

Violence Against Women

Volume | 418



Edited by Justin Healey

ISSUES
IN SOCIETY

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INTRODUCTION

Violence Against Women is Volume 418 in the 'Issues in Society' series of educational resource books. The aim of this series is to offer current, diverse information about important issues in our world, from an Australian perspective.

KEY ISSUES IN THIS TOPIC

Violence against women is now being recognised as a serious, widespread problem, with enormous social costs and individual and community impacts. In Australia, one in three women over the age of 15 years have experienced physical assault; over half of all women have experienced at least one incident of physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime.

Men's violence affects women across all sectors of society and includes sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse. A wide range of attitudes and beliefs continue to excuse, justify, minimise and hide physical and sexual violence against women. As a society, we need to address these misconceptions and entrenched gender inequality to effectively respond to violence against women and their children, and ultimately to prevent it.

This title details the various forms of violence used against women, and presents the latest research findings on prevalence and attitudes. The book also focuses on understanding and countering sexual assault and harassment, and explores the latest approaches to dealing with gender-based violence. Although violence against women is a confronting social problem, it is ultimately preventable.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Titles in the 'Issues in Society' series are individual resource books which provide an overview on a specific subject comprised of facts and opinions.

The information in this resource book is not from any single author, publication or organisation. The unique value of the 'Issues in Society' series lies in its diversity of content and perspectives.

The content comes from a wide variety of sources and includes:

- Newspaper reports and opinion pieces
- Website fact sheets
- Magazine and journal articles
- Statistics and surveys
- Government reports
- Literature from special interest groups

CRITICAL EVALUATION

As the information reproduced in this book is from a number of different sources, readers should always be aware of the origin of the text and whether or not the source is likely to be expressing a particular bias or agenda.

It is hoped that, as you read about the many aspects of the issues explored in this book, you will critically evaluate the information presented. In some cases, it is important that you decide whether you are being presented with facts or opinions. Does the writer give a biased or an unbiased report? If an opinion is being expressed, do you agree with the writer?

EXPLORING ISSUES

The 'Exploring issues' section at the back of this book features a range of ready-to-use worksheets relating to the articles and issues raised in this book. The activities and exercises in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond.

FURTHER RESEARCH

This title offers a useful starting point for those who need convenient access to information about the issues involved. However, it is only a starting point. The 'Web links' section at the back of this book contains a list of useful websites which you can access for more reading on the topic.

WHAT IS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

*There are a number of misconceptions surrounding violence against women, including how and why it occurs. We need to address these misconceptions to be successful in our responses to violence against women and their children, according to this fact sheet from the **Department of Social Services***

Violence against women does not mean only physical violence. It is much broader and includes sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse. The National Plan targets two main types of violence against women – domestic and family violence, and sexual assault.

On an international level, the *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* provides the following definition:

“The term violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”

The laws in each Australian state and territory have their own definitions. While there is no single definition,

the central elements of domestic violence include:

- Acts of violence that occur between people who have, or have had, an intimate relationship
- An ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling a partner through fear, for example by using behaviour which is violent and threatening. In most cases, the violent behaviour is part of a range of tactics to exercise power and control over women and their children, and can be both criminal and non-criminal, and
- The threatening or violent behaviour can comprise of physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse.

Violence against women does not mean only physical violence. It is much broader and includes sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse.





Attitudes that condone or tolerate violence are recognised as playing a central role in shaping the way individuals, organisations and communities respond to violence.

Physical violence can include slaps, shoves, hits, punches, pushes, being thrown down stairs or across the room, kicking, twisting of arms, choking, and being burnt or stabbed.

Psychological and emotional abuse can include a range of controlling behaviours such as control of finances, isolation from family and friends, continual humiliation, threats against children or being threatened with injury or death.

Financial or economic abuse includes forcibly controlling another person's money or other assets. It can also involve stealing cash, not allowing a victim to take part in any financial decisions or preventing a victim from having a job.

Family violence is a broader term that refers to violence between family members, as well as violence between intimate partners. It involves the same sorts of behaviours as described for domestic violence. As with domestic violence, the National Plan recognises that although only some aspects of family violence are criminal offences, any behaviour that causes the victim to live in fear is unacceptable. The term 'family violence' is the most widely used term to identify the experiences of indigenous people, because it includes the broad range of marital and kinship relationships in which violence may occur.

Sexual assault or sexual violence can include rape, sexual assault with implements, being forced to watch or engage in pornography, enforced prostitution, and being made to have sex with friends of the perpetrator.

Research has demonstrated that violence against women often involves a continuum of violence from psychological, economic and emotional abuse through to physical and sexual violence.

What are the causes?

Many of the misconceptions surrounding violence against women centre on its causes.

There are a number of myths that exist, such as:

- Men can't control their anger or sexual urges
- Alcohol causes men to be violent
- Women could leave violent partners if they wanted to, and
- Men experience equal, if not greater, levels of violence perpetrated by their partners or former partners.

The Line has done some valuable work in busting myths surrounding violence against women (*see pages 12-13 of this book*).

Research has shown that the significant drivers of violence against women include:

- The unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women, and
- An adherence to rigidly defined gender roles and identities i.e., what it means to be masculine and feminine.

Attitudes that condone or tolerate violence are recognised as playing a central role in shaping the way individuals, organisations and communities respond to violence. VicHealth has summarised five key categories of violence supportive attitudes that arise from research.

These include attitudes that:

- Justify violence against women, based on the notion that it is legitimate for a man to use violence against a woman
- Excuse violence by attributing it to external factors (such as stress) or proposing that men cannot be held fully responsible for violent behaviour (for example, because of anger or sexual urges)
- Trivialise the impact of violence, based on the view that the impacts of violence are not serious or are not sufficiently serious to warrant action by women themselves, the community or public agencies
- Minimise violence by denying its seriousness, denying that it occurs or denying that certain behaviours are indeed violence at all, and
- Shift blame for the violence from the perpetrator to the victim or hold women at least partially responsible for their victimisation or for preventing victimisation.

VicHealth has a number of useful publications and research that discuss current attitudes around violence against women.

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Department of Social Services (2016). *What is violence against women?* Retrieved from <http://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au> on 9 August 2016.

from their friends, checking in on them excessively with repeated calls, texts and emails or telling them who they can and can't hang out with is not real love. Jealousy is never an excuse for violent behaviour. There are no excuses for violent behaviour.

Physical violence

Physical violence is usually only one part of a perpetrator's long-term pattern of violent behaviour.

Physical violence can take many forms, but can include:

- Slapping, hitting, punching, kicking
- Pulling hair
- Twisting arms
- Restraining someone
- Throwing objects at a person.

Emotional or psychological violence

Emotional and psychological violence can be hugely damaging, even though the outward signs may not be obvious. Psychological violence can make the victim feel frightened, lose their self-esteem and stand in the way of them seeking help.

Psychological violence can include:

- Belittling or humiliating someone in public or private.
- Name-calling and attacking their character or personality.
- Minimising their achievements, devaluing their opinion, or taking credit for their success, for example by saying things like "you'd be nothing without me" "what you think doesn't matter" or "you only got that job because of me."
- Making threats to publish nude photos or share intimate details with other people.
- Making threats to hurt loved ones and precious belongings.
- Stalking and harassing.
- Shaming.

Sexual violence

Sexual violence can occur in intimate partner and family contexts, in workplaces, in schools, and in many other circumstances.

Sexual violence can include:

- Sexual harassment e.g. verbal street harassment, catcalling,

staring, following someone, making unwanted/repeated requests for sex.

- Sexualised bullying e.g. sending unwanted pornographic images to threaten or intimidate someone, threatening to share nude photos, making threats to rape.
- Unwanted kissing and sexual touching.
- Sexual pressure and coercion e.g. making threats to break up if someone doesn't participate in sex, playing mind games to trick someone into unwanted sexual acts.
- Sexual assault, including rape.

Online abuse and revenge porn

What online abuse can look like:

- Revenge porn – someone with a grudge, like an ex-partner, posts nude or semi-nude videos or photos of a person online to get back at them. Sometimes, current partners will threaten to do this to prevent them from breaking up.
- Creepshots – taking creepy photos of someone (e.g. when they're bending over or in a change-room) and posting the images without permission.
- Doxing – someone collecting and releasing personal information about another person online, such as their real name and location, so others can victimise them in real life.
- Cyber or e-stalking – any kind of online stalking or harassment, including making false accusations or slander, identity theft, threats, solicitation for sex, or gathering private information.
- Malicious impersonation – impersonating others online and posting comments or photos, trying to ruin their reputation (e.g. inserting their face into an image of a porn star or a victim of violence).
- Rape videos and photographs – posting and sharing videos and photos of (real or simulated) rape scenes to intimidate and shock. Sometimes used as revenge porn.
- Pretending to be someone they're not to enter relationships with people they meet online.

Source: Catherine Buni, C & Chemaly, S (2014), 'The Unsafer Net: How Social Media Turned Against Women', *The Atlantic*.

Rape myths and victim blaming

Rape myths are false beliefs and attitudes that minimise, excuse or justify sexual violence. Victim blaming places responsibility for sexual violence on the victim rather than the perpetrator. After hearing about a sexual assault some people might ask, "Why was the victim walking alone at night?" instead of questioning the behaviour of the perpetrator. This is unfair and unacceptable.

Here are some examples of rape myths and victim blaming and why they're not true:

"It's normal to call someone a slut or a skank." This is known as slut shaming and it's crossing the line. No one deserves to be criticised for their sexual activity and no one deserves to be raped.

"People shouldn't claim to have been sexually assaulted if they were drunk, affected by drugs or leading people on." This is victim blaming. The only person to blame for sexual assault is the perpetrator.

"If someone is wearing sexy or revealing clothing they were kind of asking for it." It doesn't matter what you wear, your clothing is not an excuse for sexual violence.

"Some people say no when they really mean yes because they don't want to be seen to be easy." This is totally untrue. When someone says no, it's definitely a no.

When we say someone should have better protected themselves, instead of suggesting the perpetrator shouldn't have committed the offence, we can make victims of sexual assault believe that it's their fault they were raped. This is a huge obstacle to victims seeking help or telling someone what happened.

Reinforcing rape myths and victim blaming contributes to a society that minimises, excuses and even condones violence against women.

Our Watch. *Types of violence*. Retrieved from www.theline.org.au on 8 August 2016.

Understanding violence: facts and figures

KEY STATISTICS, FACTS AND DEFINITIONS COURTESY OF OUR WATCH

Violence against women is now recognised to be a serious and widespread problem in Australia, with enormous individual and community impacts and social costs. However this significant social problem is also ultimately *preventable*.

But to prevent violence against women we first need to understand it. Get informed with these key statistics, facts and definitions.

Key facts

The following basic statistics help demonstrate the prevalence and severity of violence against women:

- On average, at least one woman a week is killed by a partner or former partner in Australia.¹
- One in three Australian women has experienced physical violence, since the age of 15.²
- One in five Australian women has experienced sexual violence.²
- One in four Australian women has experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner.²
- One in four Australian women has experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner.³
- Women are at least three times more likely than men to experience violence from an intimate partner.⁴
- Women are five times more likely than men to require medical attention or hospitalisation as a result of intimate partner violence, and five times more likely to report fearing for their lives.⁵
- Of those women who experience violence, more than half have children in their care.⁶
- Violence against women is not limited to the home or intimate relationships. Every year in Australia, over 300,000 women experience violence – often sexual violence – from someone other than a partner.⁷
- Eight out of ten women aged 18 to 24 were harassed on the street in the past year.⁸
- Young women (18-24 years) experience significantly higher rates of physical and sexual violence than women in older age groups.⁹
- There is growing evidence that women with disabilities are more likely to experience violence.¹⁰
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience both far higher rates and more severe forms of violence compared to other women.¹¹

What do we mean by violence against women?

Put simply, and using an internationally recognised definition, violence against women is any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life.¹²



Violence against women is now recognised to be a serious and widespread problem in Australia, with enormous individual and community impacts and social costs. However this significant social problem is also ultimately preventable.

As this definition makes clear, violence against women is not only or always physical. It includes psychological, economic, emotional and sexual violence and abuse, and a wide range of controlling, coercive and intimidating behaviours.

In Australia, violence against women is called many different things, including domestic violence, family violence, intimate partner violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault.

Here are some definitions of different kinds of violence, which demonstrate the different forms that violence against women can take:

Domestic violence

Domestic violence – refers to acts of violence that occur in domestic settings between two people who are, or were, in an intimate relationship. It includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse.

Emotional/psychological violence

Emotional/psychological violence – can include a range of controlling behaviours such as control of finances, isolation from family and friends, continual humiliation, threats against children or being threatened with injury or death.

Family violence

Family violence – is a broader term than domestic violence, as it refers not only to violence between intimate partners but also to violence between family members. This includes, for example, elder abuse and adolescent violence against parents. Family violence includes violent or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour that coerces or controls a family member or causes that family member to be fearful. In indigenous communities, family violence is often the preferred term as it encapsulates the broader issue of violence within extended families, kinship networks and community relationships, as well as intergenerational issues.

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence – violence that is specifically “directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately”.

Intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence – any behaviour by a man or a woman within an intimate relationship (including current or past marriages, domestic partnerships, familial relations, or people who share accommodation) that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to

In Australia, violence against women is called many different things, including domestic violence, family violence, intimate partner violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault.



those in the relationship. This is the most common form of violence against women.

Non-partner sexual assault

Non-partner sexual assault – sexual violence perpetrated by people such as strangers, acquaintances, friends, colleagues, peers, teachers, neighbours and family members.

These definitions are taken from *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*. You can find the full glossary of terms on page 61–62 of the framework.

The impact of violence against women

Violence against women and their children takes a profound and long-term toll on women and children’s health and wellbeing, on families and communities, and on society as a whole.

Intimate partner violence contributes to more death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44 than any other preventable risk factor.¹³

Domestic or family violence against women is the single largest driver of homelessness for women,¹⁴ a common factor in child protection notifications,¹⁵ and results in a police call-out on average once every two minutes across the country.¹⁶

The combined health, administration and social welfare costs of violence against women have been estimated to be \$21.7 billion a year, with projections suggesting that if no further action is taken to prevent violence against women, costs will accumulate to \$323.4 billion over a thirty year period from 2014–15 to 2044–45.¹⁷

Children and young people are also affected by violence against women. Exposure to violence against their mothers or other caregivers causes profound harm to children, with potential impacts on attitudes to relationships and violence, as well as behavioural, cognitive and emotional functioning, social development, and – through a process of ‘negative chain effects’ – education and later employment prospects.¹⁸

Above all, violence against women is a fundamental violation of human rights, and one that Australia has an obligation to prevent under international law.¹⁹

What about violence against men?

All violence is wrong, regardless of the sex of the victim or perpetrator. But there are distinct gendered patterns in the perpetration and impact of violence.

For example, both women and men are more likely to experience violence at the hands of men, with around 95% of all victims of violence in Australia reporting a male perpetrator.²⁰

While men are more likely to experience violence by other men in public places, women are more likely to experience violence from men they know, often in the home.²¹

The overwhelming majority of acts of domestic violence and sexual assault are perpetrated by men

against women, and this violence is likely to have more severe impacts on female than male victims.²²

Recognising the gendered patterns of violence doesn't negate the experiences of male victims. But it does point to the need for an approach that looks honestly at what the research is telling us, and addresses the gendered dynamics of violence – this is what Our Watch seeks to do.

Our specific mandate is to prevent violence against women and their children, but promoting gender equality and respectful and non-violent relationships benefits the whole community, including men.

Violence against women key statistics

The National Community Attitudes Survey (NCAS) 2013 key findings

NCAS, conducted by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), is a unique Australia-wide study designed to track how the population view issues related to violence against women.

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8. Johnson, M. and Bennett, E. (2015). *Everyday sexism: Australian women's experiences of street harassment*, The Australia Institute, Canberra.
9. ABS (2013) see note 4. In the *2012 Personal Safety Survey*, 13% of women in this age group reported having experienced violence by a man in the last 12 months. This was the highest proportion of any age group.
10. Cox, P. (2015), see note 2; and Woodlock, D., Healey, L., Howe, K., McGuire, M., Geddes, V. and Granek, S. (2014), see note 2.
11. For example, indigenous women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence related assaults than non-indigenous people. Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (2014).
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19. The elimination of violence against women is also a specific target of the new *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*, to which Australia is committed: United Nations (2015). *Sustainable Development Goals*.
20. ABS (2013), see note 4.
21. Ibid.
22. Around 95% of all victims of violence (both male and female) reported experiencing acts of violence – physical or sexual assault, or threats – from a male perpetrator. ABS, (2013), see note 4. Survey extrapolated to population figures on the basis of 3.8% of all women surveyed reporting having experienced physical or sexual violence from a non-partner in the past 12 months (and approximately 9 million women over the age of 18 in Australia).



Our Watch. *Understanding violence: facts and figures*. Retrieved from www.ourwatch.org.au on 3 August 2016.

Fact file: domestic violence in Australia

ABC Fact Check has scrutinised the available data on domestic violence and talked to experts to present this guide to what the data does, and does not, show

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced at a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting on April 1 that federal, state and territory leaders will unite to tackle domestic violence at a national summit in October 2016. The announcement followed the release of a report by the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence.

ABC Fact Check has received many requests to check claims made about domestic violence in Australia. Researching this area, Fact Check encountered challenges in obtaining and interpreting the statistics on domestic violence, including a scarcity of national data on reported domestic violence, its prevalence and particularly its impact on victims. These shortcomings were also identified in a 2015 Senate Committee report into domestic violence in Australia and the COAG report identified a lack of data on child victims in particular.

The Victorian Royal Commission said the greatest problem limiting the data on family violence was the widespread under-reporting, as well as failure to identify the issue and gaps in recorded data on particular groups.

Fact Check has scrutinised the available data on domestic violence and talked to experts to present this guide to what the data does, and does not, show.

The debate

Former Australian of the year Rosie Batty said in her valedictory speech in January that family violence was an “epidemic”.

Former Labor leader Mark Latham has been critical of Ms Batty’s characterisation and claimed in a podcast in January that surveys showed women were safer than ever before and unacceptable incidents of domestic assault were no worse than they were 20 or 30 years ago.

Ms Batty has also spoken of the “gendered” nature of domestic violence and told the Victorian Parliament in November last year that the statistics showed it was clearly an issue affecting women.

