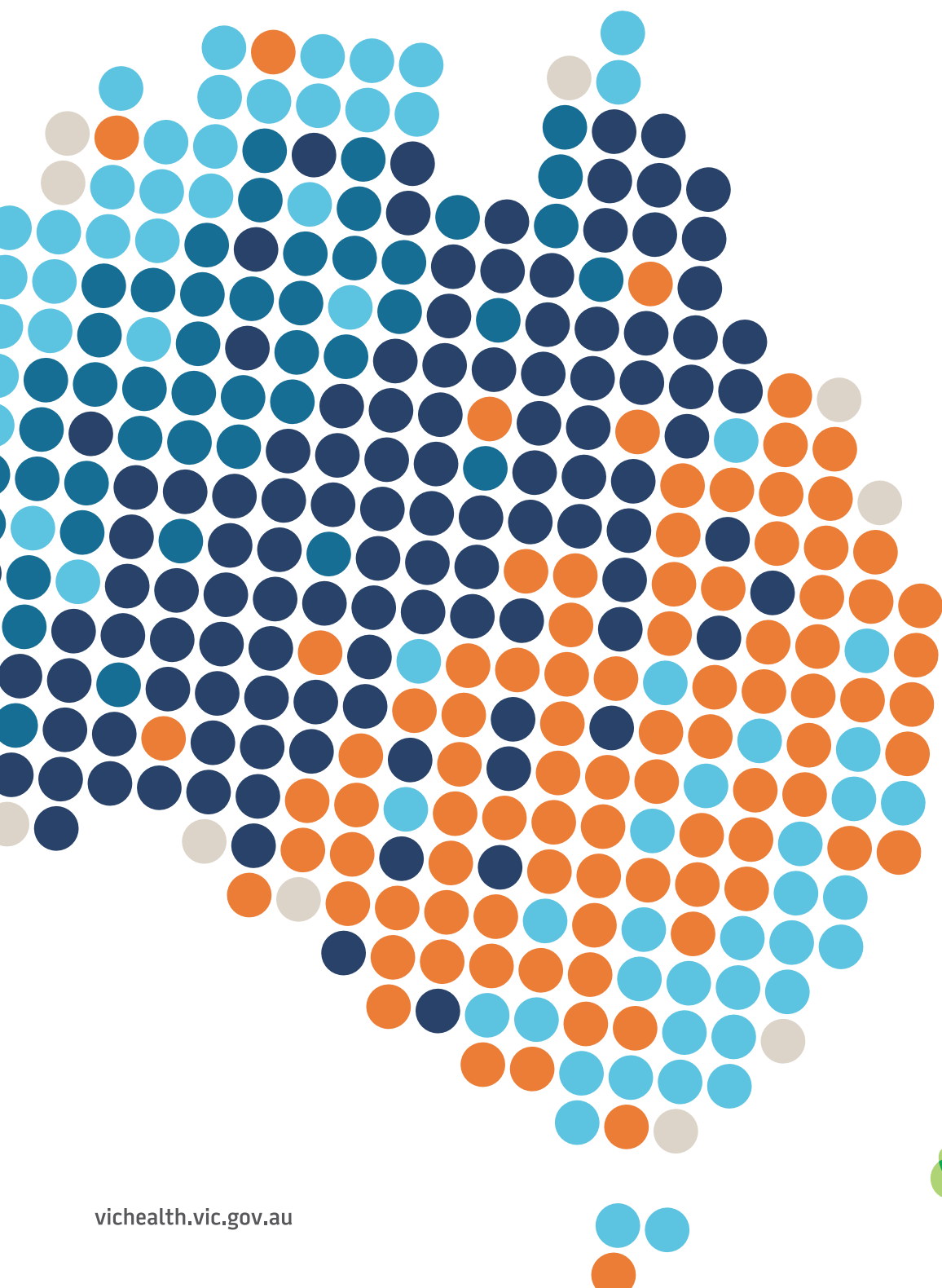


Australians' attitudes to violence against women

Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS)



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VicHealth was commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Social Services in 2012 to undertake the National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS). VicHealth led the project in collaboration with the Social Research Centre (SRC) and The University of Melbourne as research partners. Details of the project team and key contributors are on p. 6.

