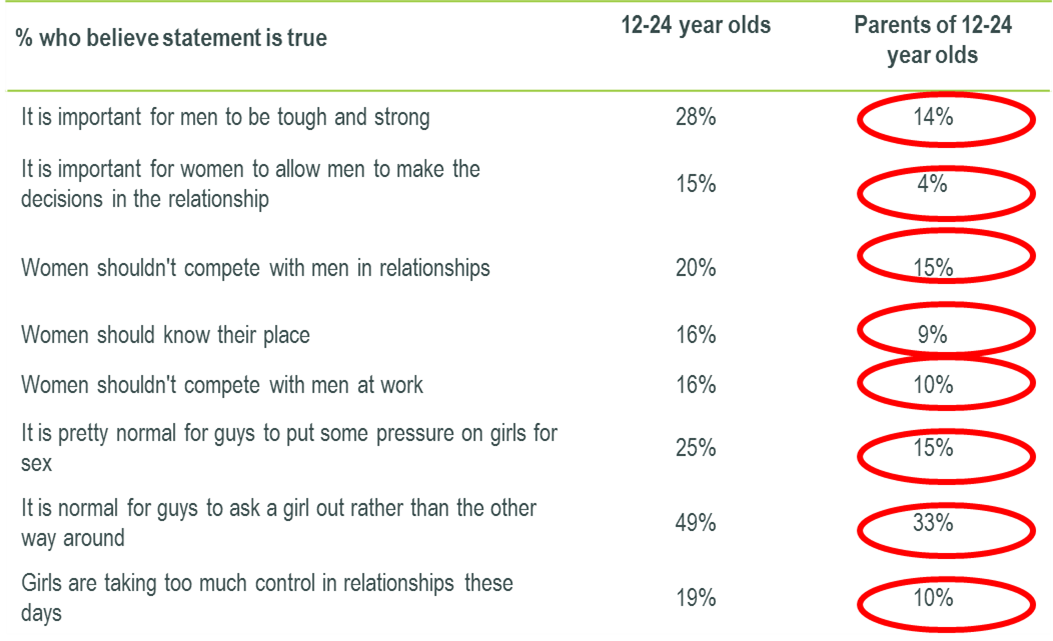
Lack of engagement also appears to be a matter of technique (parents say they instinctively ‘show’ rather than ‘discuss how’ to have good relationships) and capacity (parents say they would find it difficult to discuss the topic).

When the views of parents were also gauged as part of the qualitative study, they talked a great deal about the influence of the relationships young people saw around them. Both male and female parents identified that children model their parents’ behaviour, including to do with healthy relationships and respecting one another. It makes sense, then, that their default setting is teaching children through demonstrating their own ability to have healthy and respectful relationships.

Some parents used examples of relationship violence raised in the media to start a conversation with their teens, for instance when sports stars were found to have abused women or a woman was murdered by her partner. TV ads about sexual violence were also a prompt to open these conversations by some. However, this was not a general trend and many of the parents we spoke to acknowledge they hadn’t really talked about what it is to have a healthy relationship beyond cautioning girls and warning them of the dangers of boys… Conversations with sons about how they should behave seemed even more uncommon.

Having said this, many parents would welcome encouragement, guidance and tools with which to encourage healthy relationship behaviours among their children (including to do with porn and social media).





### Young people in families where there is violence, gender inequality and disrespectful relationships

*“He’d say to my (older) sister ‘get me a drink’ when he was sitting right near the fridge, and she was just scared of him. He pulled her hair… Not me. I’d pull his hair first” (F, Year 12)*

Young people from families where violence and controlling/abusive behaviours are already occurring, and more particularly girls, talked about the unhealthy relationships around them, including in particular their parents and older siblings.

*Case study 1: Ali is in his mid-forties, a father of two. He gets angry a lot, at his wife of 20 years (whom he claims still doesn’t understand him), and at his kids (he admits to smashing their iPad). He says that as a man, he is (or at least should be) the unquestioned ruler of his household. This, combined with a lack of negotiation skills, means that he is frustrated and unhappy with his home life. This can boil over if his perceives his wife to be making him feel inadequate, and he can rapidly become angry, uncontrollable and occasionally violent. Ali has had the police visit him several times for disturbances in his home.*

Those from families where support for gender inequality and unequal relationships is justified on cultural grounds were particularly vocal in supporting the beliefs of their fathers and other community influencers. They appear to conflate belonging and acceptance in their community, and by their fathers, with accepting the masculine culture and ways of thinking about relationships between men and women.