Social Services Minister Christian Porter echoed this view when he said that domestic violence was a problem “almost overwhelmingly, almost exclusively” perpetrated by men against women and girls on an ABC Q&A program devoted to domestic violence last year.

He was responding to a question about data cited by groups such as “One in Three”, who raise awareness of male victims of family violence.

“Contrary to common beliefs, up to one in three victims of sexual assault and at least one in three victims of family violence and abuse is male (perhaps as many as one in two),” the website states.

These claims can be distilled down to two key questions – what are the proportions of male and female victims relative to each other, and how are rates of domestic violence changing over time?

Defining domestic violence

The Australian Bureau of Statistics notes that there is no single agreed definition of domestic violence.

- The key questions are:
- Does domestic violence affect only the two people in an intimate relationship who live together, should it be extended to partners who don’t live together, and to all victims of domestic violence, including children and family members?
 - Is physical violence the only type of domestic violence or are there other types, for example psychological abuse?

Heather Nancarrow, CEO of Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety

(ANROWS) told Fact Check that when the movement to prevent domestic violence began in the 1970s, the term was synonymous with men’s violence against their intimate female partners and these victims are still the focus of many domestic violence services.

She said that in some states, for example Queensland, the legislation governing domestic violence protection orders originally only recognised domestic violence between intimate partners.

The legislation in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, the ACT, the NT and South Australia now defines domestic violence as occurring between intimate partners, relatives, family members, carers and children and in most cases an intimate relationship can exist between two people who don’t live together (i.e. people in a dating relationship).

In Tasmania, family violence is only considered in the context of a spouse or partner relationship.

The terms “domestic violence”, “family violence”, “domestic and family violence” and “domestic abuse” are used across the different jurisdictions. The types of behaviour included in different jurisdictions is broadly consistent, according to Ms Nancarrow.

The Commonwealth *Family Law Act 1975* defines “family violence” as “violent, threatening or other behaviour by a person that coerces or controls a member of the person’s family, or causes the family member to be fearful”.

As well as assault, this behaviour also includes withholding financial support and preventing contact with friends and family.

Stalking behaviours are regarded as domestic violence in some but not all jurisdictions.

The Victorian royal commission found solid support for these broad definitions of the relationships

covered by family violence, but noted that “many in the community still do not recognise emotional abuse and economic abuse as family violence”.

Fact Check has based this analysis on the broad definition of domestic violence to include all violent, threatening or controlling behaviour that affects intimate partners who may or may not be living together, and other family members and carers.

How many men and women affected?

Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) is the independent organisation jointly funded by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to research evidence to reduce domestic violence against women and children.

Their *Violence Against Women in Australia* report notes that one in four women have experienced at least one incident of violence by an intimate partner they may or may not have been living with.

The “One in Three” campaign is a group of diverse advocates who raise awareness of male victims of domestic violence, though no funding source is stated on their website. They say that one in three victims of family violence are male.

Both organisations sourced their claim to the ABS’s *Personal Safety Survey* (PSS), which was last conducted in 2012 and is the only consistent national survey on domestic violence victims.

Around 17,000 people aged 18 and over were asked, in private, about their experience of violence since the age of 15.

It shows that one in 11 people (1,927,900) have been subject to violence by a partner since the age of 15 – the breakdown is one in six women (1,479,900) and one in 20 men (448,000).

That means that of the total victims of partner violence since the age of 15, 23 per cent were men and 77 per cent were women.

Using the broad definition of domestic violence relationships (see above), for both male and female victims of domestic violence, the most common perpetrators were partners, and boyfriends or girlfriends.

However, the ABS cautions that where people have experienced violence from more than one perpetrator, they are counted separately for each perpetrator, but only counted once in the totals, so the groups cannot be added together.

However, ANROWS says the definition of intimate partner violence should include past and present cohabiting partners, boyfriends, girlfriends and dates and have conducted a more detailed analysis using additional ABS data.

This analysis shows that one in four Australian women experienced at least one incident of violence from an intimate partner (2,194,200, 25.1 per cent) since the age of 15.

The One in Three website claims that one in three victims of family violence are male and cites as the source a number of

statistics, including several from the ABS survey.

These include the finding that a third of people who experienced domestic violence from a current partner in the last 12 months were men (33,100) and two thirds were women (66,200), though the ABS notes that the number for men has a large statistical error and should be used with caution.

For the victims of violence perpetrated by a current partner since the age of 15, one in three (119,600) were men and two in three, (237,100) were women. Other statistics are published by law enforcement and crime agencies.

Homicide statistics from the Australian Institute of Criminology show 75 per cent of victims of intimate partner homicide were female. NSW police statistics for 2014-15 showed that 69 per cent of domestic violence assault victims were female.

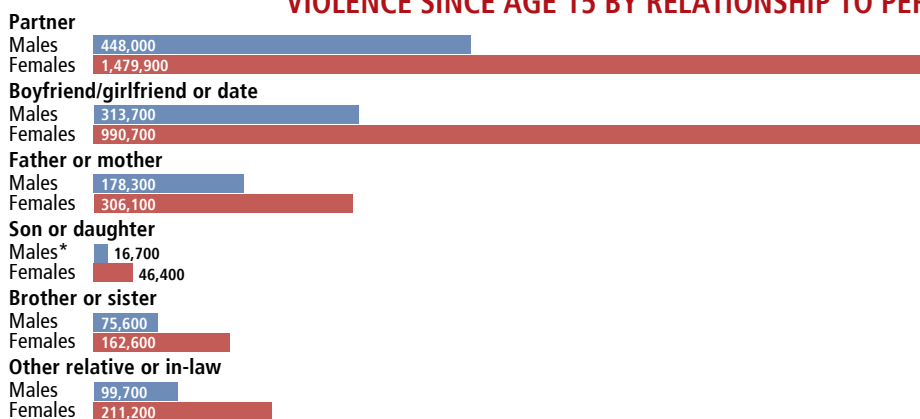
The Victorian Royal Commission reported that in Victoria, three quarters of victims in family violence incidents attended by police were female and 77 per cent of perpetrators recorded by police were male.

It noted that while males were more likely to be victims of violence generally, this was most likely to occur at the hands of men outside the family home.

“By contrast, violence against women is more likely to be perpetrated by an intimate partner,” it said.

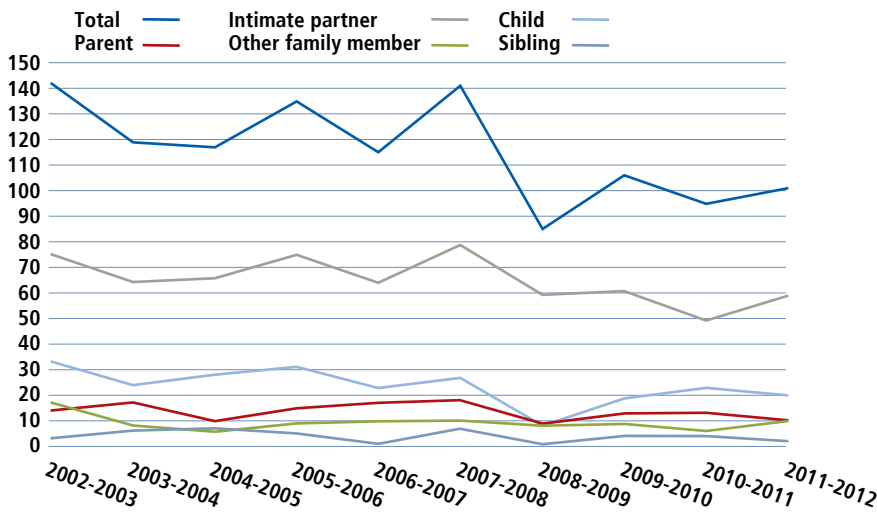
In terms of family violence, “female victims are more likely to be a current or former partner of the perpetrator, while men are

PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SINCE AGE 15 BY RELATIONSHIP TO PERPETRATOR



* The ABS says the figure is statistically unreliable.
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDES BY PERPETRATOR IN AUSTRALIA



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC).

more likely to experience violence in different familial relationships – for example, as a son or a sibling.”

What the experts say

The PSS can identify whether victims have experienced any threat of violence since the age of 15, but not whether they have been subject to multiple threats and/or assaults over time, though there is some data on the frequency of violence from current partners.

Cathy Humphries from the Department of Social Work at the University of Melbourne told Fact Check that the main shortcoming of the PSS was that it measured victims, not incidents, of domestic violence.

The data on current partner violence shows that 65 per cent of men and women experienced more than one incident of violence. She said that only by looking at the number of incidents could the severity of domestic violence be determined.

“All these men could be reporting this but it could easily be a one-off,” she said.

Survey responses to questions about physical assault ranged from pushing and shoving through to being stabbed, shot or beaten but the survey aggregates all acts or threats of violence, so it could not establish the severity of domestic violence experienced by respondents.

Deborah Walsh, family violence lecturer at the University of Queensland told Fact Check that the ABS survey was also not able to detect

patterns of “coercive control” that can be perpetrated by men against female partners.

“When his power and control or authority is challenged, that’s when the violent incident will erupt,” she said.

“This particular man may not be violent every week, it might only be once a year.”

She said when these men reassert their authority, women adjust their behaviour to accommodate them, and that will not show up in surveys as violence.

Ms Nancarrow said that PSS participants were asked about emotional abuse but the responses depended on the interviewees’ interpretation.

“If they feel abused because someone yelled at them, called them names, that could be coercive control, or it might not be,” she said.

Ms Nancarrow said that some groups, particularly indigenous, disabled and those from non-English speaking backgrounds, were under-represented in the PSS.

“We can’t guarantee that there isn’t a higher rate of violence because they didn’t pick up particular groups of women,” she said.

With regard to police statistics, Ms Walsh said they were affected by the difficulty of identifying the perpetrator in domestic violence incidents where partners were reporting violence towards each other.

“In some of the domestic violence reporting to police, they will report mutual combat,” she said, “so there’s a move in mutual combat situations for police to be trained to identify the primary aggressor.”

Are the rates changing?

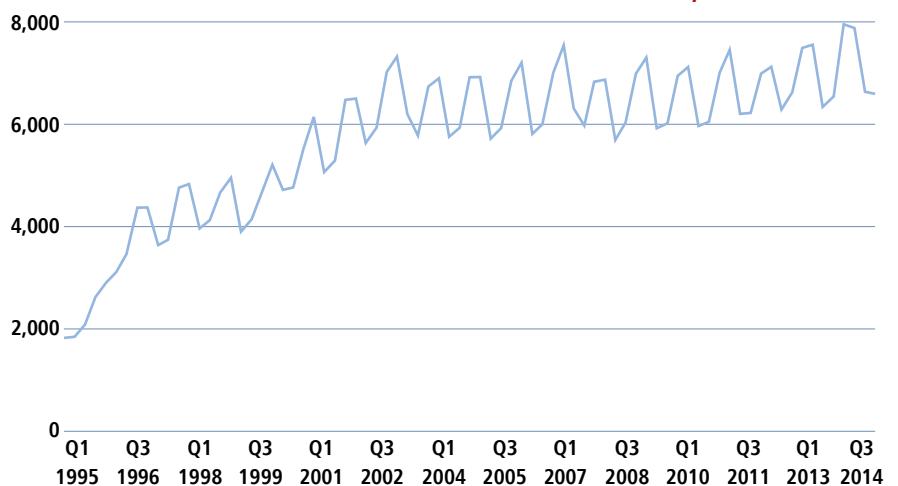
The ABS survey has only been conducted twice and does not provide detailed information on how domestic violence rates are changing over time.

The ABS recorded crime victims data collects information from states and territories on crimes committed but data from Tasmania is not included and the use of the domestic violence flag varies widely between the jurisdictions.

Australian Institute of Criminology’s homicide data, and crime data from NSW and Victoria police, show how domestic violence rates have changed in the last two decades.

Domestic and family homicides

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE-RELATED ASSAULTS IN NSW, 1995-2014



Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOSCAR).

declined between 2002 and 2012. However, data on police reports of domestic violence shows the opposite trend.

Domestic assault in NSW has risen from a rate of 257 per 100,000 people in 1995, reaching a high of 400 incidents per 100,000 people in 2014 (28,980 incidents). This represents a 2 per cent increase in the five years up to mid-2014.

Similarly, reports of family violence incidents in Victoria have been increasingly steadily since 2010-11, with an 8.8 per cent increase from 2013-14 to 2014-15 (70,906 incidents).

The Victorian Royal Commission report said it was not clear whether the prevalence of family violence was increasing, but it noted that greater reporting of family violence had led to an increase in incidents being recognised.

“In Victoria this has been evident in the increased number of reports to police and the number of family violence intervention orders being issued,” it said.

Expert opinion

The AIC identify domestic and family homicides by determining victim relationships to perpetrators.

They found that a history of domestic violence was found in a third (34 per cent) of the homicides.

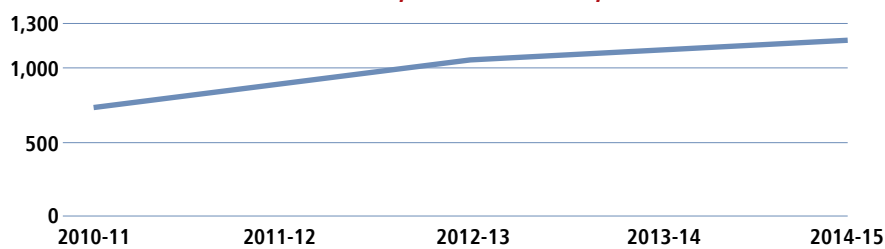
Whether domestic homicides were associated with a history of domestic violence is investigated by domestic violence death review teams in some states.

Anna Butler, manager of the NSW domestic violence death review team, told Fact Check that while the AIC data was useful, it could not definitively show whether the homicide was a result of a domestic violence incident. She explained that some cases, such as those involving acute episodes of psychosis, or the actions of a demented patient, would not fit the definition of domestic violence.

Her report covering 2000 to 2012 showed that of the 995 homicides in NSW, 28 per cent had an identifiable history of domestic violence, lower than that found by the AIC.

The Victorian Systemic Review of

FAMILY INCIDENTS ATTENDED BY POLICE IN VICTORIA, RATE PER 100,000 PEOPLE



Source: Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victoria).

Family Violence Deaths, conducted by the Victorian coroner’s court, revealed similar findings, though the proportion of intimate partner homicides was lower.

If the homicide statistics may overestimate the number of domestic and family homicide victims, the police statistics can underestimate victims.

Deborah Walsh, family violence lecturer at the University of Queensland told Fact Check that domestic violence reports to police were useful but cautioned that not all victims and perpetrators came to the attention of police.

The ABS *Personal Safety Survey* showed that 95 per cent of men and 80 per cent of women who had experienced violence from a current partner had never contacted the police.

A 2013 NSW survey, conducted by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, of 300 victims attending domestic violence services showed that only half reported their most recent incident to police and the most common reason for not reporting was fear of revenge or further violence.

Ms Nancarrow said a range of reasons, including increased confidence in police or better education about protection orders, could push up the numbers of domestic violence reports but that was not necessarily an indication the incidence had gone up.

A Victorian report on family violence from the Victorian department of justice reported that the steady rise in reported incidents over time coincided with the introduction of the Victorian police code of practice for domestic violence in 2004, and legislative changes to the *Family Violence Protection Act*.

Conclusion

Fact Check’s survey of domestic violence data in Australia showed that one in six women and one in 20 men have experienced at least one incidence of violence from a current or former partner since the age of 15.

However, the national dataset is not able to identify the frequency or severity of victims’ experience of violence, a shortcoming that could obscure substantial differences in how men and women experience domestic violence in Australia.

And while homicide data shows that rates of domestic violence deaths have been falling, reports of domestic violence to state police forces have been rising.

Experts say under-reporting of domestic violence could underestimate domestic violence and in the same way, improved policing and justice treatment of victims could have the opposite effect.

Domestic violence statistics are vital for informing service delivery and public policy but a national data collection and recording framework will not be operational until 2022.

But in the words of the 2016 Australian of the Year David Morrison, speaking on a recent episode of Q&A, “it’s not about the statistics”.

“We run the risk, at times, of being a nation of bystanders comforted by a few statistics,” he said.

“Let me tell you, there are people dying and people whose lives are absolutely ruined as a result of domestic violence and, what’s more, we are all, as a society, the victim.”

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ABC (6 April 2016). ‘Fact file: Domestic violence in Australia’, ABC News. Retrieved from www.abc.net.au/news on 8 August 2016.

MYTH BUSTER – VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women is a massive global problem – and it's reached a crisis point in Australia, according to this myth buster fact sheet from **The Line**

A massive amount of research has been carried out to determine how and why violence against women occurs, and how to end it. The good news is there are solutions, but the distracting myths surrounding violence against women stand in the way of these solutions.

When people think and say things like “That’s just the way men are” or “She’s partly to blame” they fail to see the facts about violence against women. When you have the wrong info, you can’t fix the problem. So, check out these myths to get the facts ...

MYTH #1: Men can’t control their anger

THE FACTS ...

- Plenty of men get angry, and some even find it hard to control that anger, but that doesn’t automatically lead men to be violent towards their partners.
- Perpetrators of violence against women are very much in control of themselves – they choose to be violent as a way of exerting control over their partner – and they’re often in control enough to make sure they don’t get caught.
- Even men who get into arguments at work, on the sports field or out with mates don’t immediately start punching everybody in the face, so why do we assume that it’s ‘just a control issue’ when they’re violent towards women?

MYTH #2: Men can’t control their sexual urges

THE FACTS ...

- Rape and sexual assault are acts of violence to assert power and control over people, not acts of sexual desire.
- Most men have sexual desires, but most of them have good, thoughtful and respectful relationships and attitudes towards women.
- Men are not controlled by sexual urges – even when they’re really turned on, most men do not rape women.
- Do we seriously think that guys are such cavemen that they have NO control over what their hands, bodies and penises do?

MYTH #3: Alcohol causes men to be violent

THE FACTS ...

- Being drunk doesn’t make men violent.
- Many acts of violence against women are committed by men who are sober and do not have alcohol problems.
- Research shows that while alcohol may increase how severe the violence is where it’s already happening, alcohol alone isn’t enough to cause violence in

relationships. So while there might be a higher risk of violence when alcohol is involved, and often an increase in severity, it only tends to accentuate existing behaviour (e.g. violent behaviour).



MYTH #4: Violent men had violent upbringings

THE FACTS ...

- Many men who are violent were neither victims as children or witnessed violence between their parents or in their community.
- There is some increased risk of men who have grown up in violent environments choosing to use violence against women, but also, many men who grew up in violent homes are highly intolerant of violence.