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Australians' attitudes to violence against women

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“There is no city or country in the world where women and girls live free of the fear of violence. Whether walking city streets, using public transport, going to school, or selling goods at the market, women and girls are subject to the threat of sexual harassment and violence. This reality of daily life limits women’s freedom to get an education, to work, to participate in politics – or to simply enjoy their own neighbourhoods.”

Michelle Bachelet, President of Chile and former Executive Director of UN Women

The Guardian, 21 February 2013

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CEO's introduction

I am proud to present this summary report of the third National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey, the second to be led by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth). The survey was developed in partnership with The University of Melbourne, the Social Research Centre and experts across Australia, and supported by the Australian Government Department of Social Services as part of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*.

Mental illness is among the top three causes of burden of disease and injury in Australia. That's why VicHealth has adopted improving mental health and wellbeing as a strategic focus in our *Action Agenda for Health Promotion*. We support activity that builds evidence and skills to prevent violence against women because partner violence alone contributes 8% to the total disease burden among Victorian women aged 15 to 44 years. Some 62% of that burden is mental health-related, with strong links to depression and anxiety. We recognise that valuable work is already being done to respond to women and children affected by violence, so VicHealth's emphasis has always been on primary prevention: stopping this violence from occurring in the first place.

Our prevention work would not be possible without the diverse and valuable partnerships we have forged with Victorian workplaces, local governments, communities, sports clubs, schools, universities and the media to build communities where respect and equality are paramount and where women can live, work and enjoy their leisure time free from the fear of violence.

VicHealth recently formalised an exciting partnership with the newly established Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children to integrate the findings and resources from this work and elevate them to a national level. We want to see primary prevention at the heart of efforts to tackle violence against women across Australia and to extend this work to more everyday settings such as schools and workplaces. It has been encouraging to see community-driven leadership on this issue in recent times.

The rigour of the National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey makes it an invaluable road map to guide this effort and monitor future progress. It is testimony to the calibre of the research team and their national collaborators. I thank all those involved and trust that this report will be of immense value to every person across Australia who is working to eradicate violence against women, and their children.

I look forward to seeing continued momentum in the prevention of violence against women and their children.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jerril Rechter', written in a cursive style.

Jerril Rechter
CEO, VicHealth

Foreword

How a nation responds to violence against women is an important marker of its commitment to improving the status of women. The two are inextricably linked. Being exposed to, or fearing violence, seriously compromises women's equal participation in education, employment and social and civic life. At the same time gender inequality and rigidly defined gender roles are underlying causes of this problem.

The consequences of gender-based violence are not confined to women. Violence against women has serious impacts on children and the economy.

Ending violence against women is a goal shared by Australian women and men across the social spectrum. It is a commitment encapsulated in specific plans across a number of Australian jurisdictions and nationally in the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* and the Second Action Plan, *'Moving Ahead'*.

In the early years of the National Plan, substantial infrastructure was established to ensure that Australia is ready to take a coordinated approach to address the root causes of violence against women. This includes the establishment of the Foundation to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), chaired by Emeritus Professor Anne Edwards AO. The Foundation, of which I am proud to be Chair, is driving cultural and attitudinal change to prevent violence against women and their children from the ground up through community engagement and advocacy. We will work closely with our colleagues at ANROWS and build together the evidence base to address this challenge.

This survey tells us that we have been able to challenge a culture that allows violence against women to occur. We know that further change is possible. But, the findings are also a stark reminder that vigilance will be required to maintain the momentum of change seeded in the efforts of the women's movement in the 1970s and kept alive by governments and the community in the decades since.