*Case study 2: Mo is a 16 year old young man. He believes that if his sister was caught dating, he and his brothers would “get together and sort it out” they’d “bash him”, and then they’d probably “bash her”. He knows he gets angry, but doesn’t seem to think there’s anything essentially wrong with hitting a woman, in fact, he sees it as quite normal: “If I was feeling stress and I came home and my woman [wasn’t helpful] I’d crack it and bash her”.*

*Case study 3: Dave is in his mid-forties, and has three daughters in their early teens. He talks about a rough childhood because his father beat his mother. He left home at 16 and struggled with negotiating his own life. Around 25 he realised that the violence he was used to was not normal in other families and became determined not to let it happen to his family – he has made conscious steps to move away from the lessons of his upbringing and has honest, forthright conversations with his daughters about relationships to ensure they do not end up in poor ones.*

But some parents who had experienced unhealthy and abusive relationships themselves could be very conscious of the risk this posed to their children and expressed considerable concern about the impact of these relationships on their children. In fact, several declared that they had eventually left these relationships *because* of the influence on their children.

The desire to be ‘different/better’ than their parents is also a strong motivator for young people, and could well point to an intervention strategy for those coming from households in which there is violence, or acceptance of violence, against women.

**What this means is that even teens from respectful and equitable homes are left to ‘work it out for themselves’, battling the strong influence of the social norms maintaining firmly gendered stereotypes about women as gatekeepers and men as slaves to their sex drive and hence** **absolved of responsibility (with increasingly available pornography and porn-inspired imagery reinforcing these myths).**

**Those from homes or families that support unequal gender roles are even worse off:**

**young people are exposed to a destructive performance of masculinity and gender relationships, which they risk coming to see as ‘normal’. The challenge is as much to redefine masculinity—what it is to be a ‘strong man’ (and a sexually successful one)—as it is good relationship behaviour.**

## What it means to ‘cross the line’

### Describing healthy and unhealthy relationships

For young people able to articulate a mature definition of relationships, two words define one that’s functioning well: trust and communication. *Trust* was considered crucial: interpreted as feeling that regardless of what you do or say, the other person will stand by you and support you. *Communication* in a healthy relationship was describedas the ability to talk to someone about a variety of topics, including emotions, without feeling awkward.

“It’s where you see them a lot, (but you always) have something to talk about. You feel comfortable around that person. If you have a shit day then talk 5 minutes with her then you’re the happiest bloke on earth.” (M, 15 years)

The definition of an unhealthy relationship is volunteered as one in which these things are absent: there is fighting, arguing and a lack of trust; they don’t care or notice each other; and neither is happy or feeling good about themselves. And above all, there is cheating.

“If I found out she was cheating on me I’d bitch slap her around the house.” (M, 15 years)

What is rarely mentioned in these discussions about healthy and unhealthy relationships is *equality*: love, caring/protection, and trust… but not equality. And without the notion of equality in a healthy relationship, then love is about acceptance, caring/protection is confused with controlling, and trust becomes ownership (through a focus on cheating).

Some of the beliefs that have wide currency and that frame acceptance of unhealthy behaviour in relationships include:

* Girls are as bad (or worse) than boys.
* Girls are passive aggressive – where boys are just aggressive.
* Girls are manipulative, sneaky, two-faced.
* Controlling behaviour in boys is about being protective and caring.

*“My boyfriend gets fired up when other men look at me. It’s not like it’s my fault so it isn’t fair. But I want him to be jealous. If he didn’t care it means he doesn’t love me” (F, 20 years)*

* Controlling behaviour in girls shows they care/love.
* Women are defenceless and need to be protected.
* Women suffer for love (including abuse).

*“My sister put up with the abuse because she loved him” (F, 15 years)*

* Girls are emotional... they get upset easily and often, so it doesn’t mean anything.
* ‘Boys will be boys’: girls can’t always expect boys to be well behaved.
* ‘Bad boys’ can be fixed by the right woman.
* A relationship is a form of ownership that assumes some control.

