

How emotional and economic abuse go hand-in-hand

November 20 2017, by Jozica Kutin, Mike Reid And Roslyn Russell



Financial control is a form of abuse and includes controlling access to household money, such as not having access to bank accounts. Credit: Stephanie Flack/AAP

People who have been in an abusive relationship often don't realise it until they've left it, so looking at the data on past relationships is the best way of getting a picture of how bad it can be. We find that emotional and economic abuse in relationships [are often intertwined](#). People who insult and shame their partners will often also try to control their income and assets.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics [Personal Safety Survey](#) found in 2016, 23% of women, and 15.9% of men [experienced emotional abuse](#) by a current or previous partner. In [the 2012 survey](#), this was 24.5% of women and 14.4% of men.

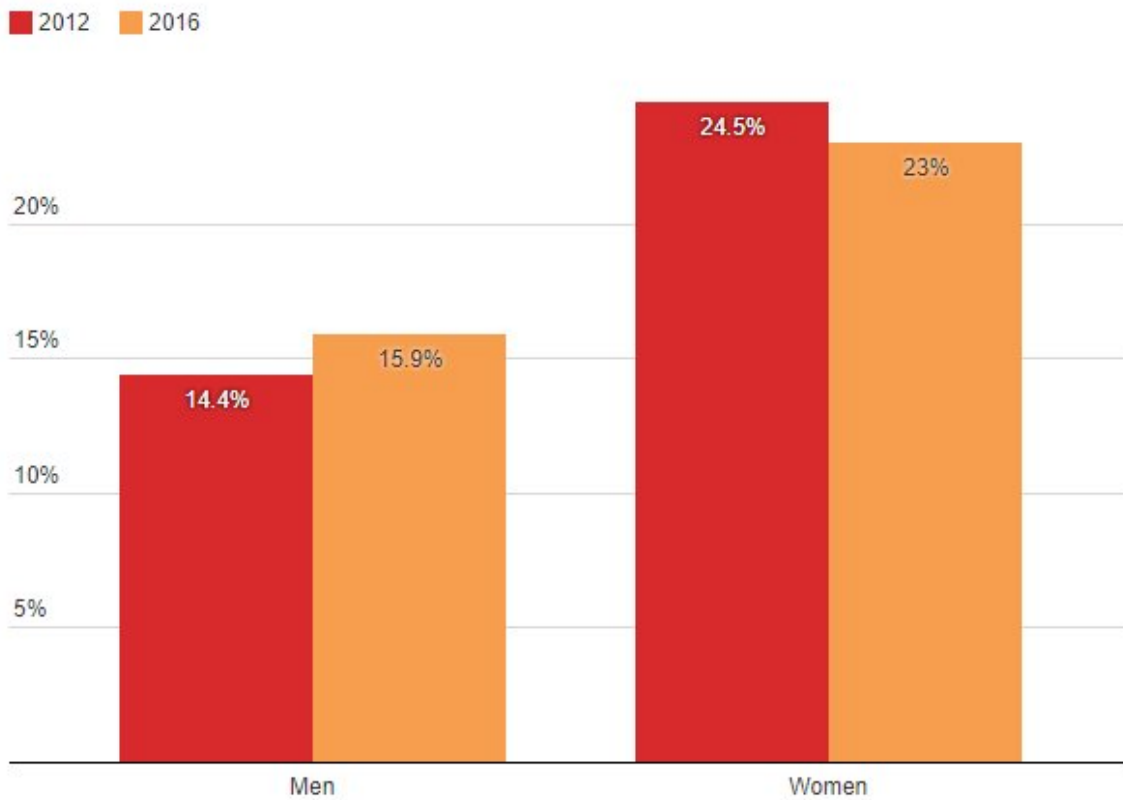
It is not entirely clear as to why slightly more men are reporting emotional abuse in the 2016 survey. There has certainly been more awareness raising around the issue of emotional abuse and a recognition that it can affect both genders: this is reflected [in national websites](#) that offer gender-inclusive support and information.

The [survey](#) shows some of the most visible forms of emotional abuse with 63% of women and 46% of men reported experiencing intimidating shouting, yelling and verbal abuse.

We see too that economic abuse is very common among those who report emotional abuse—38% of women and 22% of men also reported that their partner tried to [control](#) their access to, knowledge about or making decisions about household money.

But of women who experienced emotional abuse, financial control is in the top five most frequently occurring forms. Financial control includes controlling access to household money, such as not having access to bank accounts and being given an "allowance"; controlling decision-making and information about financial decisions.

Prevalence of emotional abuse for men and women, 2012 and 2016



Source: [Personal Safety Survey](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

For men, financial control ranks ninth, superseded by other forms of emotional abuse such as lies to family, friends and children with the intent of turning them against them. The profile of most frequent forms of emotional abuse appear to be different for men and [women](#).