We must make the most of the recent investment made in the infrastructure for the prevention of violence against women on a national scale, to turn the tide on the most concerning trends and ensure that progress does not stall. It is time for all of us to build on the positive momentum in order to reduce and ultimately eliminate violence against women.

I look forward to working with women and men across Australia to respond to this challenge.



Natasha Stott Despoja

Natasha Stott Despoja AM

Chair, The Foundation to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children

Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls

“VicHealth’s leadership in seeking to change such an entrenched problem in the private and public lives of Victorians is remarkable. Their work is always grounded in evidence, and their willingness to tackle the pervasive and persistent issue of violence against women in an innovative way is inspiring.”

Ms Despoja announcing the formal partnership between VicHealth and the Foundation to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children

10 April 2014

Acknowledgements

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) was commissioned by the former Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (now the Department of Social Services) in 2012 to undertake the National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey. VicHealth led the project in collaboration with the Social Research Centre (SRC) and The University of Melbourne as research partners. VicHealth would like to acknowledge the project team and other key contributors to the project:

NCAS Project Team

- Ms Kim Webster, Freelance Researcher/Project Manager
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Technical Advisory Group

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- Professor Jenny Morgan, Melbourne Law School, The University of Melbourne
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- Ms Carolyn Frohmader, Executive Director, Women with Disabilities Australia
- Associate Professor Anita Harris, Academic and Youth Research Specialist
- Dr Nikki Honey, Social Researcher
- Ms Cristina Scott, Librarian, Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse

Reviewers

The following individuals reviewed the project technical report on which this summary is based:

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- Ms Kiri Bear
- Ms Julie Bryant
- Ms Caitlin Dunlop

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Terms used in this report

Colonisation – in this report, the displacement and undermining of societies, including their values, cultures, beliefs and ways of life by outside peoples. It typically includes clashes whereby the colonised people are encouraged and/or forced to take on the values and beliefs of the colonisers (Weaver 2008).

Determinant – attribute or exposure that increases the probability of the occurrence of a disease or other specified outcome; in this report, violence against women or attitudes that are supportive of violence against women.

Disability – in this report, a longstanding difficulty, self-identified, in hearing, seeing, communicating, walking, climbing stairs, bending, learning or doing any similar activity that reduces the amount or kind of activity that can be done in daily life (Statistics Canada 2005).

Family violence – see *violence against women*.

Gender – economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female at a particular time.

Gender-based violence – commonly used in the international arena to describe violence involving men and women, in which the female is usually the victim; it is derived from the unequal power relationships between men and women. Violence is directed significantly against a woman because she is a woman, or affects women disproportionately (WHO 2010).

Gender equality – equal treatment of women and men in laws and policies, and equal access to resources and services within families, communities and society; sometimes referred to as formal equality (WHO 2010). See also *gender equity*.

Gender equity – involves fairness and justice in the distribution of resources and responsibilities between men and women; sometimes referred to as substantive equality. It often requires women-specific programs and policies to end existing inequalities (WHO 2010). See also *gender equality*.

Human development – the process of enlarging people's choices, particularly to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living. Other choices commonly included in definitions of human development include political, economic and social freedom, opportunities for being creative and productive and enjoying personal self-respect and guaranteed human rights (UN 1997). Although most commonly used when referring to development at the national level, in this report human development is also used to refer to development in particular regions and communities within nations.

Interpersonal violence – violence occurring between individuals either known or unknown to one another. It is distinguished from collective violence, such as violence occurring in the course of war, and self-directed violence such as suicide and other forms of self-harm (WHO 2002).

Intimate partner violence/partner violence – any behaviour by a man or a woman within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to those in the relationship. This is the most common form of violence against women (WHO 2010).

Raunch culture – a culture that promotes overtly sexual representations of women, for example through the acceptance of pornography, stripping and nudity in advertising, especially when this is encouraged by women (Collins English Dictionary 2014; see also Levy 2005; Squires et al. 2006).