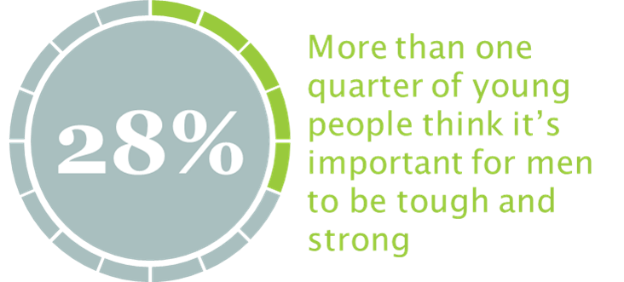
In the end, the narratives that describe healthy and unhealthy relationships (in terms of love, trust and communication) appear to be insufficient and unable to protect people from abusive relationships. A key reason is that they are trumped by a number of more powerful narratives, including in particular, that a woman in love will suffer for her man; that to show caring is to be jealous and controlling; and that men are not responsible for their actions/are not themselves when they act out in anger, and so deserve to be excused.

**This analysis suggests that not only do young people need to understand the way healthy relationships operate, but the fundamental notion of gender equality has to be put at the heart of the way we understand and form relationships.**

### Being a man and being a woman in a relationship

Related to this are the difficulties young people have working out how to be successful as a man and as a woman, in a sexual relationship.

For many men, and especially those holding unhealthy attitudes towards women, this was framed in terms of being a strong *protector*, a concept that allowed a wide range of behaviours and attitudes that cross the line.



Young men who were engaging in behaviours that clearly crossed the line were often genuinely shocked to learn that these attitudes and behaviours were not deemed acceptable by their peers. This included controlling behaviour, to do with social contact or mobile phone use, as well as violence. As discussed earlier, relationships among those under 20 take place on social media, and it seems that much of the activity, the posturing and histrionics are as much about engendering a response from the broader social group as they are about the partner.

“*I know so many guys who will bag you out in front of their friends, even if you’re standing there, but then when you’re alone with them they go all sweet and nice.” (F, 15 years)*

*“You wouldn’t post something like that’s a bit sexist on Facebook but yeah when you’re with the boys like you’d joke about that stuff.” (M, 14 years)*

This does present opportunities to better empower other young people, and especially boys, to speak up. What is required is a major reframing of the role of men in intimate relationships and, indeed, the whole notion of manhood: from protector, with its very obvious link to control and power, to someone who is in control of himself—*don’t be the guy who makes women feel frightened, intimidated or diminished; be the guy who is strong enough to talk about problems respectfully, or else walk away.*

The qualitative study specifically recruited boys who are struggling and inclined to get into trouble. These groups confirmed that these young men are not calm, measured and rational people: they flare up quickly and recognise that they find it hard to keep their anger in check. On the one hand they agree that violence is bad but, significantly, are inclined to find excuses. If they do the wrong thing, it tends to be excused because they aren’t responsible, someone or something ‘made them do it’. They feel other people are ‘doing things’ to them: cheating on them, disrespecting them etcetera.

These young men appear to be on a trajectory towards relationship violence, and represent a significant risk. They appear to be difficult to engage with, have limited impulse control and low self-esteem, and tend to be followers rather than leaders. They admit themselves that what sets them off is the idea that someone else is making them look bad. They are, at core, a group of young men who crave respect from their peers, especially their male peers. And this would seem to be the communications opportunity: to ensure they know that their peers have no respect for men who make women frightened but do respect a guy who recognises his anger and learns to control himself and walk away.

### Defining where to draw the line

The core focus of *The Line* campaign to date has been equipping young people to make good decisions with respect to behaviour that ‘crosses the line’. A primary aim of this study was to further unpack what young people see as crossing the line to understand if new or different interventions are required.