MYTH #5: Men are violent because they’re poor, working class or uneducated

THE FACTS ...

- Many cases of family violence occur in upper and middle-class families, perpetrated by men with a range of education levels and across all socio-economic backgrounds.
- While there is some increased risk of violence in the most disadvantaged geographic areas, this is more likely about attitudes that support gender inequality and think violence against women is ‘normal’ or justifiable.

MYTH #6: Women need to be more careful if they’re out alone or at night

THE FACTS ...

- 15 per cent of all women aged 18 years and over report that they have been sexually assaulted by a known person, while only 3.8 per cent of women report that they have been sexually assaulted by a stranger.
- Women are more likely to experience violence from men they know, often in the home.
- The ‘stranger danger’ myth is one of the reasons women are less likely to report a sexual assault perpetrated by someone they know. They may fear no one will believe them or that they encouraged the perpetrator in some way. Victims of assault are never responsible for the actions of the perpetrator.

MYTH #7: Women often make false claims about domestic violence or sexual assault

THE FACTS ...

- The vast majority of sexual assaults are not

reported to the police. Given for example that only 17 per cent of women who experienced sexual assault by a male perpetrator (in their most recent incident of violence) reported it to the police (ABS 2012), the actual percentage of false cases is likely to be tiny. By one estimate, the actual percentage of false cases as a proportion of all rapes (reported and unreported) may be closer to 0.005 per cent¹.

- Reporting domestic violence or sexual assault is not easy for victims. Complicated legal systems, reactions from friends and family members, and the disruption to a victim's life can make it extremely hard or traumatic for victims to seek help.

MYTH #8: Women could leave a violent relationship if they really wanted to

THE FACTS ...

- The most extreme violence, including murder, often occurs when a woman tries to leave a relationship.
- Women often stay in violent relationships because there's so much at stake – often things that are 'shared' with the perpetrator – whether it's the children, friends and family, income, somewhere to live or the emotional history they have with the perpetrator and the hope that the person they love will change his behaviour.
- When we say that it's up to women to leave violent relationships, blame is taken away from the perpetrator. This puts the responsibility for dealing with the violence on the victim, who might not be able to leave a relationship because she fears for her life or the safety of her children. We need to remember, the only person who is at fault in a violent relationship is the perpetrator.

MYTH #9: There's more violence against men, so why focus on violence against women?

THE FACTS ...

- The overwhelming majority of family violence and sexual assault are perpetrated by men against women. When men are assaulted it's much more common for it to be by another man and it mostly occurs as a one-off event, in public by a stranger, like a fight on the street or in a pub. Obviously this type of violence needs to be stopped too, but different strategies are needed for these problems. Working on stopping violence against women doesn't mean Australian's shouldn't, or aren't working to prevent violence against men as well.
- Violence against women typically occurs over a longer period of time, rather than a single incident, and more often involves the complexities of other family members, children and social circles.
- While some men experience violence from their female partners and ex-partners, the impact on women is generally more severe. The overwhelming majority of people killed by intimate partners between 2008 and 2010 were women (73

per cent). Violence against women was the leading cause of ill-health and injury among women aged 15 to 44; but not men.

MYTH #10: Men who commit violence against women are mentally ill

THE FACTS ...

- Statistically, people with a mental illness are no more violent or dangerous than others in the general population.
- People with a mental illness are more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators.
- Most men who are violent against women are not mentally ill².

So, there you have it – a bunch of myths and the facts to bust them. But now you know what isn't true ... what IS true? Well, research shows that there are three things that underpin and create a culture where violence against women can occur ...

THREE REAL CAUSES ...

- **Gender inequality** – the fact that women and men do not have equal power or resources and that their voices, ideas and work are not valued in the same way.
- **Rigid adherence to gender roles** – for example, the idea that women and men should act in certain ways or are better at certain things based on their sex.
- **Attitudes, norms, behaviours and practices that support violence** – for example, the idea that violent acts are ok in certain circumstances, the idea that some violent acts are not serious and that violence is a normal way of resolving conflict.

For more statistics, see the *Facts and Figures* page on the Our Watch website. Read the other articles on gender and respect for more information how to stay on the right side of the line ...

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Violence against women statistics have not changed in 20+ years – why not?

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS CLOSELY LINKED TO GENDER INEQUALITY, EXPLAINS THE **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CRISIS SERVICE**

Men's violence against women remains a serious and pervasive issue that affects individuals, families, communities and the social fabric of our society as a whole.

In Australia, one in three women over the age of 15 years have experienced physical assault and over half of all women have experienced at least one incident of physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. Intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44 years. Men's violence against women is perpetrated most usually by a woman's intimate partner and most violence occurs in the home.

Women are also subjected to non-partner violence, including violence by a family member, companion, family friend, carer, colleague, acquaintance or stranger. Men's violence against women affects women across all sectors of society. It occurs in private and in public: in homes and in the workplace, in schools, clubs and pubs, in prisons, detention centres and in hospitals. Men's violence against women is widespread, systematic and culturally entrenched and is recognised as one of the world's most pervasive human rights violations.

While the causes of men's violence against women are many and complex, it is widely agreed that violence is closely linked to gender inequality. And that is why we still have the violence against women statistics that we do. We have not achieved gender equality.

Despite many advances, gender inequality remains a serious issue; in outlining her plan to increase women's equality Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, suggests that "progress towards gender equality has stalled".

Also, if tabloid and media discourses are to be believed, we have arrived at a 'post-feminist' era – a

place where feminism has reached its goals and where women no longer find its traditional frameworks of theory useful. Yet in a supposedly 'post-feminist' era we are faced with a continuing culture of violence.

Violence-supportive attitudes and beliefs

A wide range of attitudes and beliefs among individuals and in communities has been identified to support violence against women. They work to justify, excuse, minimise, or hide physical or sexual violence against women.

Community attitudes may:

- Justify the use of violence (for example, when men's use of violence against a female partner is seen as a legitimate expression of their position as head of the household, an extension of rightful male dominance, or as an appropriate response to apparent transgressions by the woman)
- Excuse the perpetrator's use of violence (for example, when men are seen as unable to control their violent or sexual 'urges' or desires, violence is understood as perpetrated by 'sick' individuals, it is seen as women's duty to stay in a violent relationship to keep the family together, or the violence is attributed to external factors such as the use of alcohol and drugs)
- Trivialise the violence and its impact (for example, when domestic violence is understood as 'normal' relationship conflict, physical violence is seen as trivial and its emotional and psychological impacts are neglected, women are seen to 'enjoy' being raped, or it is assumed that 'women can always leave a violent relationship if they really want to')

- Deny or minimise the violence (for example, when violence against women is seen as rare, isolated, or exaggerated and when women are seen as routinely making false claims of rape or domestic violence)
- Blame the victim (for example, when women are seen to 'provoke' or 'ask' for physical or sexual violence by their behaviour or dress, or responsibility for 'avoiding' rape is seen as women's alone, or women are seen to 'say no but mean yes')
- Hide or obscure the violence (for example, when definitions of violence are narrow and focused only on the perpetration of severe physical violence causing injuries, thus hiding other forms of physical and sexual violence and the social and emotional forms of power and control which often accompany them, and when definitions focus only on violence against women by strangers, thus obscuring violence by familiar individuals, in marriages, relationships and other contexts).

There is also a strong relationship between attitudes to violence and attitudes towards gender roles and relations; notably:

- Men are more likely than women to hold violence-supportive attitudes.
- Individuals (both men and women) who support traditional gender roles and relationships are more likely to express violence-supportive attitudes.

Gender is a consistent predictor of attitudes that support the use of violence against women. A wide range of studies find a gender gap

in attitudes. In general, men are more likely than women to agree with myths and beliefs supportive of violence against women, perceive a narrower range of behaviours as violent, blame and show less empathy for the victim, minimise the harms associated with physical and sexual assault, and see behaviours constituting violence against women as less serious, inappropriate, or damaging. However, it is not sex *per se*, but gender orientations that shape such understandings of violence against women:

Factors associated with violence-supportive attitudes

Individual

- Childhood exposure to violence-supportive cultural norms
- Support for traditional gender roles and relationships
- Weak support for gender equality
- Age and stage of development (boys and young men)
- Masculine orientation/sense of entitlement (men)
- Lower levels of education (women)
- Lower workforce participation (women)
- Childhood exposure to violence (negative impact greater for males).

Organisational

- Masculine contexts such as sporting sub-cultures, college fraternities and the military
- Churches and faith-based organisations
- Criminal justice, social service and health system practices
- Workplace cultures.

Community

- Male peer cultures
- Faith-based communities
- Culturally specific norms regarding gender and sexuality
- Neighbourhood culture.

Societal

- Pornography
- Advertising portraying women in highly sexualised ways
- Television, music, film and media portrayals of women, violence and gender relations

- Campaigns and social movements addressing issues associated with violence and gender relations.

How do we speak up and address the issue of violence against women?

Central to addressing gender inequality is the need to address the structural dimensions which underpin it. For example, a report by the Women and Gender Equity Knowledge Network to the World Health Organisation (WHO) on gender inequity in health argues for the need to challenge gender stereotypes, tackle gendered exposures and vulnerabilities, take action to encourage organisations to consider the implications of gender in their work and work towards gender equality and support women's organisations to ensure women have a voice.

Inequality must be addressed at every level and in every sphere; in organisations and institutions, in

businesses and workplaces, in education and in homes at local, national and international levels. The role of government must be to provide supportive structures, incentives and accountability mechanisms, and to enshrine and implement laws and policies that empower women and promote women's human rights.

The language used to talk about violence against women is crucial to understandings of and responses to the problem. A range of terms are currently used to describe forms of interpersonal violence. These terms change over time and are often highly contested, each reflecting a different political and theoretical perspective or perspectives.

One of the main points of contention is that each term includes and excludes different forms of violence, such as violence against children or violence perpetrated by women. The importance of terminology and definition cannot be overstated there is 'power ... involved in acts of naming' and terms must be critically

Men's violence against women affects women across all sectors of society. It occurs in private and in public: in homes and in the workplace, in schools, clubs and pubs, in prisons, detention centres and in hospitals. Men's violence against women is widespread, systematic and culturally entrenched and is recognised as one of the world's most pervasive human rights violations.



While the causes of men's violence against women are many and complex, it is widely agreed that violence is closely linked to gender inequality. And that is why we still have the violence against women statistics that we do. We have not achieved gender equality.

analysed and sometimes challenged.

Currently there is a shift towards the use of gender-neutral language to refer to violence that is perpetrated predominantly by men against women. For example, men's violence against their intimate women partners has become referred to by the gender-neutral term 'domestic violence' and, more recently, 'family violence'.

Access Economics estimates that 87 per cent of victims of 'domestic violence' are women and 98 per cent of perpetrators are men, yet terms such as 'domestic' and 'family violence' remove the gender of the perpetrator and the victim from the analysis. This obscures the gendered nature of the violence by concealing the power relationships between women and men that are central to explaining and effectively addressing the violence.

As is acknowledged by Amnesty International Australia, "the taboos on speaking about violence, naming the gendered distribution of victimisation and offending and recognising its prevalence must be broken at all levels in societies and communities". Refusing to identify men as the primary perpetrators of violence against women contributes to the damaging silence that surrounds the issue and inhibits the conceptualisation and development of solutions that address the root causes of the problem.

An unwillingness to name the perpetrators of violence may also contribute to the growing misconception in the community that violence is perpetrated equally by women and men and that the psychological and emotional harms are equal for both men and women.

For example, a Victorian study conducted in 2006 found that 20 per cent of respondents believed that 'domestic violence' is committed equally by women and men, an

increase from nine per cent in 1995. However these myths are dispelled by the available research, which clearly illustrates the gendered nature of the violence.

Community attitudes are a key variable for shaping violence against women. A review of contemporary research shows consistent evidence of an association between violence-supportive beliefs and values, and the perpetration of violent behaviour at both individual and community levels (Flood and Pease 2006).

Attitudes and beliefs about violence against women influence the behaviour of individual victims and perpetrators, pervade the relationships and communities within which perpetration and victimisation take place, and sway the support systems designed to respond and prevent such violence. Therefore, they are a central factor to account for in any prevention efforts.

There is a need for a comprehensive approach for achieving changes in community attitudes and behaviours related to violence against women.

The key strategies that identify three inter-related themes for tackling the underlying causes of violence against women are:

- Promoting equal and respectful relationships between men and women
- Promoting non-violent social norms and reducing the effects of prior exposure to violence and
- Improving access to resources and systems of support.

Evidence suggests that the combined efforts of communities, government and other sectors can reduce violence by taking steps to:

- Understand, discuss and explicitly condemn violence against women

and their children

- Promote women as equal and as active participants in intimate relationships and public life
- Ensure women have equal access to secure employment, salaries and financial independence
- Reject definitions of 'being a man' or notions of masculinity that are associated with violence
- Promote notions of masculinity that are non-violent
- Intervene where violence against women and their children is witnessed or suspected
- Provide information about, and links to, available support services
- Render assistance to victims/survivors when formal services are limited
- Hold perpetrators accountable and challenge their use of violence
- Provide services to perpetrators to help them change their behaviour
- Address factors that contribute to violence in the wider community by encouraging the responsible service and consumption of alcohol; addressing the abuse of drugs; discussing the nature, causes, and impacts of violence against women; and demanding media and internet standards to prevent glamourised images of violence and the negative sexualisation and denigration of women, and
- Promote education about respectful relationships.

Mirjana Wilson is CEO, Domestic Violence Crisis Service ACT.

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AUSTRALIANS STILL TRIVIALISE AND EXCUSE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

One in five Australians believe violence can be excused if the offender later regrets it. **Kristin Diemer** examines the latest research findings into community attitudes

The latest *National Community Attitudes Survey on Violence against Women* (NCAS), released today, shows that most measures of community understanding and attitudes on violence against women have not improved in Australia in almost 20 years. In some areas, they've worsened.

The survey involved 17,500 phone interviews with a cross section of Australians aged 16 years and older. It's the third such survey, so we can compare the responses with those in 1995 and 2009.

Sadly, violence against women in Australia, over their lifetime, is not declining. Two out of every five women experience some form of physical or sexual abuse. And nearly half have experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15.

Few Australians openly support violence against women but many others subtly endorse it by trivialising and excusing acts of abuse.

SUBTLE ENDORSEMENTS

There is a tendency for Australians to minimise the impact of living in an abusive relationship. Despite efforts from organisations such as White Ribbon, VicHealth and Amnesty International to dispel the myths, three-quarters of Australians find it hard to understand why women stay in abusive relationships. And half of all Australians believe that women could leave if they really wanted to leave.

One in five Australians believe violence can be excused if the offender later regrets it. Fans of Australian hip hop artist MC Eso, for instance, seemed to accept his apology for posting images simulating abuse of women on his Instagram account.

The supportive comments on MC Eso's Instagram feed also illustrate just how common it is to excuse abuse as 'a joke' which further minimises the impact of violence on women.

Despite community education and law reform in Australia to promote a model of consent based on mutual negotiation and respect, one out of every ten Australians agree that "if a woman does not physically resist – even if protesting verbally – then it isn't really rape".

Twice as many people will excuse sexual assault if the woman is affected by alcohol or drugs at the time, a view shared by American singer Cee Lo Green, who recently tweeted: "People who have really been raped REMEMBER!!!"

A culture of denial exists in Australia, with more than one in three people believing women make up false claims of rape. We've also seen a significant increase

Few Australians openly support violence against women but many others subtly endorse it by trivialising and excusing acts of abuse.





Sadly, violence against women in Australia, over their lifetime, is not declining. Two out of every five women experience some form of physical or sexual abuse. And nearly half have experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15.

in Australians who further excuse and explain rape by believing it results from men not being able to control their need for sex.

Finally, the report shows a concerning rise in the number of Australians who believe that both men and women are equally responsible for partner violence. In reality, most adults who have experienced violence since the age of 15 experienced violence from a male (78% of those reporting partner violence and 95% of those reporting all forms of violence).

IT'S NOT ALL BAD NEWS

Australian governments have invested heavily in campaigns and plans to reduce men's violence against women over the past ten years and there have been some rewards.

More Australians recognise that violence and abuse includes coercive and controlling behaviour, in addition to physical and sexual abuse. (Although we still have a way to go in recognising emotional and financial abuse. Just 70% recognise that denying a partner money in order to control them constitutes abuse.)

There is also greater recognition that women should be supported when escaping domestic abuse and should not have to sort things out for themselves.

A majority agree that men who are violent toward their families should be made to leave the family home (if they still live together) instead of the woman and her children being forced to leave.

Increasing numbers of Australians also understand the barriers women with disabilities face in reporting violence.

While young people under the age of 25 are one of the groups least understanding of violence against women, attitudes of young men have significantly improved since

the last survey in 2009. This shows that targeted work can have an impact in changing attitudes.

WHY COMMUNITY ATTITUDES MATTER

Community attitudes on violence against women are an important barometer on gender relations. They illustrate the way people respond when they witness violence, whether victims feel confident to seek help, and whether perpetrators are likely to be excused or held to account for their actions. Changing attitudes is crucial to preventing crises in the longer term.

The fact that the survey finds negative change in some areas, clear misconceptions around the facts of violence, and only modest progress in other areas, shows it's important to maintain our efforts to prevent and reduce men's violence against women, including strengthening community attitudes.

There would also be benefits in targeting future activity to environments that shape knowledge and attitudes, including popular culture, social media and news media. The newly formed Australian Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women has already started, launching the Our Watch campaign to drive changes in culture, behaviours and attitudes that underpin and create violence against women and children.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Australian National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children sets out a 12-year agenda to do just that. This includes funding information and support services and investing in research through Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS).

But there is no single answer to ending violence against women and children. Multiple approaches need to be layered together.

Along with changing community attitudes, we need to support women and children to recognise abuse and seek help. This involves training workers across multiple disciplines to recognise signs of abusive and controlling behaviour, to know how to ask questions about abuse, and to know what to do with that information.

Women leaving abusive relationships also need more accommodation options. Ideally, the abusive man should be removed from the home so women and children can live safely in their home if they want to, but we also need more options if they need to relocate.

To prevent violence, we need to hold perpetrators of violence to account.

This article was co-authored by Kim Webster, a freelance writer and project manager.