Risk factor – see *determinant*.

Sex – biological characteristics that typically define humans as male or female [the exception being persons who are inter-sex. The gender identity of trans-gender or bi-gender persons may be different to the sex assigned to them at birth; Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission 2013].

Social norms – rules of conduct and models of behaviour expected by a society or social group. They are rooted in the customs, traditions and value systems that gradually develop in a society or social group.

Socio-economic status – umbrella term used in this report to refer to education, occupational status, employment and degree of advantage or disadvantage at the area level.

Violence against women – 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 (UN 1993). Indigenous communities understand violence against women perpetrated by people known to them as part of the broader issue of *family violence*, defined as:

a wide range of physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological and economic abuses that occur within families, intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities (Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force 2003, p. 123)

This reflects the significance of extended family and kinship relationships in Indigenous communities, resulting in both a broader conceptualisation of the notion of family and a view that the consequences of violence affect all those involved.

The broader definition also reflects the interrelationships between violence occurring within Indigenous communities and that which has been perpetrated against them (Atkinson 1994).

Violence-supportive attitudes – in this report, attitudes that justify, excuse, minimise or trivialise physical or sexual violence against women, or blame or hold women at least partly responsible for violence perpetrated against them. Individuals who hold such attitudes are not all necessarily ‘violence-prone’ or would openly condone violence against women. However, the evidence presented in this report suggests such attitudes expressed by influential individuals or held by a substantial number of people can create a culture in which violence is at best not clearly condemned and at worst condoned or encouraged.

Abbreviations

- ABS – Australian Bureau of Statistics
- ATSI – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI and Indigenous are used interchangeably and both refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples)
- DSS – Department of Social Services
- GDP – Gross Domestic Product
- N-MESC – Non-main English speaking country
- PSS – Personal Safety Survey
- VicHealth – The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation

About this report

The National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (herein the National Community Attitudes Survey) involved more than 17,500 twenty-minute telephone interviews with a cross-section of Australians aged 16 years and older. This is the third survey of its kind, with the first undertaken in 1995 and the second in 2009. The research investigates four key areas related to violence against women and its prevention:

1. community knowledge of violence against women
2. attitudes towards violence against women
3. attitudes towards gender roles and relationships
4. responses to witnessing violence and knowledge of resources.

This report is a summary of the findings and implications of the Survey and is based on:

- a technical report containing detailed data and information on the survey methodology (www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/ncas)
- a report focusing on results for people aged 16 to 24 years (www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/ncas).

This survey is one of two designed to monitor the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*. The second survey, the Personal Safety Survey, gauges experiences of violence. It is implemented by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2013b).

The National Community Attitudes Survey is conducted to:

- gauge community knowledge of, and attitudes towards, violence against women to identify areas that need attention in future
- assess change between 1995, 2009 and 2013
- improve understanding of factors influencing knowledge, attitudes and responses
- identify segments of the population that may particularly benefit from activity to prevent violence.

As well as looking at results for young people (as above) and the community as whole, there is a focus on:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) Australians (also referred to as Indigenous Australians in this report)
- those born or with a parent born in a country in which English is not the main language spoken
- people with disabilities.

This is because women in these groups are particularly vulnerable to violence and/or its impacts.

“It is vital that we make our voices heard when speaking against violence. It is important that we continue to spark discussions around gender equality. While there is much to celebrate in terms of how far we have come, it is important to recognise the challenges we still have to overcome.”

Julie McKay, Executive Director of UN Women Australia
Daily Life, 27 March 2013

Overall findings

The majority of Australians have a good knowledge of violence against women and do not endorse most attitudes supportive of this violence.

On the whole, Australians’ understanding and attitudes remained stable between 2009 and 2013. However, when you look at the findings from individual questions, some areas improved, whereas others became worse.