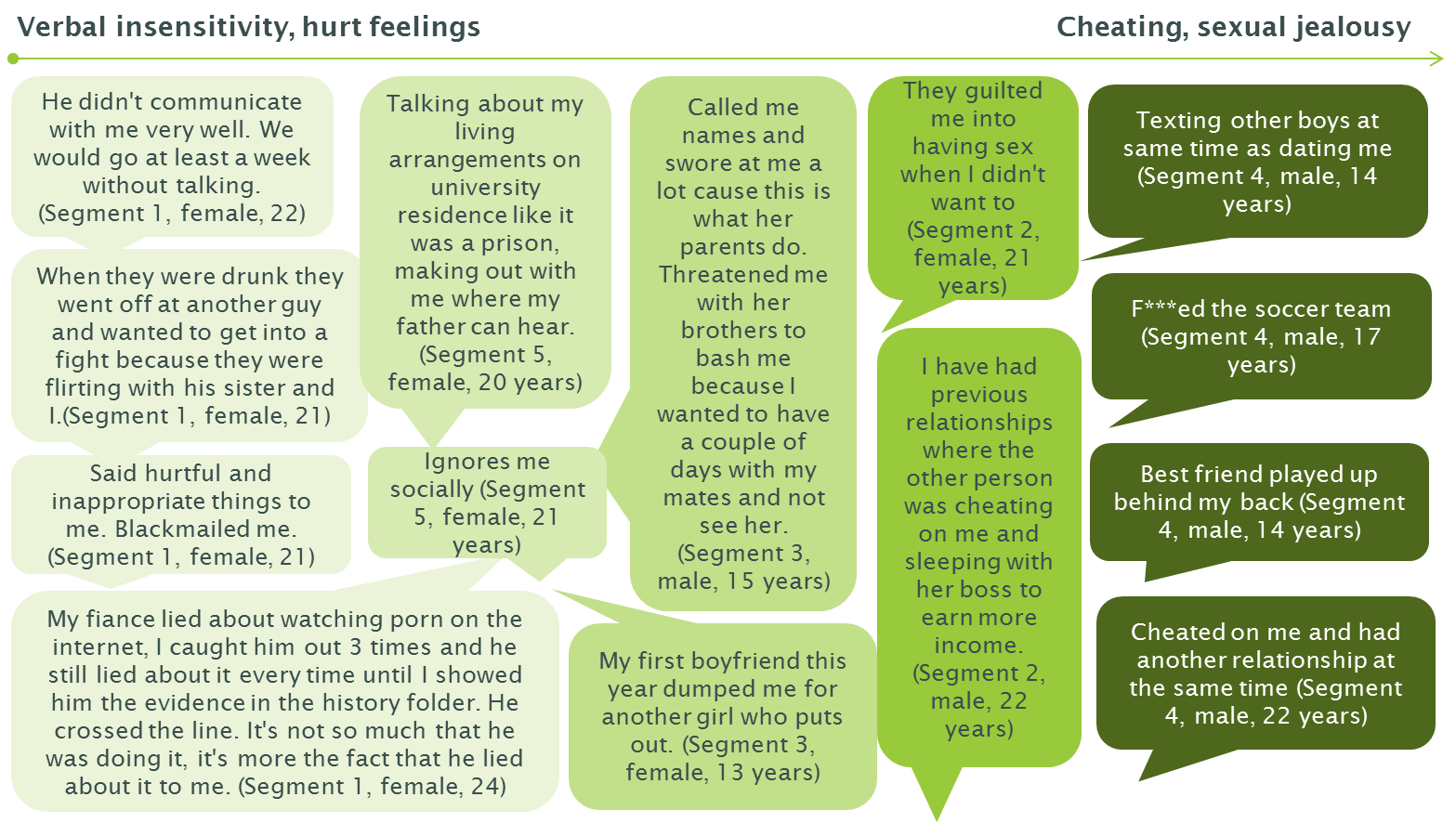
As outlined previously, most young people easily articulate what a good relationship is. Trust, mutual respect, open communication… *not cheating*.

However, the only consistent definition or point of commonality across the sample on what constitutes bad relationship behaviour was illegal: rape and serious physical assault. While some adults admitted to the latter, young people in our sample recruited as being ‘on the trajectory’ rather than as perpetrators of violence were uniform in rejecting both. More generally, people disassociated themselves from illegal behaviours: *doesn’t happen to/by people I know*.