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Young Australians' views on domestic violence are cause for concern – but also hope

Youth is a critical time for sexual development and for establishing models for early and future relationships, explain **Anastasia Powell** and **Kristin Diemer**

Young Australians are more likely to blame victims and excuse and minimise violence against women, according to the latest in a series of results from the 2014 *National Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women Survey*. The findings provide useful information about where we might invest in efforts to prevent domestic violence.

While it's not all bad news, the results reveal disturbing trends in attitudes that are supportive of domestic violence and gender inequality. This is cause for grave concern given that, overall, in Australia one in three women experience violence in their lifetime. Specifically, one in five Australian women experience sexual violence, and one in six experience partner violence.

The *Young Australian's Attitudes towards Violence Against Women* report presents findings from a subset of the national survey, with responses from 1,923 Australians

aged 16 to 24. The full survey has been conducted periodically since 1995. This provides a benchmark for measuring changes in community attitudes to violence against women over time.

Understanding of violence against women

Consistent with the 2014 report on the survey, which presented findings for the community as a whole, 98% of young people recognise that physical partner violence is a serious matter and that it's against the law. The majority (71%) also understand partner violence is perpetrated more often by men, and that women are most likely to be physically injured (87%). Most agree women shouldn't have to sort out sexual harassment by themselves and that it's not a

woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship.

All of this is important; research shows people with good knowledge of the extent and gendered nature of domestic violence are more likely to recognise violence, support victims and encourage action to prevent violence.

But a number of the survey results indicate young people are more likely than older Australians (between 35 and 64 years) to have concerning views about violence against women. Only 60% agree violence against women is common, for instance, compared with 71% of the 35-to-65-years age group.

Young people are also less likely than older Australians to recognise the harms of non-physical forms of violence, such as harassment,

Research shows people with good knowledge of the extent and gendered nature of domestic violence are more likely to recognise violence, support victims and encourage action to prevent violence.

Key overall findings among the NCAS youth sample

- Overall, young Australians have a good understanding of the range of behaviours that constitute violence against women, and are aware that these behaviours are against the law. This is based on findings from a number of survey questions.
- While there is some variation on individual questions, young people show a higher level of attitudinal support for violence against women than do those aged 35-64 years. They also have a lower level of understanding that such violence comprises more than physical violence and forced sex.
- While young people are as likely as those aged 35-64 years to have a high level of support for gender equality in public roles such as education and employment, they are less likely to support gender equality in decision-making in relationships. This may suggest that young people support gender equality in the abstract (e.g. women in public roles and employment), but less so in the context of their personal relationships. This is based on findings from a number of survey questions.
- Compared to young women, young men show a lower level of understanding of violence against women; a lower level of support for gender equality; and a higher level of attitudinal support for violence against women.
- Most young Australians (more than 90%, depending on the scenario) say they would intervene if they saw a woman being assaulted by her partner, but only 54% would know where to go for help with issues of violence against women. This was 5 percentage points lower than among 35-64 year olds and 4 percentage points lower among young people than in 2009.
- There has been a 10 percentage point decrease since 2009 in the proportion of young men who hold high levels of violence-supportive attitudes.
- The strongest influences on attitudes towards violence against women among young people are their understanding of the nature of violence and their attitudes towards gender equality.

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Young people's knowledge of violence against women

ENCOURAGING RESULTS

- ▶ Young people have a good understanding that violence against women comprises a range of behaviours designed to intimidate and control women, not just physical assault. This is based on findings from a number of survey questions.
- ▶ Most young people (98%) recognise that partner violence is against the law.
- ▶ Most young Australians recognise that partner violence is perpetrated mainly or more often by men (71%) and that it is women who are most likely to suffer physical harm (87%). This reflects trends in the general population.

AREAS OF CONCERN

- ▶ Young people are less likely to recognise non-physical, rather than physical, behaviours as violence against women.
- ▶ Only 60% of young people agree that violence against women is common. This is 11 percentage points lower than the 35-64 year age group.
- ▶ Only 50% of young men and 65% of young women recognise that a woman is more likely to be assaulted by a known person than by a stranger. Young people are 9 percentage points less likely to recognise this than respondents aged 35-64 years.
- ▶ There has been a decline in the percentage of young people recognising that partner violence is perpetrated mainly by men (from 37% in 2009 to 32% in 2013) and that women are more likely to suffer physical harm (from 90% in 2009 to 87% in 2013). A larger percentage in 2013 agreed that the fear involved in this violence was equally bad for both men and women (45% in 2009 to 49% in 2013). These trends are similar to those in the NCAS sample as a whole.
- ▶ Only 50% of young people recognise that women are more likely than men to experience fear as a result of partner violence, and this proportion declined by 4 percentage points between 2009 and 2013.
- ▶ More than half (57%) of young people believe that a main cause of violence against women is men being unable to manage their anger.

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VicHealth (September 2015). *Young Australians' attitudes to violence against women*, p.3. Retrieved from www.vichealth.vic.gov.au on 8 August 2016.

stalking and controlling behaviours. One in two young men (52%) agreed that tracking a partner electronically without their consent was acceptable to some degree – as did 40% of young women – compared to 35% of

those aged between 35 and 64, who likewise minimise such behaviours.

These results may reflect the increased embedding of technology in everyday life. Nearly all 16- to 17-year-old Australians regularly

use the internet, mobile phones and social media. This is changing how people in relationships communicate. Key stages of relationships have now moved online. Flirting, declarations of being 'in a relationship', as well as break-ups, are largely now done through or announced on social media.

The downside of the growth of communications technology is that it may be blurring the boundaries between increasingly normalised forms of 'checking in', with more serious forms of partner surveillance and stalking.

Excusing perpetrators and blaming victims

Today's report finds one in four young people are prepared to excuse partner violence in a range of scenarios; 26% agree partner violence can be excused if the perpetrator regrets it afterwards, for instance. And 24% agree violence can be excused if the perpetrator was so angry they "lost control".

Most young people (90%) don't endorse being affected by alcohol as an excuse for perpetrating partner violence. But two in five agreed "rape results from men not being able to control their sexual urges". This is a



downward trend, given results from the 2009 national report showed the previous comparable figure was one in three.

More disturbingly, one in five believe that women often say no to sex when they mean yes. This demonstrates a poor understanding of the importance of mutuality and consent in sexual negotiations. Given young Australian women aged 16 to 24 are most at risk of sexual violence – and most often from male peers – these findings are cause for serious concern.

Decades of research, including by the World Health Organisation, has demonstrated attitudes supportive of violence are linked with broader views endorsing gender inequality. In other words, the less support people have for equal gender relations, the more likely they are to hold attitudes that minimise and excuse men's violence towards women and blame the victims.

The survey found young people were overall supportive of gender equality in public roles, such as education and employment. But they were less likely to support gender equality in the private sphere; more than one in five young people (22%) agree men should take control for decision-making in relationships, for instance, compared with just 16% of older Australians. This finding is troubling since male dominance in relationships is a known risk factor for partner violence.

Preventing violence

It's crucial prevention education programs work with young people before attitudes that are supportive of violence start to have an impact on their experiences, as they navigate what is a formative time of life. Youth is a critical time for sexual development and for establishing models for early and future relationships. And we know that 16- to 24-year-olds are at greatest risk of experiencing violence.

While the survey overall shows young people are more likely than older Australians to hold attitudes that are supportive of domestic violence, this is particularly true



of young men. Clearly, there are gains to be made from investing in prevention and education work with young men in particular.

Framing prevention messages that encourage young men to change their own views and practices is vital. But we can also support young men to be active bystanders and challenge attitudes that are positive about domestic violence among their peers.

Prevention strategies must reach out to young people in settings that are influential in their lives and development. Messages challenging violence and promoting gender equality can be delivered not only through schools, for example, but through sports and recreation settings, as well as new media and popular culture. We must also ensure young people themselves are included in the development and delivery of prevention messages.

While today's report highlights some disturbing trends, the fact is that, overall, most young people

agree violence against women is a serious matter. Encouraging and supporting them to get involved and challenge problematic attitudes among their peers may be one of the greatest tools for preventing violence against women.

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THE CONVERSATION

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CHAPTER 2

Sexual violence and harassment

SEXUAL ASSAULT

A FACT SHEET FROM THE **BETTER HEALTH CHANNEL**

Summary

- Victims are never to blame for sexual assault.
- Sexual assault can have long-lasting effects on a person's life.
- A common misconception is that sexual assault is motivated by desire – on the contrary, it is about power and violence.
- Most victims/survivors do not report sexual assault to the police because of fear, humiliation and shame.

Sexual assault is any unwanted sexual behaviour or activity that makes the victim feel uncomfortable, frightened or threatened. It is sexual activity that the person has not consented to and refers to a broad range of sexual behaviours, including the use or threat of violence to force another person to engage in a sexual activity against their will.

Sexual assault is a serious crime. According to Australian statistics, since the age of 15 years, one in five women and one in 20 men have experienced one or more episodes of sexual violence. Other significant statistics include that 93 per cent of offenders are male and 78 per cent of sexual assault victims had some form of relationship with the offender. Around half of all sexual assaults occur in the victim's home.



A common misconception is that sexual assault is motivated by desire. On the contrary, it is about power and violence. Men are also victims of sexual assault, but less frequently. According to the Australian Institute of Criminology, a woman over her lifetime is three-and-a-half times more likely to be sexually assaulted than a man.

Emotional impact of sexual assault

The terror, pain and humiliation suffered during a sexual assault can have dramatic short-term and long-term consequences for the victim. These impacts may have wide-ranging effects across every aspect of a victim's life, including emotional, mental and physical health, family and social relationships, schooling, employment, career and housing.

Emotional effects may include:

- Shame and embarrassment
- Fear, including fear of the offender
- General fear of all men/women (the same gender as the perpetrator)
- Anxiety and depression
- Feelings of guilt, regret and self-blame
- Low self-esteem
- Broken trust in others and difficulty with sexual relationships
- Post-traumatic stress responses with symptoms including flashbacks, nightmares and withdrawal from people and situations.

Hidden crime of sexual assault

Sexual assault is a vastly under-reported, under-investigated and under-convicted crime. According to the Victorian Law Reform Commission, one in six reports to police of rape, less than one in seven reports of incest or sexual penetration of a child, one in seven reports of women sexually assaulted by a current partner and just over one in six reports of sexual assault by any other male result in prosecution.

Of all those committing sexual assaults in Victoria, less than five per cent face legal punishment. Women are more likely to report the crime to police if the offender is a stranger. Women are less likely to report current husbands, de facto partners or boyfriends.

Reasons for under-reporting of sexual assault

Research shows that sexual assault is not reported to the police for a number of reasons including:

- Lack of faith in police and the justice system
- The fear of not being believed
- Fear of coping with the medical and legal procedures
- Fear of reprisals
- Not wanting family and friends to know
- Humiliation and shame
- Prevalent social attitudes, which blame the victim for sexual assault.

Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASAs)

Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASAs) respond to every victim and survivor with belief, respect, sensitivity and recognition of their struggle and ability to survive. CASAs provide a safe place for them to talk about their feelings in their own way and in their own time. Victims and survivors are informed of their fundamental rights to medical, legal and support options.

Victoria Police – in conjunction with CASA – has adopted guidelines for responding appropriately to people reporting sexual assault. This approach is outlined in the *Victoria Police Code of Practice for Sexual Assault*. Key aspects of the code include providing victims of sexual assault with information, choice, and access to support and advocacy.

When contacting police, ask for the Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT), which is staffed by experienced and qualified Victoria Police detectives specially trained to respond to and investigate sexual assault and child abuse. In Victoria, there is no time limit on reporting sexual assault.

Physical evidence of sexual assault

If you've been sexually assaulted or abused, it is a good idea to have a health check-up, even if you decide not to report the assault to the police. You can have a check-up with your doctor or contact a CASA. This is to treat any injuries and check for sexually transmissible infections. If you do not want to speak about the assault, you can say you had unprotected sex.

If pregnancy is suspected, a woman can take the 'morning-after pill', which is available from pharmacists and doctors. If you decide to report the assault to police, you will be asked if you agree to a medical examination to collect forensic evidence to help police with their case.

Physical evidence of the crime is sometimes the only undisputed fact presented in court, so it may help not to shower, change clothes, eat, drink or go to the toilet before the examination.

The examination may include:

- General examination – to look for and treat any injuries, including cuts or bruises. Photographs may be taken of the injuries, but only with your consent. Clothing may be kept for forensic testing

- For women, a pelvic examination – similar to the procedure for a pap smear
- Fluid samples – swabs will be taken and sent to a laboratory.

What to do in the case of sexual assault

Someone who thinks they have been sexually assaulted recently, or in the past, can contact any of the services listed below. While the police and Centres Against Sexual Assault work cooperatively to respond to victims of sexual assault, the organisations operate separately. You can use the support services, even if you don't want to report a sexual assault to the police.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Police
- In an emergency, call 000 (triple zero)
- CASA's Sexual Assault Crisis Line Tel. 1800 806 292 (24 hours)
- National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service (Australia) Tel. 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) – free telephone counselling hotline (24 hours, 7 days), online chat www.180orespect.org.au
- Victims of Crime Helpline Tel. 1800 819 817

Things to remember

- Victims are never to blame for sexual assault.
- Sexual assault can have long-lasting effects on a person's life.
- A common misconception is that sexual assault is motivated by desire – on the contrary, it is about power and violence.
- Most victims do not report sexual assault to the police because of fear, humiliation and shame.

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DEFINING SEXUAL ASSAULT

FACT SHEET ADVICE FROM **WHITE RIBBON AUSTRALIA**, A CAMPAIGN TO STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

There is no single nationally or internationally agreed definition of what constitutes 'sexual assault'. There are broad definitions which are based on the experiences of victims/survivors of sexual assault.

Sexual assault can have broad and far reaching impacts across a person's lifetime. Sexual assault can leave significant trauma impacts such as shame and self-blame. It is important to remember that the perpetrator of sexual assault is always responsible for their actions. The victim is never to blame.

There are narrower definitions, based on perpetrators' behaviours that are offences under the criminal law. One definition is that "sexual

assault is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature directed towards another person:

- Which makes that person feel uncomfortable, distressed, frightened or threatened, or which results in harm or injury to that person
- To which that person has not freely agreed or given consent, or to which that person is not capable or able to give consent
- In which another person uses physical, emotional, psychological or verbal force or (other) coercive behaviour against that person."

A definition offered by the Australian Bureau of Statistics reads: "Sexual assault may be located

Sexual assault can have broad and far reaching impacts across a person's lifetime. Sexual assault can leave significant trauma impacts such as shame and self-blame. It is important to remember that the perpetrator of sexual assault is always responsible for their actions. The victim is never to blame.



on a continuum of behaviours from sexual harassment, indecent assault to rape. These behaviours may include lewdness, stalking, indecent assault, date rape, drug-assisted sexual assault, child sexual assault, incest, exposure of a person to pornography, use of a person in pornography, and threats or attempts to sexually assault."¹

The societal belief that sexual violence is only perpetrated by



strangers who are pathologically deviant may provide many members of society with a sense of comfort. It provides a logical excuse for the attacker's actions as being those of someone who does not know the victim, is sick or deranged or 'not quite right'.

While acknowledging that some cases like this do exist, the unfortunate reality remains that the vast majority of sexual violence attacks do not conform to this stereotype. Most sexual assaults are perpetrated by someone known to the victim.² In cases of child sexual assault most offenders are known and trusted by the family and child.³

Date rape

Date rape is a type of sexual assault where the victim and the offender are in, or have been in, some form of personal social relationship, ranging from a first date to an established relationship, or sometimes within a friendship circle. Date rape may be easily recognised as 'rape', or it may involve coercive sex that has left the victim feeling confused and traumatised.

Sexual consent is central to the problem of date rape according to the Australian Institute of Criminology. Sex forced on a date or a partner who has not consented clearly constitutes rape. However, the often held beliefs that 'no means yes' and that consent within relationships is not required mean that sexual assault is occurring a lot more often than is reported. In a date rape situation, consent is sometimes coerced by using physical, emotional or verbal threats and tactics and while the physical threats can be clearly seen as rape, categorising verbal or emotional coercion is less clear.⁴

Drugs and alcohol can also be used to facilitate date rape. Drink spiking with prescription drugs such as rohypnol and illegal drugs such as gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GBH) can seriously affect the way a victim makes decisions or keeps things safe. 'Drink spiking' is defined as the surreptitious addition of drugs or alcohol to a drink (alcoholic or



Date rape may be easily recognised as 'rape', or it may involve coercive sex that has left the victim feeling confused and traumatised.

non-alcoholic), without consent of the person ingesting it.⁵

'Drug-facilitated sexual assault' refers to non-consensual acts which take place when the victim is incapacitated due to the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, which prevents them from resisting and/or giving meaningful consent.⁶

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MYTHS AND FACTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Understanding the reality of sexual assault is a major step in reducing its incidence and impacts, according to **Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia**

Sexual assault is a crime. It can happen to anyone and is never the fault of the person who has experienced the violence.

Myths exist only to blame the victim for what has happened and give excuses to the perpetrator for their actions and behaviour.

Understanding the reality of sexual assault is a major step in reducing the incidence and impacts of sexual assault. It will also help those who experience such violence to seek assistance in their recovery and justice for the crimes that have been committed against them.

MYTHS AND REALITIES

It could never happen to me.

Anyone can experience sexual assault. 1 in 5 women in Australia will experience sexual assault at some time in their life. 7% of all people who experience sexual assault are adult men. While age is no barrier to experiencing sexual assault, women aged 15 to 24 years are most at risk^b.

Sexual assault is about uncontrolled lust.

Sexual assault is a violent assault. Research shows that most offenders plan their attacks^a.

Women 'ask for it' by the way they dress and behave.

If you have money in your pocket does that mean you want to be robbed? Research shows that sexual assault is not caused by the look or behaviour of the victim^a.

Sexual assault is committed in dark alleys by strangers.

Most know their attackers. In 70% of sexual assaults the offender is a family member, friend, work or school colleague. Of the remainder, the offender is usually someone the person meets socially or dates. Most sexual assaults occur in the victim's or perpetrator's home, car or workplace. Sexual assault by a stranger accounts for less than 1% of sexual violence and an attack by a stranger in a dark place is even less common^b.

A sex offender is easy to spot.

Sex offenders look perfectly normal. They come from every class, profession, age and culture. They are not connected to any particular group or activity. They are usually 'nice' and social. This is how they establish trust and are then able to manipulate the person into a location where they can commit their act without interruption or witnesses.

It's not sexual assault if those involved have had sex with each other before.