Young people’s attitudes remain an area of concern. Young people have somewhat more violence-supportive attitudes than others but their attitudes are gradually improving over time, particularly among young men, with fewer young people in 2013 holding attitudes at the extreme end of the spectrum.

People’s understanding of violence against women and their attitudes to gender equality have significant impacts on their attitudes to violence against women.

The key findings of the four areas investigated are summarised in the following tables.

1. COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

	1995	2009	2013
Certain behaviours are a form of partner violence/violence against women (% agree)			
Slaps/pushes to cause harm and fear	97	97	97
Forces partner to have sex	94	97	96 [#]
Tries to scare/control by threatening to hurt others	n/a	98	97
Throws/smashes objects to frighten/threaten	91	97	96 [#]
Repeatedly criticises to make partner feel bad/useless	71	85	86 [#]
Controls social life by preventing partner seeing family and friends	74	83	85 [^]
Tries to control by denying partner money	62	71	70 [#]
Yells abuse at partner	77	88	n/a
Stalks by repeatedly following/watching at home or work	n/a	90	89
Harasses by repeated phone calls	n/a	89	87 ^{**}
Harasses by repeated emails/text messages	n/a	85	85
Understanding of the law (% agree)			
Domestic violence is a criminal offence	93	97	96 [#]
A woman cannot be raped by someone she is in a sexual relationship with	n/a	6	9 ^{**}
Prevalence of violence against women (% agree)			
Violence against women is common	n/a	74	68 ^{**}
Women with disabilities are more likely than other women to experience violence	n/a	n/a	41
Patterns and consequences of violence (% agree)			
Women are more likely to be raped by someone they know than a stranger	76	70	64 [^]
Men mainly or more often commit acts of domestic violence	86	74	71 [^]
Women are more likely to suffer physical harm from domestic violence	n/a	89	86 ^{**}
Level of fear is worse for women	n/a	55	52 ^{**}
Perceived main cause (%)			
Some men being unable to manage their anger	n/a	n/a	64
The belief that men should be in charge of the relationship	n/a	n/a	18
Some men being under financial stress	n/a	n/a	13

Strengths

- Most Australians recognise that violence against women constitutes a wide range of behaviours designed to intimidate and control women – not just physical assault.
- Since 1995 there has been an increase in the proportion of Australians recognising non-physical behaviours as part of violence against women.
- Most recognise that partner violence and forced sex in a relationship are against the law.
- Most recognise that partner violence is perpetrated mainly by men and that women are more likely to suffer physical harm.

Guide to table symbols

- ** Difference between 2009 and 2013 is statistically significant, $p \leq 0.01$.
- # Difference between 1995 and 2013 is statistically significant, $p \leq 0.01$.
- ^ Difference between 1995, 2009 and 2013 is statistically significant, $p \leq 0.01$.
- ~ Difference between assault of a stranger and assault of a family member or friend is statistically significant, $p \leq 0.01$.

Challenges

- While most Australians recognise that violence against women constitutes a wide range of behaviours designed to intimidate and control women, fewer Australians understand non-physical behaviours as violence against women.
- Since 1995 there has been a decrease in those agreeing that violence is perpetrated mainly by men.
- Between 2009 and 2013 there was a decrease in those recognising that women are more likely than men to suffer physical harm and fear as a result of this violence.
- Between 2009 and 2013 there was a decrease in those recognising that violence against women is common.
- Since 1995 there has been a decrease in those recognising that women are at greater risk of sexual assault by a known person than by a stranger. A woman is three times more likely to be sexually assaulted by a known person (ABS 2013b).
- Only 4 in 10 Australians are aware of the greater risk of violence experienced by women with disabilities.
- Most people see violence against women as being primarily due to some men being unable to manage their anger.