Anything between the two extremes is open to debate and negotiation. For some, wearing too short a skirt or ‘hooking up’ via tinder is crossing the line. For others, highly controlling and aggressive behaviour, short of physical assault, is not. Most behaviour can be justified and, as many insisted, is just as likely to be perpetrated by women (to illustrate, both men and women can shout at each other). The statistics overleaf have been chosen to demonstrate the highly subjective nature of ‘the line’.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 15% It's okay for a guy to pressure a girl for sex if they are both drunk | 1 in 3 young people disagree that 'exerting control over someone else is a form of violence' | |
| A quarter don't think it's a big issue when guys harass girls in the street | | 1 in 4 young people don't think it's serious if a guy, who's normally gentle, sometimes slaps his girlfriend when he's drunk |
| As further evidence, respondents in the survey were asked to nominate if and how they had crossed the line, or how others had crossed the line with them. The verbatims below and overleaf illustrate the range of ideas on what crossing the line means. | |  |





## Getting men to speak up

In listening to teens, young adults, parents and teachers talking about these issues, it is striking how much of the messaging seems to be predominantly voiced by and directed to, *women*. The consequence of this is three-fold:

* Firstly, that relationship/domestic violence is presented to the community predominantly as a woman’s problem, and therefore their responsibility to solve.
* Secondly, this absolves boys and men of responsibility. No-one is telling them that, actually, they are the problem and have to change.
* And thirdly, the lack of authoritative male voices in this space within the media actually diminishes the authority and legitimacy of many of the arguments.

At the time of the fieldwork, a woman was murdered by her estranged partner and the media was dominated by women’s voices from the sector talking about the high incidence of women being killed by their male partners. Across the discussion groups with adults (parents and teachers,) we heard a lot of negative responses: *‘women are just as bad’, ‘we only hear about the women who are abused but not the cases of women as perpetrator*…’

We hypothesise that the lack of male voices in this domain is contributing to a counter-narrative about the ‘equally bad behaviour of women’, and this is from men and women. More than this, however, is the risk that having the debate dominated by women allows men and boys to tune out.

Currently, there is little in this debate that speaks to young men (or indeed older ones) or attempts to challenge them to reconsider their ideas and their behaviour; and especially about how to reframe notions of masculinity in a way that they can identify with and aspire to.

Similarly, there was strong resistance to the ‘facts’ we presented about the high incidence of relationship violence, the number of deaths etc. On the one hand this shocked people, but it also prompted strong counter argument: *‘yes but women are just as bad…’* Women and (even more so) young girls tend to find a focus on the extent to which men harm women *irritating*: they don’t want to think of themselves as the victims of men, and are in fact more likely to be aspiring to a strong, sassy image of womanhood. Moreover, the vast majority do not identify with the victims behind the stats. Even if they have known abusive relationships themselves, they don’t really want to be just another ‘victim’ statistic.

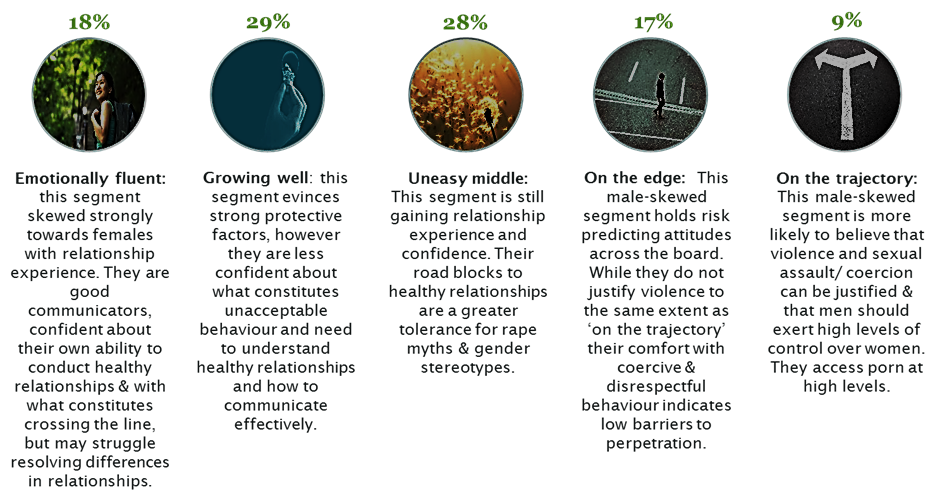
**The more voices across the community who join in to this conversation, the more impactful. For young boys in particular, hearing men they look up to, who convey the sort of masculinity they aspire to, helps them reframe their thinking, including breaking free of some of the gender stereotypes they conflate with their individual or community identity.**

## A risk-based segmentation

A range of analyses undertaken on the data revealed five underlying segments among young people across the quantitative sample.