Forced sex is sexual assault. Consent must be given for

SEXUAL ASSAULT IN AUSTRALIA

- In Australia, 1 in 3 women will experience physical violence and 1 in 5 women will experience sexual assault at some time in their lives. It is estimated that 126,000 incidents of indecent or sexual assault occur annually in Australia^d.
- However only 17% of sexual assaults are reported to Police, and many do not tell anyone when they are sexually assaulted^b.
- Most sexual assaults do not involve physical injury/assault.
- While sexual assault occurs in all communities, rural women, people with disabilities, people who have a mental illness, women who have drug or alcohol addictions, women who work as sex workers and Aboriginal women experience higher rates of sexual assault than other women.

every occasion of intimacy – consent last night does not mean consent tonight and consent to one does not mean consent to others.

If consent is withdrawn that must be respected. Absence of 'no' is not consent. When negotiating a sexual encounter both parties have a responsibility to ensure the other is consenting.

If a person is affected by alcohol or other drugs to the point that they do not know what they are doing, it is sexual assault to have opportunistic sex with them^c.

A husband cannot rape his wife.

Being married does not mean permanent consent. Sexual assault in marriage is a crime.

Men don't get sexually assaulted.

Yes, they do.

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EVERYDAY RAPE: LET'S TURN THE SPOTLIGHT ON KNOWN PERPETRATORS

The majority of sexual assaults are perpetrated by a man known to the victim, explain **Nicola Henry** and **Anastasia Powell**

Australia is at a critical juncture in terms of increasing awareness and understanding of men's violence against women. But one important type of sexual violence is often overlooked: acquaintance rape. It's the most common form of sexual violence and is primarily gender-based.

What is acquaintance rape?

Acquaintance rape (or 'sexual assault') refers to coercive sexual intercourse perpetrated by someone known to the victim, such as a neighbour, co-worker, employer, friend, friend-of-friend, partner or ex-partner.

The coercion might involve physical force, but more common are situations where a person does not freely agree to sex and has not given active or verbal consent.

This includes:

- Where a person is asleep, unconscious or incapacitated by drugs and alcohol
- Where a person is mistaken as to the identity of the perpetrator or the nature of the act, or
- Where a person is pressured into sex due to threats, emotional abuse or manipulation.

In Australia, one in five women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15, compared to one in 22 men. The majority of sexual assaults are perpetrated by a man known to the victim and women aged 16 to 24 are at greatest risk. But 80-90% of victims will never report the crime to the police.

Studies show that women who are raped by an acquaintance often blame themselves, have low self-esteem, high levels of psychological stress, and are at risk of increased

drug and alcohol use and sexual risk taking.

The perpetrators

The majority of perpetrators of acquaintance rape never come to the attention of the criminal justice system. So although perpetrators are known to the victim, we actually know little about them as a group of offenders.

Community attitude surveys provide some insight into the deeply embedded nature of the problem. The 2013 *National Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women* survey reported that a significant minority of the Australian community have poor understandings of rape.

One in three Australians agreed

with the statement that "women say they were raped when they led the man on and later had regrets", and 17% agreed that "women say no when they actually mean yes".

It's important to remember that violence, regardless of context, is not caused by culture or attitudes alone. Acquaintance rape is no different, and is a result of a combination of individual, cultural and societal-level factors.

Studies indicate that perpetrators of sexual violence typically hold hostile attitudes about women and sex. Wider societal attitudes that minimise sexual violence can discourage victims from reporting, and in effect, allow perpetrators to escape accountability.

Studies show that women who are raped by an acquaintance often blame themselves, have low self-esteem, high levels of psychological stress, and are at risk of increased drug and alcohol use and sexual risk taking.





We need to critically question our own beliefs and values about gender, violence and sex, if we are to create a society free of rape.

Rape law

In Australia, and internationally, reforms to rape law have attempted to address the 'justice gap' for victim-survivors.

Such reforms include:

- Changes to the definition of rape and the meaning of consent
- Abolition of witness corroboration requirements
- Restrictions on the admission of sexual history evidence
- Protective measures for vulnerable witnesses
- Specialist courts.

The legal meaning of consent continues to be a highly vexed issue for reform. In Victoria, the prosecution must prove beyond reasonable doubt that the complainant was not consenting and that the accused intended to sexually penetrate the complainant without their consent.

Currently in Victoria, an accused can be acquitted if they had an honest belief that the victim was consenting, regardless of how unreasonable that belief was.

As of July 1, 2015, a new definition

of rape will be introduced which brings Victoria into line with the United Kingdom, New Zealand and other Australian jurisdictions.

This means that a person can be convicted of rape if they sexually penetrate another person without their consent, and they do not reasonably believe that the other person is consenting.

Decades of rape law reform, however, have largely been ineffective in increasing reporting, prosecution and conviction rates, and tackling the problem at its heart.

In addition to criminal justice approaches, other measures are also required, such as civil law remedies, restorative justice approaches, and civil society platforms. Online anti-rape websites such as Project Unbreakable allow victim-survivors to document their experiences and connect with other victims and supporters.

Beyond the law

Acquaintance rape is a deeply entrenched social problem that has enormous long-term impacts. Providing support on the ground,

such as sexual assault counselling and effective legal responses, is important – but only addresses part of the problem.

We need strategies to prevent acquaintance rape before it occurs. A national policy framework for primary prevention is required to address the range of individual, cultural and societal factors that underlie this form of violence.

Problematic and outdated attitudes that minimise acquaintance rape can be addressed through programs in schools and communities such as Respectful Relationships, the AFL Respect and Responsibility policy and the Sex and Ethics program.

Bystander intervention programs, such as the *Who Are You* campaign in New Zealand, also hold promise. These programs operate in schools, universities, workplaces and in the community. Their aim is to motivate people to challenge problematic attitudes, interrupt situations where a sexual assault is likely, and provide support to victim-survivors.

Other social marketing campaigns that shift responsibility to men are also imperative, such as the *Don't Be that Guy* campaign in Canada.

Bipartisan commitment from political leaders is crucial to ensure funding, support and momentum under this framework.

A decade of research has shown that the causes of sexual violence, like other forms of men's violence against women, are fundamentally linked to continued gender inequality. Above all then, we need to critically question our own beliefs and values about gender, violence and sex, if we are to create a society free of rape.

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THE CONVERSATION

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HOW THE LEGAL SYSTEM RESPONDS TO SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIM/SURVIVORS

South Eastern CASA offers advice aimed at female survivors and support workers

This article is written for women and assumes a male offender, however SECASA acknowledges that both men and women can be survivors of sexual abuse and that offenders can be male and female.

Sexual assault is one of the most under-reported crimes in Australia. There are many reasons for this, including the social stigma which flows from myths surrounding sexual assault, and the ways in which the assumptions beyond those myths flow into the workings of the legal system.

Additional factors include the facts that:

- *The perpetrator is often known to the victim/survivor*
- *There is a perception and reality that the legal process which follows reporting to the police is difficult and overly concerned with the rights of the accused, and*
- *Conviction rates are low.*

Those who have been the victim/survivors of sexual assault and who choose to undertake legal action, frequently identify the legal process following the decision to report, as being nearly as traumatic as the actual experience of sexual assault. Given that most victim/survivors are women, it is important to consider the position of women before the law, where they have traditionally been viewed as the property of men.

Nowhere is this issue of ownership more clearly reflected than in the laws on sexual assault. For example, it was not until the late 1980s that immunity from prosecution for rape within marriage was removed in all states and territories.

Historically, rape and specifically consent, have been defined by Common Law, also known as precedent. Since the women's movement and the resulting change in community attitudes, the laws have been reformed by Parliaments in most states of Australia. Some of these reforms have resulted in changes to the issues of Consent, Language, Uniformity.

CONSENT

Prior to the reform of rape laws, Common Law asserted that in order to 'prove' rape, it was necessary to prove sexual intercourse had occurred without consent, where the accused knew, or was reckless as to whether, the victim/survivor was consenting. The process of rape law reform has largely comprised of codification of Common Law.

In each state and territory, Parliaments have legislatively over-ridden Common Law by introducing statutory changes to the rules of evidence.

For example, the Common Law definition of rape

only covered the insertion of a penis into a vagina, whereas women experienced sexual violation in many other ways. Moreover, the definition of 'consent' needed to be clarified to ensure that it was not legally defined from the male perspective; as did the definition of penetration *vis a vis* intercourse.

Most states have now adopted legislation which focuses on forms of coercion other than the employment

Those who have been the victim/survivors of sexual assault and who choose to undertake legal action, frequently identify the legal process following the decision to report, as being nearly as traumatic as the actual experience of sexual assault.





through the criminal justice system may be the only means through which they expect justice to be done. This is not an unreasonable expectation in a system which is designed to place limits on the behaviour of citizens by creating and enforcing laws, and to guarantee the protection and rights of members of the community. (Brett and Williams, 1993).

The perils of the criminal justice system for women have been well documented. Most victim/survivors are better informed about the perils than they are about their rights to pursue legal options. Such perils may negatively impact upon a victim/survivor's decision to enter into the criminal justice system.

Each victim/survivor has the right to have his or her experience of sexual assault understood within a social and political context. S/he retains that right throughout the legal process. Each victim/survivor has the right to a counsellor, to medical and legal representatives and information. The role of these workers are then, not to deliver her unprepared to this system, but to constructively engage with it. The worker must understand the legislative options which presently exist, and advocate for the rights of the victim/survivor and for the significance of the victim/survivors experience to be visible within this process.

These legal principles do not just impact on the liberty of the accused. They also condition the experience of the victim/survivor at court. They feed into another set of powerful beliefs in our society, which we also find reflected in the legal setting.

of physical violence. Although legislative definitions of consent vary a little from state to state, the themes of the reforms promote an understanding that when coercion is employed, it negates consent. Most states have specifically defined the circumstances in which consent is negated, although 'proof' that a rape occurred still relies on effectively convincing a jury not only that the woman did not consent, but also that the offender knew she was not consenting.

LANGUAGE

There has also been a shift towards gender neutral language being adopted in the law. Unfortunately, the effect of this in cases of sexual assault, has been to obscure the gendered nature of a crime which has been well demonstrated to be overwhelmingly carried out by men against women, men and children.

UNIFORMITY

Recently, recommendations have been made for the establishment of uniform rape law across Australia in order to provide a minimum standard of sexual and bodily autonomy and integrity for women across all states.

SO WHAT ARE THE LEGAL PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE JUSTICE FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS?

Part of the process of engaging with the law is to be aware that for many victim/survivors, formal justice

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MORE THAN REVENGE: WHEN INTIMATE IMAGES ARE POSTED ONLINE

Anastasia Powell and Nicola Henry reveal that intimate images are also being used in domestic violence and sexual assault situations – to blackmail victims, or to discourage them from seeking help from the police

Revenge porn'. It's when a partner or ex-partner posts nude or intimate pictures or videos online and without consent. And in the absence of better laws, perpetrators are largely getting away with it.

The media and public responses to the issue have been slowly shifting. Where once it was common to blame and shame victims for taking nude or sexy pictures in the first place, now there are calls to hold the perpetrators of these sexual violations responsible for their actions.

The harm to victims

Victims describe feeling sexually violated when they discover their images have been posted online. In fact, like other forms of sexual violence, emerging evidence suggests that it is most often women and girls who experience this kind of victimisation. And, like our attitudes to sexual violence generally, too often we have blamed and shamed the victim while ignoring or minimising the actions of the perpetrator.

In fact, according to our research, intimate images are also being used in domestic violence and sexual assault situations to blackmail victims, or to discourage them from seeking help from the police. It's not just 'revenge' towards an ex-lover that motivates perpetrators of these harms. In many cases, it is part of a pattern of abuse

against women.

Like sexual and domestic violence more generally, the harms to victims when their images have been shared or posted online is also not a one-off event. Victims describe it as an ongoing violation as the images are often difficult to remove and may have been re-shared many hundreds or thousands of times.

What the law says

Countries such as the United States, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom are all scrambling to draft new laws to better respond to the harms of revenge porn. Soon, sharing or publishing intimate images without consent will be a criminal offence in the UK

Like sexual and domestic violence more generally, the harms to victims when their images have been shared or posted online is also not a one-off event. Victims describe it as an ongoing violation as the images are often difficult to remove and may have been re-shared many hundreds or thousands of times.



We need to stop shaming and blaming victims, and start shaming and holding responsible those who post these images online in the first place.

with offenders facing up to two years in jail.

Australia's current laws were not designed to deal with the harm caused by these kinds of publication and sharing of intimate images by everyday individuals. Australia's privacy laws, for example, are designed to protect us from companies and government departments, not a trusted partner, ex-partner or friend.

Australia's state and territory criminal laws cover physical and sexual assaults as well as repeated stalking behaviours, but not the one-off act of posting someone's intimate images. Australia is lacking laws that recognise and respond to the sexually based violation and the ongoing harm that sharing intimate images without consent causes to victims.

Australia also has a federal law against "using a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence" (section 474.17). Yet, much like similar laws in the UK, this law is rarely used in revenge porn cases, and there are calls for a specific offence that more accurately reflects the harm caused when a person's intimate images are misused.

In Victoria, for example, a draft bill (passed by parliament on Wednesday) creates two new offences that will make it a crime to distribute, or threaten to distribute, intimate images without consent. The Australian Law Reform Commission has also recommended that the Federal Government create new individual digital privacy protections.

Australians urgently need such laws to provide greater

legal clarity and better protection for victims of revenge porn across all states and territories.

What we can do

We need to stop shaming and blaming victims, and start shaming and holding responsible those who post these images online in the first place. This means not only actions by governments to provide consistent legal responses, but also industry and service providers responding quickly to take-down requests and cooperating with police investigations.

Our public institutions such as schools, workplaces and universities can also be proactive by including these behaviours in sexual harassment policies and taking complaints seriously.

Individuals too can play a role. If someone shows you or sends you intimate images of another person, call them out on it. Tell them that you don't think it is okay to disrespect a person by sharing their images without permission.

If a partner or ex-partner has threatened, or has shared, your intimate images to others you can seek legal advice or report it to police. Confide in a trusted family member or friend. By speaking out we can continue to raise awareness of the seriousness of this issue and maybe encourage other victims to seek assistance.

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Nicola Henry is Senior Lecturer in Legal Studies, La Trobe University.

THE CONVERSATION

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT

WHITE RIBBON AUSTRALIA EXPLAINS THE ISSUES

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is an unwelcome sexual advance or any other unwelcome sexual conduct which a reasonable person would anticipate would make another person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated.

Who can be sexually harassed?

The vast majority of sexual harassment occurs against women by men. Men (including gay men) can be sexually harassed, as can lesbian women. In the workplace, sexual harassment laws apply to employees, contractors, customers and clients. Sexual harassment can be a one-off incident or ongoing behaviour.

A threat to rights

Sexual harassment is a breach of international human rights. Women have the right to be free from violence, which includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or threats of such acts.¹

The right to work is also a fundamental human right.² Sexual harassment in the workplace prevents women from exercising their right to work and be economically independent. Women often leave the workplace after complaining about sexual harassment which limits women's opportunities to work and places them in a financially vulnerable situation.

What behaviour can sexual harassment cover?

- Asking for sex
- Physical behaviour of a sexual nature³
- Sexual comments, jokes and innuendos⁴
- Intrusive questions or comments about private life or appearance⁵
- Unwelcome touching, hugging, cornering, kissing, unnecessary familiarity, staring⁶
- Use of the internet, mobile phones and SMS to transmit pornographic and other offensive material.⁷



Women have the right to be free from violence, which includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or threats of such acts.

Mutual attraction

Behaviour that is consensual and reciprocated is not 'unwelcome conduct'. However, this does not apply if a person's consent has been gained through intimidation.

Workplace sexual harassment

The workplace follows the worker. Whether a worker is performing work from home, at a client's office, in a car, or is at a work conference or office party, all of these places will be taken to be the workplace.

What practical steps can you take?

1. Whether you are or you observe someone else being sexually harassed – don't remain silent.
2. As soon as possible, tell the offending person that the behaviour is not welcome and offensive, or if you feel uncomfortable telling the person directly, seek assistance.
3. Access your employer's sexual harassment policy. Make a complaint and document what has happened as soon

as possible after the event(s).

It is your right to make a complaint, and it is unlawful to victimise someone for making a complaint.

4. Contact your relevant Human Rights/Equal Opportunity commission (state and federal) for further guidance.

Remember – everyone has the right to work in an environment free of sexual harassment, and everyone has the responsibility to create and maintain such an environment.

NOTES

1. General Recommendation 19 on Violence Against Women made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Discrimination includes violence in the prohibition of gender-based discrimination – www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom19 (Viewed on October 28, 2009).
2. The right to work is contained in the *UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and also contained in the



What is sexual harassment?

- Sexual harassment is any unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour, which makes a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated.
- Sexual harassment is not interaction, flirtation or friendship which is mutual or consensual.
- Sexual harassment is a type of sex discrimination.
- The *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) makes sexual harassment unlawful in some circumstances.
- Despite being outlawed for over 25 years, sexual harassment remains a problem in Australia.
- Sexual harassment disproportionately affects women with 1 in 5 experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace at some time. However, 1 in 20 men also report experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace.

Identifying sexual harassment

Sexual harassment can take many different forms – it can be obvious or indirect, physical or verbal, repeated or one-off and perpetrated by males and females against people of the same or opposite sex.

Sexual harassment may include:

- Staring or leering
- Unnecessary familiarity, such as deliberately brushing up against you or unwelcome touching
- Suggestive comments or jokes
- Insults or taunts of a sexual nature
- Intrusive questions or statements about your private life
- Displaying posters, magazines or screen savers of a sexual nature
- Sending sexually explicit emails or text messages
- Inappropriate advances on social networking sites
- Accessing sexually explicit internet sites
- Requests for sex or repeated unwanted requests to go out on dates
- Behaviour that may also be considered to be an offence under criminal law, such as physical assault, indecent exposure, sexual assault, stalking or obscene communications.

Source: Australian Human Rights Commission, *Sexual harassment*.

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Whistling and staring at women in the street is harassment – and it's got to stop

87% of Australian women have experienced some form of physical or verbal street harassment. It has to stop, writes Bianca Fileborn

You may not have heard the term 'street harassment', but if you're a woman in Australia, you've probably experienced it: whistles, stares, unwanted comments, touching or being followed by strangers in the street.

According to research by the Australia Institute, 87% of us have experienced some form of physical or verbal street harassment, often before the age of 18. Internationally, this figure is higher, at 96%.