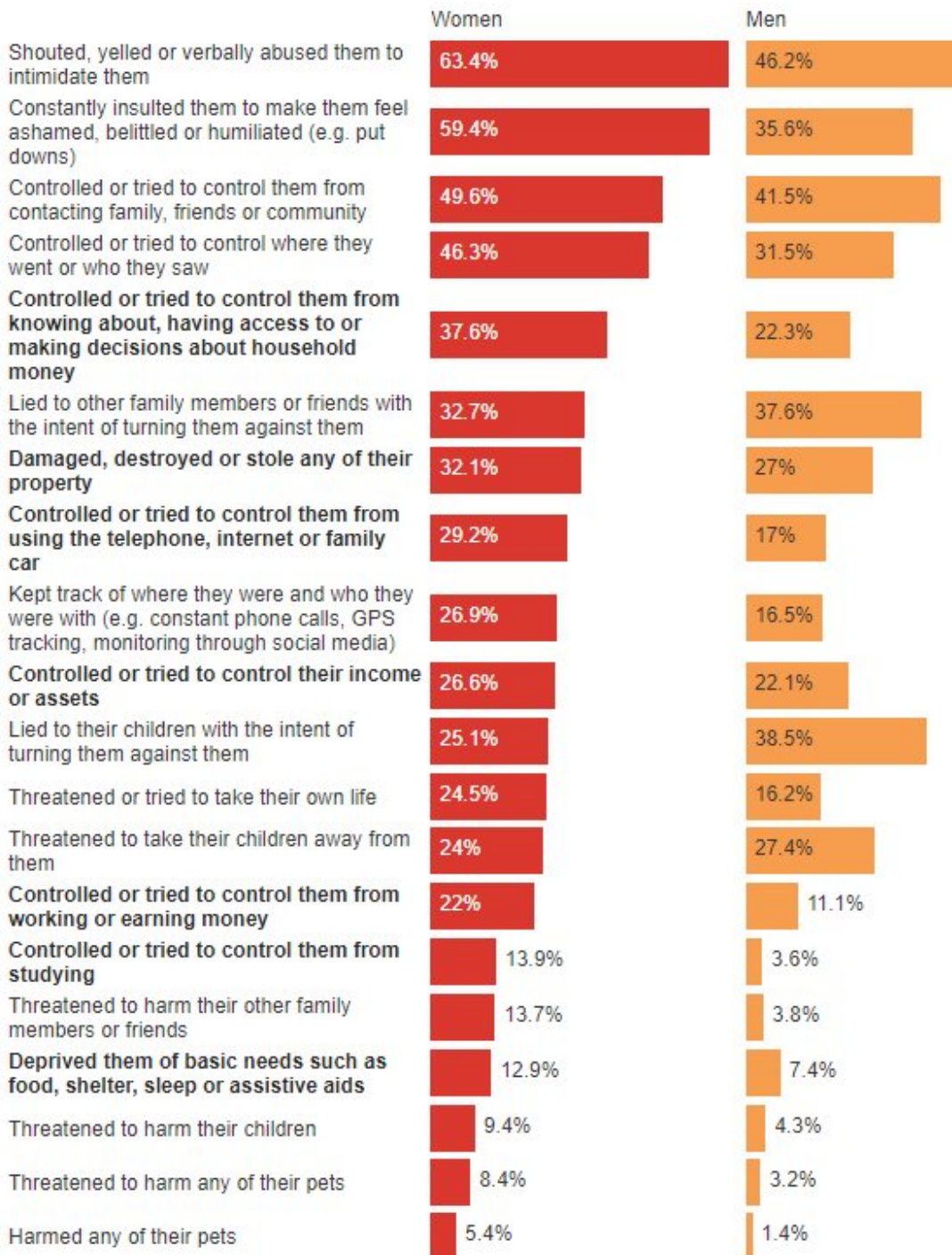
These tactics, along with other emotional abuse tactics, aim to control and maintain power over the other. Emotional abuse depletes someone's

psychological resolve and resilience, while financial abuse depletes their financial independence and confidence. All types aim to increase dependence.

While the 2012 Personal Safety Survey data examines abuse with current or previous partners, the 2016 data is only for previous partners. At the population level in 2016, the most common indicators of economic abuse in previous relationships was controlling access to household money. In 2012, damaging property was the most common form in current or previous relationships.

Men and women who have experienced abuse in a previous relationship

Emotional abuse and economic abuse (in bold)



Source: [Personal Safety Survey](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

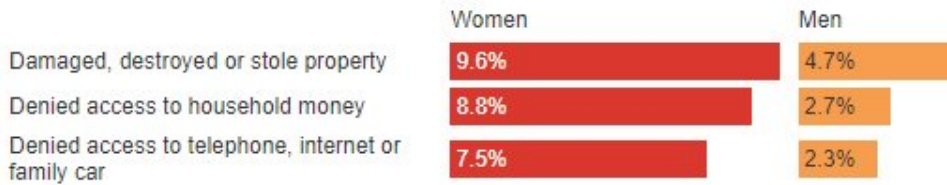
Economic abuse is a serious and devastating component of [intimate partner violence](#). It's a significant component of emotional abuse. It can also continue well after the [relationship](#) has ended.

[Our previous research](#) has also established that economic abuse goes hand in hand with emotional abuse. There is community awareness and acceptance that all forms of partner physical and sexual violence are unacceptable. However, emotional and economic abuse are lesser known forms of [partner](#) violence, with many shades of grey.

While the Personal Safety Survey is our only source of population based data, its current structure underestimates the prevalence of abuse because economic [abuse](#) is not asked about separately from the [emotional abuse](#).

Changes between 2012 and 2016 in types of abuse

2012



2016



Source: Kufin et al. (2017) Table 1; PSS 2016 Tables 27.1 and 28.1 • Created with Datawrapper

This article was originally published on [The Conversation](#). Read the [original article](#).

Provided by The Conversation

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