These are described here and in the table overleaf.

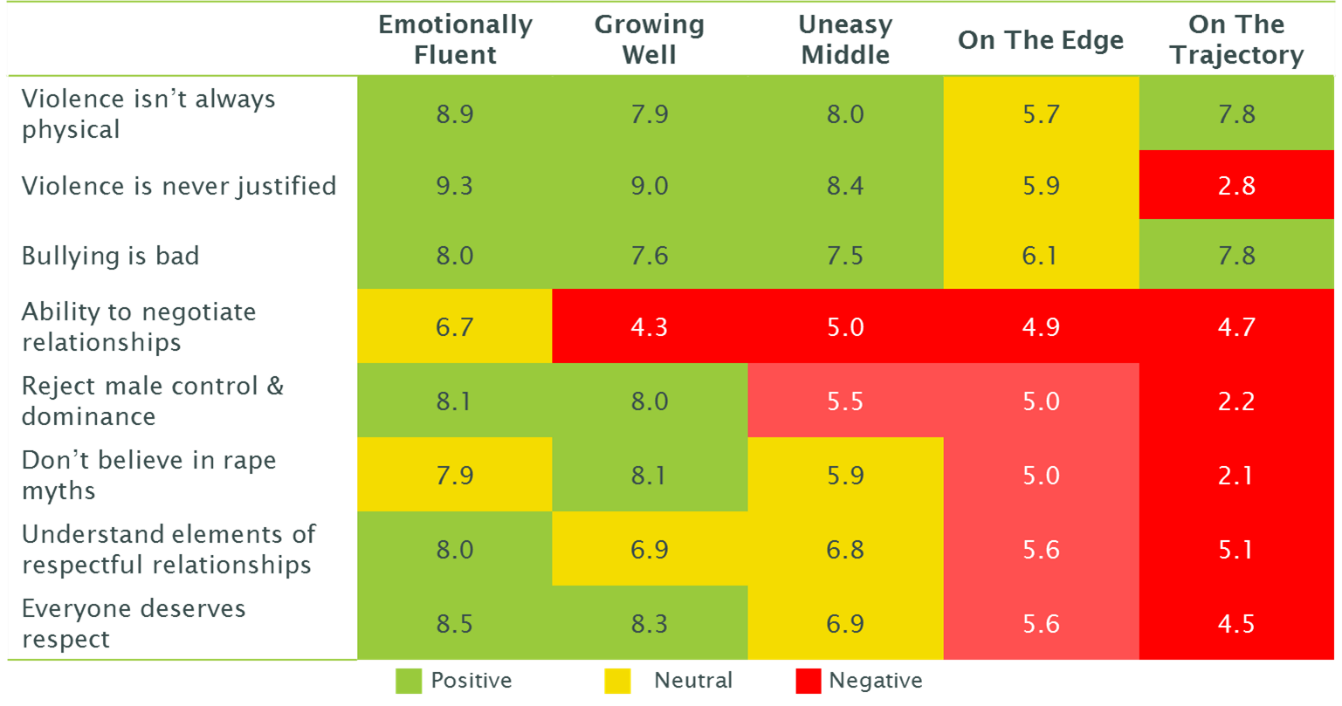
* Segment 1, ‘Emotionally fluent’ (18%) are good communicators and confident that they know what constitutes a healthy relationship.
* Segment 2, ‘Growing well’ (29%) are skewed younger. They have positive attitudes and beliefs that are likely to help them develop healthy relationships, but lack experience and confidence with respect to negotiating healthy relationships.
* Segment 3, ‘Uneasy middle’ (28%) are, like Segment 2, still learning how to conduct relationships, but their greater tolerance for rape myths and gender stereotypical attitudes puts them at greater risk of perpetrating abuse.
* Segment 4, ‘On the edge (17%), appear to be most comfortable with coercive and disrespectful behaviour, putting them at a higher risk of developing unhealthy relationships.
* Segment 5, ‘On the trajectory’ (9%) appears to be on a trajectory that, without intervention, could lead them to perpetuate abusive relationships. They condone violence and sexual coercion, and have very negative attitudes towards women. They access porn at a much higher rate than the rest of the sample (24% of this segment reported accessing sexually explicit videos or images at least once a day, compared to 3% of ‘Emotionally fluent’).