As with other forms of sexualised violence, men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of street harassment and women the victims – although victims may also be targeted on account of ethnicity and or sexual orientation.

While it may be tempting to dismiss such occurrences as 'minor' or 'harmless', there is a substantial body of research that tells us this is not the case. The impacts of street harassment vary depending on the context, and range from the immediate, visceral responses of anger, repulsion and shock, through to longer-term effects such as anxiety, depression and, in some cases, post-traumatic stress disorder.

Street harassment also has a very real impact on women's use of and access to public spaces. Women consistently report that they limit their movements in public in order to avoid street harassment as well as more 'serious' sexual violence.

While there is considerable merit in documenting the prevalence and impacts of street harassment, we need to ensure that this is not all we do.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Street harassment is part of the continuum of men's violence against women, which includes what we might consider to be more 'serious' forms of gender-based violence, such as sexual assault, rape and physical abuse. These seemingly vastly different forms of behaviour are interconnected, and all contribute towards women's oppression and inequality.

Street harassment is part of the continuum of men's violence against women, which includes what we might consider to be more 'serious' forms of gender-based violence, such as sexual assault, rape and physical abuse. These seemingly vastly different forms of behaviour are interconnected, and all contribute towards women's oppression and inequality.

Despite this, minimal attention has been paid to how we might prevent and respond to street harassment. There is little legal or other recourse for women who have





experienced street harassment. And street harassment is notably absent from policy documents and discussions on the prevention of men's violence against women.

Yet, if we are to eliminate all forms of violence against women it is vital that street harassment is included in our prevention efforts.

AVENUES FOR PREVENTION

So, what avenues are there for responding to, and preventing, street harassment?

Improving justice responses to street harassment is one option that could be pursued. Although some forms of street harassment are covered under current legislation, others, such as staring, are not. We know relatively little about victims' experiences of reporting to the criminal justice system, although as with other forms of sexual violence it is likely vastly under-reported.

However, a formal justice response may not be the best, or most appropriate, option for responding to and preventing street harassment. Certainly, it is an avenue that should be kept open to street harassment victims should they desire to pursue it. Yet, the justice system has a long history of responding poorly to violence against women – a problem that persists, despite efforts to reform the system.

The nature of street harassment makes it difficult to respond to through the justice system. The often-fleeting nature of street harassment means that perpetrators have moved on, often before women are able to identify who they were.

Additionally, the harm from street harassment may arise from the cumulative experience of repeated harassment and not from the action of individual perpetrators.

When it comes to responding to street harassment, we need think outside of the formal justice box.

Bystander intervention, for instance, is gaining increasing prominence as a response to gender-based violence, and offers much potential when it comes to the prevention of street harassment. Bystander intervention can mean directly confronting the perpetrator – where safe to do so – and other actions such as asking the victim if they are okay.

Speaking up when we see street harassment tells perpetrators their behaviour is not acceptable, while simultaneously offering our support to victims.

Internationally, public transport companies have run campaigns communicating that harassing behaviour will not be tolerated. Australian-based companies could easily do the same.

Continuing to challenge the attitudes towards women and gender stereotypes that underpin street harassment is also vital. While programs such as 'Sex and Ethics' are increasingly being introduced into our schools to help achieve this, research shows that we still have a long way to go in shifting attitudes.

If we are to eliminate all forms of violence against women it is vital that street harassment is included in our prevention efforts.

A lack of current responses to street harassment, while disappointing, allows us to develop responses from the starting point of victims' needs and experiences. While some victims may prefer to access the traditional justice system, others may desire innovative or new responses such as voicing their experience online. A one-size-fits all approach is unlikely to be successful; we need a suite of responses.

Whichever options we ultimately decide on, one thing is clear: it's time to stop just talking about street harassment and start taking some action.

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THE CONVERSATION

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Backgrounder: national campaign to reduce violence against women and their children

The national campaign aims to help break the cycle of violence by encouraging adults to reflect on their attitudes, and have conversations about respect with young people. This backgrounder is courtesy of the **Department of Social Services**

THE ISSUE

On average, one woman is killed every week at the hands of a current or former partner. One in three women has been a victim of physical or sexual violence, since the age of 15, from someone known to them. One in four young people are prepared to excuse violence from a partner.

This is a cycle of violence, which starts with disrespect. It starts with the attitudes and behaviours that are dismissed by adults.

Children form their beliefs from the world around them – what they hear, see and talk about. Sometimes, without meaning to, we ignore disrespectful behaviour, or prefer not to get involved.

What we often don't realise is that our language can carry hidden meanings. The excuses we make can allow disrespect to grow. Research shows we teach boys this behaviour towards girls is "just what boys do." We teach girls to accept it, and tell them "It's OK, he probably did it because he likes you".

We may not realise how much our words shape young people's view of the world. As they grow, children learn to accept our excuses. Gradually, boys and girls start to believe that disrespect is just a normal part of growing up.

By making excuses, we pass on our beliefs about men and women to the next generation. We are unintentionally part of the problem. But we can all be part of the solution.

THE CAMPAIGN

The campaign is aimed at parents and family members of children aged 10-17, as well as the teachers, coaches, community leaders and employers of young people.

Advertising will air from Sunday 24 April on television, cinema, print, digital and outdoors (such as public transport). It will be supported with online tools and resources to help influencers of young people to reflect on their own attitudes, and talk about respect with the young people in their life.

This is a Council of Australian Governments initiative,

One woman is killed every week at the hands of a current or former partner. One in three women has been a victim of physical or sexual violence, since the age of 15, from someone known to them. One in four young people are prepared to excuse violence from a partner. This is a cycle of violence, which starts with disrespect. It starts with the attitudes and behaviours that are dismissed by adults.





jointly funded by the Australian, state and territory governments. Campaign activities run until 2018, and will build on efforts already underway by states and territories, as well as non-government organisations like Our Watch and White Ribbon.

OTHER GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

It's widely recognised that to reduce violence against women, we need to operate on a number of levels, including primary prevention, early intervention, support services for victims and effective interventions for perpetrators.

This campaign takes a primary prevention approach and complements other important programs and initiatives.

All Australian Governments are working together as part of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, to reduce domestic and family violence and sexual assault.

In September last year, the Commonwealth Government announced an additional \$100 million for a Women's Safety Package. This supports the work being undertaken as part of the National Plan.

It includes funding for developing innovative ways of using technology to keep women safe for example, GPS trackers for perpetrators, safe mobile phones, and safety devices for homes.

The package will also help current initiatives further enhance and extend their support services, including 1800RESPECT, Mensline and DV-Alert, as well as supporting local caseworkers in domestic violence hotspots to better co-ordinate community services. It includes education resources to teach young people about respectful relationships, which complements the national campaign. And it also includes extending support services in remote indigenous communities.

While better responses to violence against women are a must, it is essential we take a step back and stop the cycle of where it begins.

THE STATISTICS

The extent of violence

The 2012 ABS *Personal Safety Survey* found that, since the age of 15:

- 1 in 3 women had experienced physical violence
- 1 in 4 women had experienced emotional abuse from a current or former partner
- 1 in 5 women had experienced sexual violence
- 1 in 6 women had experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former partner
- Women were most likely to experience physical and sexual violence in their home, at the hands of a current or former partner.

What adults think

Awareness and understanding of violence against women is high, and most adults agree it's wrong.¹

We also agree violence against women isn't just physical – it includes a range of behaviours designed to intimidate or control.

However, what we often don't realise is that the cycle of violence can start with the beliefs and attitudes boys and girls develop from a young age.

Our excuses can allow disrespect to grow. Research shows that too often, we play down disrespectful behaviour, accept aggression as just being part of a boy, or blame girls.²

The latest *National Community Attitudes Survey* (2013)³ found that:

- 1 in 5 people think there are circumstances in which violence can be excused
- More than 2 in 5 think rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex
- More than 3 in 5 see violence against women being primarily due to some men not being able to manage their anger
- Nearly 4 in 5 cannot understand why women stay in a violent relationship. More than half agree 'women could leave a violent relationship if they really wanted to'
- Up to 28 per cent endorse attitudes supportive

of male dominance of decision-making in relationships, a dynamic identified as a risk factor for partner violence.

What young people think

From an early age, boys and girls begin to believe there are reasons which make disrespectful or aggressive behaviour acceptable. Girls question whether it's their fault, and boys tell each other it was a bit of joke. This can lead to attitudes like:

- 1 in 4 young people don't think it's serious when guys insult or verbally harass girls in the street⁴
- 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 arguing⁵
- Over 1 in 4 young men believe that girls like guys who are in charge of the relationship⁶
- 1 in 5 young people believe there are times when women bear some responsibility for sexual assault.⁷

Since young people's attitudes and behaviours are shaped by those around them, it's important to expose them to positive influences where they live, work, learn and socialise.⁸

Indigenous women

Indigenous women were five times more likely to have experienced physical violence in the previous 12 months than other Australian women and girls.⁹

People from a CALD background

Though reported prevalence for women from a CALD background is the same as other women, incidences could be a lot higher. Cultural, religious and language factors, as well as a fear of deportation, are likely leading to non-disclosure.

Women with disability

- 90 per cent of women with an intellectual disability have been subjected to sexual abuse^{10,11}
- Studies indicate that over two-thirds of women with disability (68 per cent) will be sexually abused before they turn 18 years old.¹²

The role of gender

The severity of physical injury and levels of coercion from all forms of violence in relationships is greater for women than men.¹³ The World Health Organisation states that violence against women is both a consequence and a cause of gender inequality.¹⁴

MORE INFORMATION

Visit www.respect.gov.au for copies of the advertising materials, other background and resources. Read more about research behind the campaign, key findings from the 2013 *National Community Attitudes Survey* and youth survey, and visit the Our Watch website for more research on young people's views about relationships and gender equality.

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CHANGE THE STORY

HOW THE WORLD'S FIRST NATIONAL FRAMEWORK CAN HELP PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women is preventable. We can change this story. A new framework shows how, writes **Anastasia Powell**

In Australia, one woman is killed almost every week by a current or former partner. By now, these horrifying murders are all too familiar. But they are just a small part of the bigger story.

Hundreds of thousands more women are physically and psychologically harmed by men's violence, threats and controlling behaviour. Many suffer long-term trauma and harm to their health, wellbeing and life chances. Many live in fear.

But violence against women is not inevitable. Rather, it is driven by a series of complex and entrenched but changeable social and environmental factors.

In other words, violence against women is preventable. We can change this story. A new framework shows how.

The world's first national framework to focus on preventing violence against women was launched this

week. *Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia* was developed by Our Watch, the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety.

WHAT IS THE FRAMEWORK BASED ON?

Change the Story draws upon the latest international evidence on what drives violence against women and what works to prevent it. Its development included consultations with over 400 stakeholders across Australia. It uses this research and practice expertise to demonstrate how, by working together, we can create an Australia where women live free from violence.

Although violence against women has no single cause, *Change the Story* points to substantial evidence that

higher levels of violence against women are consistently associated with lower levels of gender equality in both public life and personal relationships. For example, a major study found that higher gender inequality predicted higher levels of intimate partner violence across 44 countries.

Within this broader context, *Change the Story* identifies four specific, gendered drivers of violence:

1. Condoning violence, particularly by excusing or trivialising it, or 'blaming the victim'
2. Men's control of decision-making, and limits to women's independence in public life and relationships
3. Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity, and
4. Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

To illustrate the last two, there is a particularly clear relationship between violence and the dominant, aggressive and controlling characteristics associated with stereotypical ideas of masculinity, which are expressed in some male peer relations. In Australia, 95% of victims, women and men, experience violence from a male perpetrator.

WE CAN'T IGNORE THE BIGGER PICTURE

The framework makes it clear we can't just focus on the violence itself; we must change the bigger story behind it. We must challenge the social, political and economic structures, practices and systems that created gender inequality, and the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that continue to support and normalise it.



Change the Story outlines a range of supporting actions that can be taken to address various ‘reinforcing factors’. These range from alcohol used in ways that weaken people’s positive behaviours, to exposure to, or normalisation and valorisation of, other kinds of violence in society.

The framework provides evidence-based guidance to government, organisations and communities. It outlines a strategic approach to achieve effective leadership, coordination, resourcing and support for violence-prevention efforts across Australia.

It calls for complementary initiatives that engage people throughout their lives and where they live, work, learn, socialise and play. These include schools and other education institutions, sporting, social and leisure spaces, workplaces, the media, popular culture, advertising and entertainment, faith-based contexts and transport and public spaces.

WHAT PRACTICAL STEPS CAN BE TAKEN?

Change the Story points out that prevention activities should reinforce each other. For example, best-practice respectful relationships education programs involve the whole school. These engage not just students, but teachers, staff and the wider school community in conversations about gender equality, respect and non-violence.

School activities can then be reinforced by other programs, such as through sporting clubs or social media. Similarly, adults should be engaged in multiple ways – in workplaces, communities and social spaces. Our media, popular culture, policy and legislation should all support and reinforce the aim of gender equality.

This kind of consistent, comprehensive approach, which reaches and engages everyone, is needed to prevent violence against women in Australia.

At the same time, a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to be effective; prevention must be tailored to the diverse contexts of



Violence against women is not inevitable. Rather, it is driven by a series of complex and entrenched but changeable social and environmental factors.

people’s lives. Greater effort and resources are required for groups affected by multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage, or experiencing the cumulative impact of many negative factors – for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Small steps can make a big difference. If we reduced the prevalence of intimate partner violence in Australia (affecting 27% of women across their lifetime) to that of Denmark (22%), this small reduction would prevent 6,000 cases of violence-related injury, illness and disability. It would also save many millions of dollars in health sector and productivity costs.

With *Change the Story*, Australia is poised to lead the world by demonstrating the kind of nationwide, cultural and structural change necessary to forever change the story of violence against women.

The National Sexual Assault, Family & Domestic Violence Counselling Line – 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) – is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for any Australian who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Or you can go online to 1800RESPECT (www.1800respect.org.au) and Our Watch (www.ourwatch.org.au).

This article has been co-authored by **Dr Emma Partridge**, Co-ordinator, National Framework to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children, at Our Watch, and **Dr Lara Fergus**, Director, Policy and Evaluation, at Our Watch.

Anastasia Powell is Senior Research and ARC DECRA Fellow, Justice and Legal Studies, RMIT University.

THE CONVERSATION

Powell, A, Partridge, E and Fergus, L (13 November 2015). *Change the story: how the world's first national framework can help prevent violence against women*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com> on 3 August 2016.

Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN IN AUSTRALIA

This executive summary extract from **Our Watch** explains the framework at a glance

Introduction: an urgent need for collective action

Violence against women and their children is a prevalent, serious and preventable human rights abuse.

One woman a week is murdered by a current or former partner and thousands more are injured or made to live in fear. The social, health and economic costs of violence against women are enormous.

Preventing such violence is a matter of national urgency, and can only be achieved if we all work together. *Change the story* draws on robust international evidence to identify the core elements required to create a strategic, collaborative and consistent national approach to preventing violence against women and their children.

Purpose of the framework

Change the story harnesses the momentum and will across Australia to end violence against women and their children.

It reinforces the direction outlined in the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, and seeks to consolidate and strengthen the action already occurring around the country to address the issue.

It draws upon the latest evidence from around the world and is the result of consultations with hundreds of stakeholders across Australia.

Change the story details a national approach to preventing violence against women and their children through:

- Identifying what drives and

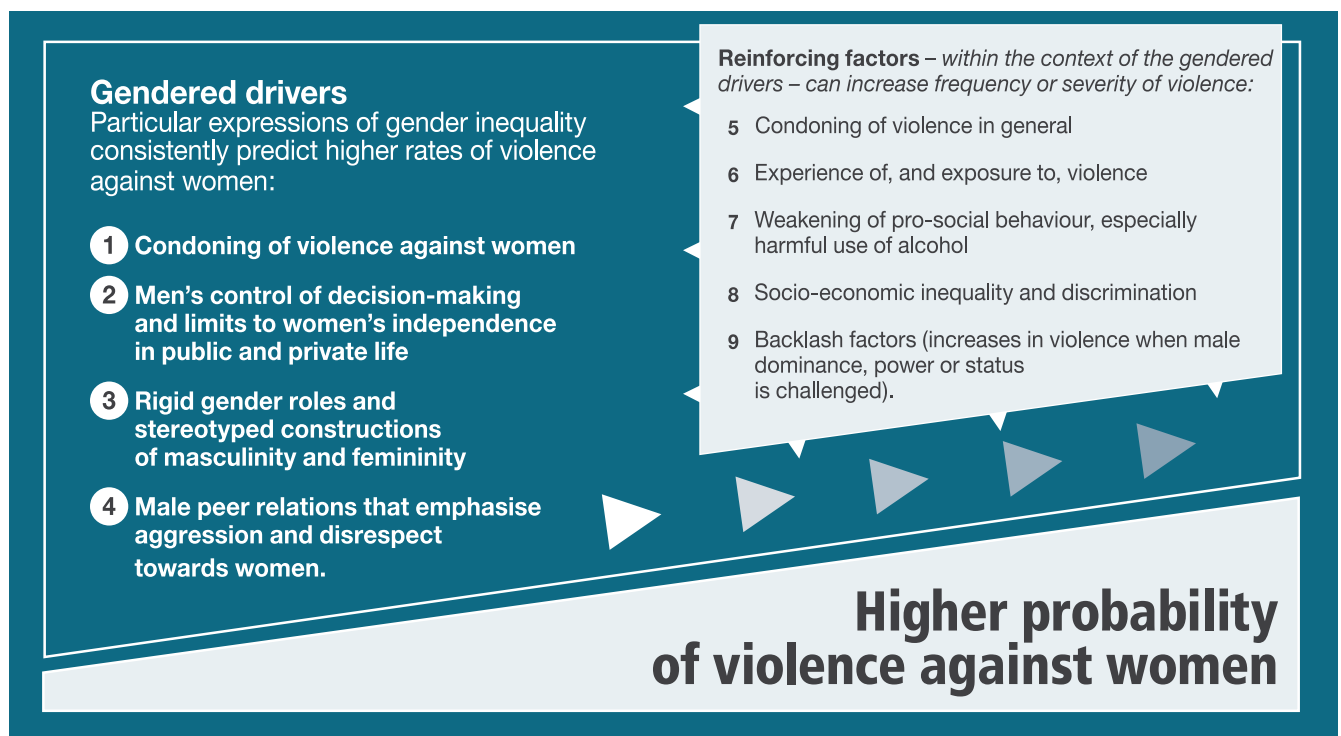
contributes to violence against women

- Providing evidence-based guidance to government, the private sector, civil society and communities on how to strategically and effectively lead, coordinate, resource and support prevention effort across Australia
- Informing and supporting the development of policy and legislation, prevention strategies, programming and advocacy that targets and seeks to reduce the drivers of violence against women.

What drives violence against women?

Element 1: An explanatory model of violence clarifies what constitutes violence against women and explores the gendered nature of this violence. It identifies the drivers of violence, together with a number of reinforcing factors, as summarised in the graphic below.

Violence against women and their children is a prevalent, serious and preventable human rights abuse. One woman a week is murdered by a current or former partner and thousands more are injured or made to live in fear.



Element 1 demonstrates how gender inequality sets the necessary social context in which violence against women occurs. Despite concerted effort and gains to improve the position of women in Australia, we have not yet achieved true gender equality. In 2014, Australia was ranked 24 out of the 142 countries included in the *Global Gender Gap Index*.⁴ We are currently below similar countries such as New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and also behind developing countries such as the Philippines, Nicaragua and Burundi.

Gender inequality is a social condition characterised by unequal value afforded to men and women and an unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunity between them. It results from, or has historical roots in, laws or policies formally constraining the rights and opportunities of women.

Gender inequality is maintained and perpetuated today through structures that continue to organise and reinforce an unequal distribution of economic, social and political power and resources between women and men; limiting social norms that prescribe the type of conduct, roles, interests and contributions expected from women and men; and the practices, behaviours and choices made on a daily basis that reinforce these gendered structures and norms.

Gender inequality is influenced by other forms of systemic social, political and economic disadvantage and discrimination. Other factors interact with or reinforce gender inequality to contribute to increased frequency and severity of violence against women, but do not drive violence in and of themselves.

What can we do?

Element 2: Key actions to prevent violence outlines the range of actions needed through legislative, institutional and policy responses; implemented in settings such as workplaces, schools, community organisations, sports clubs, media and popular culture; and tailored to the

CURRENT STATE

Violence against women is serious, prevalent and driven by **GENDER INEQUALITY**

GENDERED DRIVERS of violence against women:

- CONDONING** of violence against women
- MEN'S CONTROL** of decision-making and limits to women's independence
- STEREOTYPED** constructions of masculinity and femininity
- DISRESPECT** towards women and male peer relations that emphasise aggression

Gender inequality sets the **NECESSARY SOCIAL CONTEXT**

657 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MATTERS ARE DEALT WITH EVERY DAY BY AUSTRALIAN POLICE

Every week one **WOMAN IS MURDERED** by her current or former partner

context and needs of different groups.

It identifies five essential and five supporting actions to address the factors that drive and reinforce violence against women. These actions need to be undertaken across the nation by a diverse range of stakeholders.

How should we do it?

Element 3: Approach, settings and techniques for prevention identifies specific, practical strategies that the research suggests should be drawn upon when engaging in prevention work. Drawing upon national and international research





and evaluation findings, it identifies approaches to ensure different communities are reached and engaged, and that prevention initiatives

span the life course and are tailored to the diverse contexts of people's lives. It notes the greater intensity of effort and resources required for

communities or groups affected by multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage, or experiencing the cumulative impact of many negative factors.

Element 3 also looks at how the different environments in which people live, work, learn, socialise and play can be key settings for prevention activity including:

- Education and care settings for children and young people
- Universities, TAFEs and other tertiary education institutions
- Workplaces, corporations and employee organisations
- Sports, recreation, social and leisure spaces
- Art and cultural spaces
- Health, family and community services
- Faith-based contexts
- Media
- Popular culture, advertising and entertainment
- Public spaces, transport, infrastructure and facilities
- Legal, justice and corrections contexts.



Violence against women IS PREVENTABLE if we all work together



ACTIONS

that will prevent violence against women:

CHALLENGE
condoning of
violence against
women

PROMOTE
women's
independence
& decision-making

CHALLENGE
gender
stereotypes
and roles

STRENGTHEN
positive, equal
and respectful
relationships

Promote and normalise **GENDER EQUALITY** in public and private life

MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIONS ARE NEEDED THROUGH LEGISLATION, INSTITUTIONAL, POLICY AND PROGRAM RESPONSES:

- by governments, organisations and individuals
- in settings where people live, work, learn and socialise
- tailored to the context and needs of different groups.



Finally, it explores the techniques and strategies that have proven effective or promising in reducing violence against women and its drivers. It highlights the shared principles for effectiveness across techniques and settings, and these are covered in more detail in Appendix I.

What supports are needed?

Element 4: Prevention infrastructure explains how a collaborative national approach requires strong infrastructure to support quality cross-sectoral practice, enable policy and legislative reform and provide the leadership and coordination necessary to drive broad, deep and sustainable social change.

This holistic approach should integrate the promotion of gender equality and non-violence into the work of established agencies, organisations and networks; and use existing infrastructure at the national, state, regional and local levels, supported by coordination

Essential actions to address the gendered drivers of violence against women

- 1 Challenge condoning of violence against women
- 2 Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships
- 3 Foster positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles
- 4 Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys
- 5 Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life.

Supporting actions to address the reinforcing factors

- 6 Challenge the normalisation of violence as an expression of masculinity or male dominance
- 7 Prevent exposure to violence and support those affected to reduce its consequences
- 8 Address the intersections between social norms relating to alcohol and gender
- 9 Reduce backlash by engaging men and boys in gender equality, building relationship skills and social connections
- 10 Promote broader social equality and address structural discrimination and disadvantage.

Lower probability of violence against women

and quality assurance mechanisms and an expert workforce.

Who needs to be involved?

Element 5: Stakeholder roles and responsibilities acknowledges that every sector, institution, organisation, community and individual has a role to play in preventing violence against women. But different stakeholders have different responsibilities, expertise and capacities, as well as varying spheres of influence and opportunities to take action.

Prevention efforts will be most effective if stakeholders both take advantage of their own specific opportunities, and also work in collaboration or partnership with each other to ensure different prevention efforts are consistent and mutually reinforcing. Element 5 outlines these roles and emphasises that an effective national approach to the prevention of violence against women must coordinate and systematise the efforts of multiple stakeholders.

What changes can we expect to see and when?

Element 6: Stages of action and expected outcomes notes that the goal of an Australia free of violence against women and their children is a long-term, intergenerational one.

An Australia where women and their children live free from violence is an achievable long-term goal. It can only be realised by addressing the drivers of this violence, which are deeply entrenched in our culture, society, communities and daily lives.

We need to sequence our actions in order to sustain progress over time.

Element 6 identifies short, medium and long-term phasing of collaborative activity, and the expected outcomes or signposts of success that signal what Australia will see with an increase in support for, investment and action in preventing violence against women.

It also indicates directions for measuring the changes expected across the population as a systematic, evidence-based, well-resourced approach to prevention is progressed. This will require evaluating not only what is done at a program or initiative level, but also at the broader community, state and territory and national level, against the drivers of violence against women.

Conclusion

An Australia where women and their children live free from violence is an achievable long-term goal. It can only be realised by addressing the drivers of this violence, which are deeply entrenched in our culture, society, communities and daily lives.

This means that no one individual, community, organisation or government can prevent violence against women alone. However, through a shared, consistent and mutually reinforcing approach, we can all contribute to creating a safer Australia built upon respect and equality.

The framework offers a path towards this ultimate goal of social transformation. It provides the necessary evidence, rationale and guidance required to lead and support a significant and sustained nationwide effort to prevent violence against women and their children.

© Our Watch 2015.

Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth (2015). *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, pp. 5-10. Retrieved from www.ourwatch.org.au on 8 August 2016.

HOW DO WE PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

It is possible to change attitudes which perpetuate violence against women, according to this commentary from the **Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria**

Last month, in a world first, Australia published a national framework based on the most up to date global research and data about the drivers of violence against women, and how this violence can be prevented.

What this new research tells us is this: while gender inequality sets the necessary social context that allows violence against women to flourish, there are four particular expressions of gender inequality that consistently predict higher rates of violence against women:

1. **Condoning of violence against women.** This can be anything from attitudes that blame the victim of violence through to legal proceedings and the length of a sentence allegations of violence proceed to court.
2. **Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life.** This isn't just within individual relationships – think about laws, institutions and social norms that make this a daily reality for many Australian women.
3. **Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity.** It's important to recognise that women and men, girls and boys aren't necessarily choosing these stereotyped roles for themselves, they're being taught by a society that these are their only choices ... and if they step outside those gendered boundaries they'll be 'punished' by not having friends, being turned down for a job, being teased or even experiencing violence.
4. **Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.**

What this means is that in situations where men don't speak up against violence, or where violence, sexism and harassment of women is 'funny' or a part of a bonding experience for men, then those cultures have a huge impact on creating a society where violence flourishes.

This issue is complex and it's not as simple as 'cause and effect'. But what the research tells us – and has told us for many decades – is that where these four expressions of gender inequality are present, there is likely to be more violence against women.

Australia ranks 24th in the world on gender equality, according to the *Global Gender Gap Index*. If you think that doesn't sound too bad, look at the countries that rank higher than we do; most of the Scandinavian countries, Ireland, the Philippines, New Zealand, South Africa, Ecuador and the US. Australians often believe that we've achieved equality and it's time to move on, but the *Global Gender Gap Index* tells a different story.

While gender inequality sets the necessary social context that allows violence against women to flourish, there are four particular expressions of gender inequality that consistently predict higher rates of violence against women.

The good news, however, is that it is possible to change things.

Look at the social justice movements that have changed world and you'll see that they weren't led by

governments or by any one organisation. These movements are led by people. Sometimes, there was one individual who inspired others, who captured the public imagination – Rosie Batty is doing a fairly excellent job of that in Australia right now. But inspiring action is what Rosie wants to do – not just action from governments and funders, it's action from everyone in their daily lives that people like Rosie are calling for.

Don't underestimate the part you can play. If everyone called out sexism and harassment, if everyone made an effort to educate themselves about the warning signs of violence, if everyone worked in their friendships and intimate relationships to enact gender equality, if everyone encouraged women's leadership and women's voices, we'd see a huge reduction in the prevalence of violence against women in Australia within a decade.

At DVRCV, we have committed to focusing on the primary prevention of violence against women as one of our four strategic directions for the next three years. By working with others across Victoria to address the key drivers of violence against women, we can create a more equitable – and safe – society for everyone.

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (11 December 2015). *How do we prevent violence against women?* Retrieved from www.dvrcv.org.au on 8 August 2016.

OFFERING SUPPORT AND TAKING ACTION

If someone starts talking to you about their experience of violence, you may wish to consider following this simple advice from **White Ribbon Australia**

Experience has shown that when people start to talk about violence they can often feel compelled to disclose their own experience. Alternatively you may recognise the signs of violence in a family member, friend, neighbour or work colleague and wonder what to do.

For people who have experienced, or are experiencing violence

Many women experiencing domestic violence cope with it alone. While they may develop a range of active strategies to protect themselves and limit the impact of the violence, many do not seek any outside help – they tell nobody at all. When they do disclose the situation to a family member or friend, the first response is often critical in determining how, and whether, they will proceed further.¹

Violence against women is under-reported, and statistics show that a victim of violence is more likely to discuss and disclose their experience to a friend or family member than to the police or another public authority.²

It is important to know where to refer people and how to deal with people telling you about their experience.

If someone starts talking to you, some simple advice includes:

- Find a safe/quiet space to talk
- Listen – this may be the first time she has spoken about the experience
- Have a non-judgemental attitude
- Believe the woman's story
- Reassure her that it is not her fault
- Hold the perpetrator responsible for the violence and abuse
- Provide emotional and practical support
- Support the woman's choices
- Do not be overly directive.³



Violence against women is under-reported, and statistics show that a victim of violence is more likely to discuss and disclose their experience to a friend or family member than to the police or another public authority.

For people using violence

If you do talk to someone you suspect is violent to their partner or another person, it is highly likely they will tell you to mind your own business, make excuses or deny it. None of these responses mean that abuse is not occurring. It is common for a person who is being abusive to deny or minimise the abuse. Probably the only way you will be able to 'verify' that a person is abusive is if their partner tells you that they are, or if you witness the abuse. People who appear to be 'respectable' and 'normal' can be abusive in the privacy of their own home.

If you do observe abuse, and you feel safe or able to, talk about the behaviour you have observed. For example: "You are my friend, but I think the way you criticise and intimidate her is wrong".

But if you only know about the abuse because the victim has talked

to you about it, be careful to check with her first before saying anything to her partner. Her partner could become more abusive to her if he or she thinks she has told someone. Research shows that men who use violence generally seek relationship counselling rather than domestic violence counselling, often in response to ultimatums delivered by their partners.

There are not as many specific services available for men who use violence compared with services for women suffering violence but there are some listed below. These may be listed in your *White* or *Yellow Pages*.

Intervening in violent situations

Many people mistakenly believe that they have only two options in instances of actual or potential violence – intervene physically and possibly expose themselves to personal harm, or do nothing. They often choose to do nothing as a

National services

For emergency situations that require immediate and urgent assistance call 000
National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service
(24 hours) www.1800respect.org.au
1800RESPECT (1800 737 732)
Lifeline (24 hours) www.lifeline.org.au 13 11 14
MensLine (24 hours) www.mensline.org.au 1300 78 99 78
Kids Help Line (24 hours) www.kidshelp.com.au 1800 55 1800
Translating and Interpreting Service 131 450

result. But this is a false and limited set of choices.⁴

Intervening in violent situations can make them less dangerous or more dangerous. Abusive situations are dangerous – stop and think before getting into them.

But not stepping in keeps it dangerous and says to the violent person that it's okay to hurt someone. And it tells the person being hurt that no one cares, that she isn't important. When violence isn't challenged, it leaves all of us feeling unsafe.

Things to do:*

1. Call the police.
2. Tell the violent person clearly that his actions are not okay.

3. Talk to the victim to help her feel safe.
4. Call on help from other people nearby.
5. Create a distraction to stop the violence.
6. Stand where the violent person can see that his actions are being witnessed.^{5,6}

Further responses may be appropriate depending on the situation. Where you come across a situation of violence in public, it can be useful to call out to the guy: “Hey, mate – what are you doing? That’s not on.” Stick around to make sure the situation has cooled down. Ask what’s going on, “Is everything alright?”, or just be there. This can slow down

what’s happening. Make the man feel noticed, and offer practical assistance to the woman. Talk to the woman – at some point – and let her know you saw what was going on and you’re willing to help her.

When he calms down, either on the scene or later if you can, talk to him and tell him that what you witnessed was not okay, and he needs to get some help. If the abuser is someone you know, you could discuss the situation with some of his other friends and, together, decide on a course of action.

NOTES

1. Commonwealth of Australia (2002). *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Annual Report 2000-01: A substantial beginning to a new commitment*. Union Offset Printers Canberra.
 2. Mouzos, J & Makkai, T (2004). *Women’s Experiences of Male Violence: Findings from the Australian Component of the International Violence Against Women Survey*. Australian Institute of Criminology. Viewed 16 June 2014. Available: www.aic.gov.au/documents/5/8/DI/7B58D8592E-CEF7-4005-AB11-B7A8B4842399%7DRPP56.pdf
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 5. Creighton, A and Kivel, P (1995). *Young Men’s Work: Building Skills to Stop Violence* (A Ten Session Group Program). Center City, Minnesota: Hazelden (Oakland Men’s Project).
- * The language here reflects situations involving a male perpetrator and female victim. We recognise of course that males too can be victims of violence and females too can be perpetrators.

State and territory services

ACT Domestic Violence Crisis Service (24 hours) www.dvcs.org.au 02 6280 0900
Canberra Rape Crisis Centre (24 hours) www.crcc.org.au 02 6247 2525
Canberra Men’s Centre www.menscentre.org.au 02 6230 6999

NSW Domestic Violence Line 1800 656 463
Rape Crisis Service (24 hours) www.nswrapecrisis.com.au 1800 424 017

NT Sexual Assault Referral Centre
Darwin: 08 8922 6472 (also available after hours)
Katherine: 08 8973 8524
Tennant Creek: 08 8962 4361
Alice Springs: 08 8955 4500 (also available after hours)

QLD DV Connect www.dvconnect.org
Women’s line 1800 811 811
Men’s line 1800 600 636
Sexual Assault Help Line 1800 010 120

SA Domestic Violence Helpline 1800 800 098
Yarrow Place Sexual Assault Service www.yarrowplace.sa.gov.au 1800 817 421

TAS Family Violence Response and Referral Line 1800 633 937
SASS – Sexual Assault Support Service www.sass.org.au 03 6231 1817

VIC Women’s Domestic Violence Crisis Service www.wdvcs.org.au 1800 015 188
Sexual Assault Crisis Line www.sacl.com.au 1800 806 292
Men’s Referral Service www.mrs.org.au 1300 766 491

WA Crisis Care 08 9223 1111 or 1800 199 008
Women’s DV Helpline 08 9223 1188 or 1800 007 339
Sexual Assault Resource Centre 08 9340 1828 or 1800 199 888
Men’s DV Helpline 08 9223 1199 or 1800 000 599

White Ribbon Australia (2014). *Fact Sheet 14 – Offering support and taking action*. Retrieved from www.whiteribbon.org.au on 9 August 2016.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN THE CLASSROOM IS JUST A START

Relationship lessons are a good thing, but they're just the start of measures to combat violence towards women, writes **Kaye Quek**

The Victorian government has joined New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania in announcing plans to roll out 'respectful relationship' education in primary and secondary schools in an effort to curb gender-based violence. How far can such classroom lessons go in ending violence against women?

Introducing classes for prep to year 10 students that challenge attitudes contributing to violence against women is a significant, much-needed and welcome initiative. In launching the program, the state government is not only bringing Victoria up to speed with other Australian states but also with countries such as the UK, where lessons on gender equality and the prevention of gendered violence have been a mandatory part of school curriculum nationwide for a number of years.

There is also a lot for the government to hang its hat on in announcing the initiative. Research from other countries indicates that when such programs are in-depth, ongoing and use a wide range of teaching methods, they have a positive and long-lasting influence on students, by creating attitudes and behaviours that are less accepting of gendered violence and more supportive of victims.

Studies from the US show that among high school and university students who have participated in anti-rape education classes, there is less adherence to rape myths, more empathy for victims and a reduction in rape-supportive attitudes.

Critics of the move have questioned if classrooms are the appropriate forum for the delivery of 'respectful relationship' messages.