**Risk-based segmentation of   
young people**

The ‘Emotionally fluent’ segment displays confidence and healthy, positive attitudes, while those in the ‘On the edge’ and ‘On the trajectory’ segments were more likely to support rape myths, male dominance and a

range of other negative attitudes. Surprisingly, they are aware bullying is bad, and violence isn’t always physical. The following table outlines a range of attitudes held by the segments.

**Segment attitudes**

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Paradoxically, despite reporting a range of negative behaviours, experiences and attitudes, ‘On the trajectory’ feel more confident about where to draw the line—and clearly where they draw the line will be different from where the ‘Emotionally fluent’ do. When asked ‘to what extent do you feel you know where to draw the line between what’s acceptable and what is not in a relationship?’, ‘On the trajectory’ had a mean answer of 8.5 of (a positive score) compared with 9.25 of ‘Emotionally fluent’.

To illustrate, a number of scenarios were put to young people as part of the quantitative study to help understand what they saw as acceptable and unacceptable behavior. There were marked differences in response between the segments.

*Scenario 1: You’re out at a house party having a few drinks with friends. A girl has been flirting all night with one of your mates and it’s clear to everyone that she wants to be with him. Towards the end of the night, everyone’s pretty drunk, they go to a private space and it gets pretty heavy. She mumbles that she’s just too drunk to take it further tonight but he’s really keen*

‘Emotionally fluent’ condemns coercive sexual behavior, while ‘On the edge’ and ‘On the trajectory’ segments are less likely to call out bad behavior.

The following verbatims typify the segments’ responses as the quotes at right demonstrate.

He will most likely pressure her to the point that she gives in, ‘On the edge’

Hopefully he respects her decision and doesn't take this any further, ‘Emotionally fluent’

He gets his way, and has sex with her, regardless of her saying no, ‘On the trajectory’

*Scenario 2: A girl you really like dumps you after cheating on you. A few weeks later you notice that you still have naked pictures of her that she sent you on your phone—what do you do with them?*

When asked what they would do with nude photos of an ex-partner, only 36% of male ‘On the trajectory’ members said they would delete them rather than keeping them or sharing them with friends or more broadly online or on social media. In contrast, 88% of ‘Emotionally fluent’ members said they would delete the photos.

*Scenario 3: A guy you know sends you a naked picture of himself— it makes you feel uncomfortable. What do you do next?*

When asked what they would do with a photo that made them feel uncomfortable, only 39% of female ‘On the trajectory’ members said they would delete it rather than keeping them or sharing them with friends or more broadly online or on social media, or even sending a nude photo back.

*Scenario 4: You’re suspicious about your boyfriend—although you can’t be sure, you think he might be cheating. It’s driving you crazy. Which of the following do you think you would do?*

When asked how they would respond to suspicions of a partner cheating, 23% of female members of ‘On the trajectory’ said they would check his mobile phone, and 23% his Facebook account. A further 8% would follow him to work. 46% they would talk to him about the issue.

Interestingly, ‘On the trajectory’ were more likely to be both perpetrators and victims of violence and bullying, indicating that they may have come to see negative behaviours as normal.

## Helping young people draw the line

The study has outlined the need for a multi-phased, integrated campaign that includes a strong focus on schools, including primary schools. Key audiences are identified in terms of their developmental stage and their risk of entering unhealthy relationships, rather than their sexual experience. Thus:

* Primary school-aged children exposed to respectful relationship programs.
* A strong focus on years 7 and 8 with sex-education intertwined with content that is about relationships (and is capable of standing up to the messaging many children are getting from porn).
* A program for years 9 and 10 that is more clearly focused on behavioural change among at-risk young people.
* The segments suggest different communications and intervention strategies. The line needs to be clearly drawn for all the segments—*any behaviour which makes women feel frightened, intimidated or diminished crosses the line*—but the desired behaviour change is different. We want the more emotionally mature young people to promote peer support for positive relationships, while those ‘On the edge’ and ‘On the trajectory’ need help to deal with their anger and the normalisation of unequal and violent behaviours that they may have learnt from their families or broader communities.
* A campaign targeted at parents to encourage them to consider (through their own behaviour) and engage with young people about relationships.