While unequivocally supporting both the sentiment and message behind the Victorian program, an op-ed expressed concern as to whether already over-worked teachers should be further burdened with "moral instruction" and "social engineering, even for the worthiest of causes". The author said academic education itself – "[r]eading, writing and numeracy" – is the best way to combat gender-based violence.

Why shouldn't violence prevention be taught alongside human development, nutrition and physical exercise in schools?

The problem with this argument is that it relies on a 'stay the course' approach. In Australia, women are already outperforming men academically, but this in itself hasn't resulted in gender-based violence withering away; rather, it continues at endemic levels.

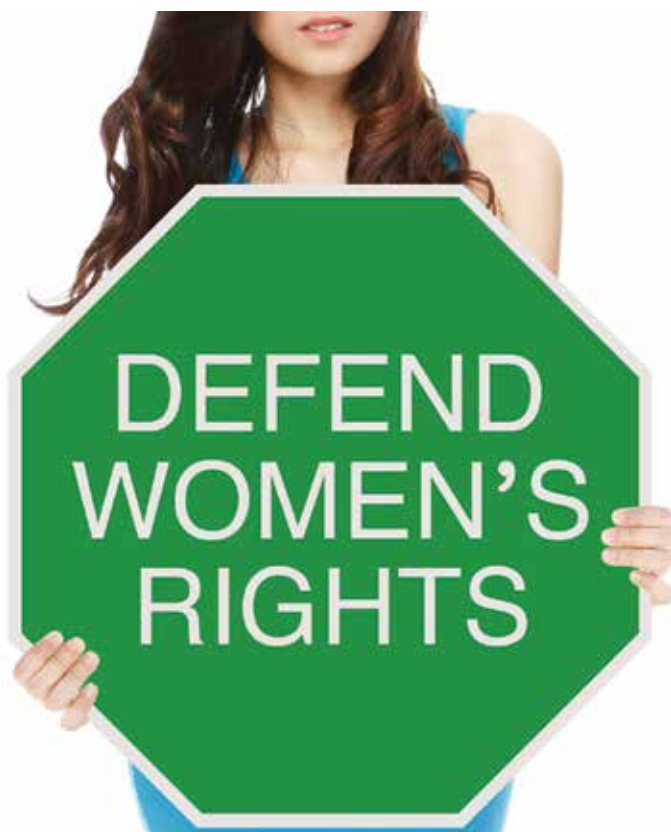
Educating students about the consequences of violence against women is also not merely a matter of

correcting poor 'moral' judgement, but an issue of health. Gender-based violence is the highest cause of premature death or ill-health for women in Victoria under the age of 45; more so than other risk factors including high blood pressure, obesity and smoking.

Why shouldn't violence prevention be taught alongside human development, nutrition and physical exercise in schools?

In a state where one in three women experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime, in a country where a woman is killed almost every week by a current or former partner, it would seem that introducing gender equality classes for students – at an age when prevention education is likely to have the greatest impact – is the very least the state can do.

If we are going to change attitudes to gendered violence and women's equality, school is a good place to start before the wider lessons of life. But these are issues that require much broader cultural, social and political change. Respectful relationships are not just something to be learned by boys, they must also be lived by men.



'Respectful relationships' not nearly enough

'Respectful relationship' classes aren't nearly enough because we know that domestic violence and other forms of violence against women are the product of a broader culture in which women are constructed as unequal to men.

Violence prevention programs for school students are an important step in changing that culture, but are boys likely to take this message on board while growing up in a wider culture of everyday sexism and casual misogyny?

The widespread consumption of pornography that eroticises violence against women and the mainstreaming of this in a pornified pop culture certainly do not promote respectful relationships.

But it is not only pop culture providing mixed messages on women's equality. The Victorian government could look to its own backyard, for a start. The state has one of the oldest systems of legalised brothel prostitution in the world, a policy that is at odds with the 'respectful relationships' framework.

In the often-heated feminist debate on whether prostitution is a form of violence against women, there is a great deal of evidence to show the industry causes considerable harm to women, even when legalised, and despite some women expressing satisfaction at being involved in the industry.

Feminists critical of prostitution have long pointed

out that the practice, and the sex industry more generally, relies on a vision of women as less than fully human; in the purchasing of sexual services, women are reduced to a commodity used for the purpose of male sexual gratification. By legalising prostitution, the state legitimises and effectively promotes this conception of women, which contributes to a broader culture in which we are defined by our inequality with men.

Prostitution and the larger sex industry are, of course, not the only areas the state could and should address. They are, however, key drivers of the idea that are women are not equal to men, especially in the context of sex and sexuality, and therefore can be treated accordingly.

If we are going to change attitudes to gendered violence and women's equality, school is a good place to start before the wider lessons of life. But these are issues that require much broader cultural, social and political change. Respectful relationships are not just something to be learned by boys, they must also be lived by men.

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THE CONVERSATION

Quek, K (25 August 2015). *Gender-based violence prevention in the classroom is just a start*. Retrieved from <http://theconversation.com> on 8 August 2016.



EXPLORING ISSUES

WORKSHEETS AND ACTIVITIES

The Exploring Issues section comprises a range of ready-to-use worksheets featuring activities which relate to facts and views raised in this book.

The exercises presented in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond. Some of the activities may be explored either individually or as a group.

As the information in this book is compiled from a number of different sources, readers are prompted to consider the origin of the text and to critically evaluate the questions presented.

Is the information cited from a primary or secondary source? Are you being presented with facts or opinions?

Is there any evidence of a particular bias or agenda? What are your own views after having explored the issues?

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Brainstorm, individually or as a group, to find out what you understand about violence against women.

1. The term 'violence against women' doesn't just refer to physical violence. Name other types of abuse associated with violence against women.

2. What is sexual assault, and what are some other commonly used terms to describe forms of sexual assault?

3. What is sexual harrasment, and where can it occur?

4. What is date rape, and who can it affect?



MULTIPLE CHOICE

Complete the following multiple choice questionnaire by circling or matching your preferred responses. The answers are at the end of the following page.

1. Which of the following are considered types of online abuse? (select all that apply)

- a. Liking a friend's social media post
- b. Collecting and releasing personal information about another person online
- c. Posting a selfie with your friends
- d. Inappropriate text messages
- e. Posting revenge porn
- f. Posting creepshots
- g. Cyberstalking
- h. Malicious impersonation

2. Sexual harassment can include which of the following behaviours? (select all that apply)

- a. Unnecessary familiarity
- b. Suggestive jokes
- c. Insults of a sexual nature
- d. Consensual touching
- e. Intrusive questions about someone's private life
- f. Sending sexually explicit emails
- g. Mutual attraction
- h. Leering
- i. Inappropriate advances on social networking sites
- j. Constant unwanted date requests

3. Match the following terms to their correct definition.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>a. Intimate partner violence</p> | <p>1. A type of violence that is directed at a woman because she is a woman, or that affects women disproportionately.</p> |
| <p>b. Psychological violence</p> | <p>2. Coercive sexual intercourse perpetrated by someone known to the victim.</p> |
| <p>c. Domestic violence</p> | <p>3. Refers not only to violence between intimate partners but also to violence between family members.</p> |
| <p>d. Date rape</p> | <p>4. The most common form of violence against women. This is when behaviour by someone in a relationship causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to those in the relationship.</p> |
| <p>e. Gender-based violence</p> | <p>5. Sexual violence perpetrated by people such as strangers, acquaintances, friends, colleagues, peers, teachers, neighbours and family members.</p> |
| <p>f. Non-partner sexual assault</p> | <p>6. Violence that can include a range of controlling behaviours and make the victim feel frightened, lose their self-esteem and stand in the way of them seeking assistance.</p> |
| <p>g. Acquaintance rape</p> | <p>7. Sexual assault where the victim and the offender are in, or have been in, some form of personal social relationship, ranging from a first date to an established relationship.</p> |
| <p>h. Family violence</p> | <p>8. Acts of violence that occur in domestic circumstances and between people who are, or were, in a relationship.</p> |



MULTIPLE CHOICE

4. Respond to the following statements by circling either 'True' or 'False':

- a. Most sexual assaults are perpetrated by strangers. True / False
- b. On average, at least one woman a week is killed by a partner or former partner in Australia. True / False
- c. Women often make false claims about domestic violence or sexual assault. True / False
- d. Indigenous women are five times more likely to have experienced physical violence than other Australian women and girls. True / False
- e. Men commit rape and sexual assault because they can't control their sexual urges. True / False
- f. Some people say 'no' to sex when they really mean 'yes' because they don't want to be seen to be easy. True / False
- g. While age is no barrier to experiencing sexual assault, women aged 15 to 24 years are most at risk of sexual assault. True / False
- h. Sexual assault in marriage is a crime. True / False

MULTIPLE CHOICE ANSWERS

1 = b, d, e, f, g, h; 2 = a, b, c, e, f, h, i, j; 3 = a = 4, b = 6, c = 8, d = 7, e = 1, f = 5, g = 2, h = 3; 4 = a = F (in 70% of sexual assaults the offender is a family member, friend, work or school colleague; of the remainder, the offender is usually someone the person meets socially or dates), b = T, c = F (the vast majority of sexual assaults are not reported to the police; only 17% of women who experienced sexual assault by a male perpetrator report it to the police, therefore the actual percentage of false cases is likely to be tiny), d = T, e = F (rape and sexual assault are acts of violence to assert power and control over people, not acts of sexual desire), f = F (when someone says 'no', it is definitely a 'no'), g = T, h = T.

- Research has shown that the significant drivers of violence against women include: the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women, and an adherence to rigidly defined gender roles and identities (DSS, *What is violence against women?*). (p.2)
- Violence against women usually involves a long-term pattern of controlling and coercive behaviour by the perpetrator (Our Watch, *Types of violence*). (p.3)
- Sexual violence can occur in intimate partner and family contexts, in workplaces, in schools, and in many other circumstances (*ibid*). (p.4)
- On average, at least 1 woman a week is killed by a partner or former partner in Australia (*ibid*). (p.5)
- Women are at least 3 times more likely than men to experience violence from an intimate partner (*ibid*). (p.5)
- Violence against women is not limited to the home or intimate relationships. Every year in Australia, over 300,000 women experience violence – often sexual violence – from someone other than a partner (*ibid*). (p.5)
- In Australia, violence against women is called many different things, including domestic violence, family violence, intimate partner violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault (*ibid*). (p.5)
- Intimate partner violence contributes to more death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44 than any other preventable risk factor (*ibid*). (p.6)
- An ABS survey showed that 95% of men and 80% of women who had experienced violence from a current partner had never contacted the police (ABC, *Fact file: Domestic violence in Australia*). (p.11)
- Domestic assault in NSW has risen from a rate of 257 per 100,000 people in 1995, reaching a high of 400 incidents per 100,000 people in 2014. This represents a 2% increase in the 5 years up to mid-2014 (*ibid*). (p.11)
- 15% of all women aged 18 years and over report that they have been sexually assaulted by a known person, while only 3.8% of women report that they have been sexually assaulted by a stranger (Our Watch, *Myth buster – Violence against women*). (p.13)
- By one estimate, the actual percentage of false cases as a proportion of all rapes (reported and unreported) may be close to 0.005% (*ibid*). (p.13)
- In Australia, 1 in 3 women over the age of 15 years have experienced physical assault and over half of all women have experienced at least one incident of physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime (Domestic Violence Crisis Service, ACT, *Violence against women statistics have not changed in 20+ years – why not?*). (p.14)
- A wide range of studies find a gender gap in attitudes. In general, men are more likely than women to agree with myths and beliefs supportive of violence against women, perceive a narrower range of behaviours as violent, blame and show less empathy for the victim, minimise the harms associated with physical and sexual assault, and see behaviours constituting violence against women as less serious, inappropriate, or damaging (*ibid*). (p.15)
- A 2006 study found that 20% of respondents believed that ‘domestic violence’ is committed equally by women and men, an increase from 9% in 1995 (*ibid*). (p.16)
- A culture of denial exists in Australia, with more than 1 in 3 people believing women make up false claims of rape. We’ve also seen a significant increase in Australians who further excuse and explain rape by believing it results from men not being able to control their need for sex (Diemer, K & Webster, K, *Australians still trivialise and excuse violence against women*). (pp. 17-18).
- Young people are also less likely than older Australians to recognise the harms of non-physical forms of violence, such as harassment, stalking and controlling behaviours (Powell, A & Diemer, K, *Young Australians’ views on domestic violence are cause for concern – but also hope*). (p.19)
- 1 in 2 young men (52%) agreed that tracking a partner electronically without their consent was acceptable to some degree – as did 40% of young women – compared to 35% of those aged between 35 and 64, who likewise minimise such behaviours (*ibid*). (pp. 19-20).
- Rural women, people with disabilities, people who have a mental illness, women who have drug or alcohol addictions, women who work as sex workers and Aboriginal women experience higher rates of sexual assault than other women (Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia, *Factsheet: Myths and Facts*). (p.26)
- Studies show that women who are raped by an acquaintance often blame themselves, have low self-esteem, high levels of psychological stress, and are at risk of increased drug and alcohol use and sexual risk taking (Henry, N & Powell A, *Everyday rape: let’s turn the spotlight on known perpetrators*). (p.27)
- Sexual harassment disproportionately affects women with 1 in 5 experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace at some time. However, 1 in 20 men also report experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace (Australian Human Rights Commission, *Sexual Harassment*). (p.34)
- According to research, 87% of people have experienced some form of physical or verbal street harassment, often before the age of 18. Internationally, this figure is higher, at 96% (Fileborn, B, *Whistling and staring at women in the street is harassment – and it’s got to stop*). (p.35)
- A 2013 survey found up to 28% of people endorse attitudes supportive of male dominance of decision-making in relationships, a dynamic identified as a risk factor for partner violence (Department of Social Services, *Backgrounder: National campaign to reduce violence against women and their children*). (pp. 38-39)
- 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 (*ibid*). (p.39)
- Indigenous women were 5 times more likely to have experienced physical violence in the previous 12 months than other Australian women and girls (*ibid*). (p.39)
- 90% of women with an intellectual disability have been subjected to sexual abuse (*ibid*). (p.39)

Date rape

A type of sexual assault that occurs when the victim and the perpetrator are in, or have been in, some form of personal social relationship. This can be anything from a single date to a long-term relationship.

Domestic violence

A situation where one partner in a relationship is using violent and abusive behaviour in order to control and dominate the other partner.

Drink spiking

When someone adds drugs or alcohol to a drink (alcoholic or non-alcoholic), without the consent of the person drinking it.

Economic abuse

Also known as financial abuse. When a partner or another family member takes control of financial affairs when you don't want them to, or prevents access to money or assets.

Emotional violence

Also called psychological violence. When controlling behaviour is used such as humiliation, isolation from friends and family, threats of suicide and self-harm, injury or death and destruction of property. It can make the victim experience fear and loss of self-esteem which can reduce their ability to seek help.

Family violence

Any type of abusive behaviour in a family or relationship where one person attempts to gain and maintain control over the other. It can take many forms including physical violence, sexual violence, emotional violence, and social or economic abuse.

Gender-based violence

This occurs when violence is specifically 'directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately'.

Indecent assault

When someone touches someone else's body in an unwanted and inappropriate way. It can include unwanted touching of a person's bottom, breasts or genitals.

Intimate partner violence

Any type of behaviour by a person (male or female) within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to those in that relationship. This can include current or past marriages, domestic partnerships, familial relations, and/or people who share accommodation. This is the most common type of violence against women.

Non-partner sexual assault

Sexual violence that is perpetrated by someone other than a partner e.g. family, friends, neighbours, strangers, colleagues, peers, or teachers.

Physical violence

Includes both physical assault, which refers to the use of physical force with the intent to harm or frighten a person,

and physical attempts or threats, which refers to the verbal, and/or physical intent to inflict harm which the victim believed was able and likely to be carried out.

Rape

The most serious form of sexual assault, forcing someone to have sexual intercourse without their consent. It also includes oral sex. Sexual intercourse with anyone under the age of 12 is rape as a child is not capable of giving consent. In NSW law, the term rape is no longer used and has been replaced with 'sexual intercourse without consent'.

Rape myths

False beliefs and attitudes that minimise, excuse or justify sexual violence.

Revenge porn

When a partner or ex-partner posts nude, semi-nude or intimate pictures and/or videos online without permission.

Sexual harassment

Unwanted sexual advances or any other sexual behaviour that would make someone feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. Can include street harassment.

Sexual threat

The threat of a non-consensual or forced sexual activity by use of physical force, intimidation or coercion in which the victim must believe that the threats were able and likely to be carried out.

Sexual violence

Also called sexual assault. Includes any form of non-consensual or forced sexual activity or touching, including rape. It is carried out against your will using physical or threatened force, intimidation or coercion. Forcing you to have sex is against the law, even if you are married. It can occur in intimate partner and family contexts, in workplaces, in schools, and in many other circumstances.

Stalking

When a partner, ex-partner, or someone else follows you around, or repeatedly tries to contact you, even if you've said you don't want this. Stalking is against the law and you should notify someone if this is occurring.

Street harassment

A situation where someone experiences whistles, stares, unwanted comments, touching or is followed by strangers in the street.

Social abuse

Systemic isolation from family and friends through techniques such as ongoing rudeness to family and friends, moving to locations where the victim doesn't know anyone, and forbidding or physically preventing the victim from going out and meeting people – in effect, imprisonment.

Victim blaming

When the responsibility for sexual violence is placed on the victim rather than the perpetrator.

Websites with further information on the topic

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) <http://anrows.org.au>
 Be the Hero www.bethehero.com.au
 CASA Forum (Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault) www.casa.org.au
 Department of Social Services www.dss.gov.au
 Domestic Violence Crisis Service www.dvcs.org.au
 Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria www.dvrcv.org.au
 Lifeline www.lifeline.org.au
 Love: the good, the bad and the ugly <http://lovegoodbadugly.com>
 MensLine Australia www.mensline.org.au
 National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service www.1800respect.org.au
 No To Violence Men's Referral Service www.ntvmrs.org.au
 One in Three Campaign www.oneinthree.com.au
 Our Watch www.ourwatch.org.au
 Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia www.rape-dvservices.org.au
 South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence (SECASA) www.secasa.com.au
 The Line www.theline.org.au
 Violence Against Women. Let's Stop it at the Start www.respect.gov.au
 White Ribbon Australia www.whiteribbon.org.au

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THANK YOU

- Our Watch
- The Line campaign
- White Ribbon Australia.

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