2. ATTITUDES TOWARDS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

	1995	2009	2013
Circumstances in which violence towards a current/former partner can be justified (% agree)			
Partner admits to sex with another man	6	5	6
Partner makes him look stupid or insults him in front of his friends	n/a	3	5**
Partner ends or tries to end relationship	n/a	3	4
Against ex-partner to get access to children	n/a	4	4
If ex-partner is unreasonable about property settlement and financial issues	n/a	2	4**
Attitudes excusing violence (% agree)			
Rape results from men not able to control their need for sex	n/a	35	43**
A man is less responsible for rape if drunk/affected by drugs at the time	n/a	8	9
Domestic violence can be excused if people get so angry they lose control	n/a	20	22
Domestic violence can be excused if the violent person regrets it	n/a	25	21**
Domestic violence can be excused if the violent person was abused as a child	n/a	n/a	12
Domestic violence can be excused if the violent person is under a lot of stress	n/a	n/a	12
Domestic violence can be excused if the offender is heavily affected by alcohol	n/a	8	9
Attitudes trivialising violence (% agree)			
Where one partner is violent it's reasonable for them to be made to leave the family home	n/a	90	89
It's hard to understand why women stay	77	82	78**
Most women could leave a violent relationship if they really wanted to	n/a	54	51
Women who are sexually harassed should sort it out themselves	20	13	12#
Domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family	18	14	17**
It's a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship to keep the family together	n/a	8	9
Attitudes minimising violence			
Violence against women is a serious issue	n/a	96	95
Certain behaviours are serious (% agree)			
Slaps/pushes to cause harm/fear	93	92	92
Forces partner to have sex	95	96	96
Tries to scare/control by threatening to hurt others	n/a	97	97
Throws/smashes objects to frighten/threaten	87	94	93#
Repeatedly criticises to make partner feel bad/useless	72	84	85#
Controls social life by preventing partner seeing family and friends	84	85	87#
Tries to control by denying partner money	77	75	74#
Yells abuse at partner	70	79	n/a
Stalking by repeatedly following/watching at home or work	n/a	96	94
Harassment by repeated phone calls	n/a	92	90
Harassment by repeated emails, text messages	n/a	86	86

Seriousness/acceptability of tracking a female partner by electronic means without their consent (% agree)			
Serious	n/a	n/a	85
Never acceptable	n/a	n/a	61
Attitudes towards false allegations of partner violence and rape (% agree)			
Women going through custody battles often make up or exaggerate claims of domestic violence in order to improve their case	n/a	51	53
Women rarely make false claims of rape	59	60	59
A lot of times women who say they were raped led the man on and later had regrets	n/a	n/a	38
If a woman doesn't physically resist – even if protesting verbally – then it isn't really rape	n/a	n/a	10
Attitudes shifting blame from perpetrator to victim (% agree)			
If a woman is raped while drunk/affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible	n/a	18	19
Women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes'	18	14	16
If a woman goes to a room alone with a man at a party, it is her fault if she is raped	n/a	n/a	12
Domestic violence can be excused if the victim is heavily affected by alcohol	n/a	9	11

Strengths

- Only 4% to 6% of Australians (depending on the scenario) believe violence against women can be justified.
- Since 2009 there has been a decrease in the proportion of Australians who believe that domestic violence can be excused if the violent person is regretful afterward.
- Most do not believe that women should remain in a violent relationship to keep the family together or that domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family.
- Since 1995, there has been a decrease in those who believe that women who are sexually harassed should sort it out themselves.
- Most support the current policy that the violent person should be made to leave the family home.
- Most agree that violence against women (both physical and non-physical) is serious.
- Since 1995 there has been an increase in the percentage recognising non-physical forms of control, intimidation and harassment as serious.
- There has been a 7% decline since 2009 in the proportion of young people who hold attitudes which support violence against women at the extreme end of the spectrum. The decline is 10% in young men. Young people have been the target of recent efforts to prevent violence against women.

Challenges

- Sizeable proportions believe there are circumstances in which violence can be excused.
- There has been an increase from over 3 in 10 in 2009 to over 4 in 10 in 2013 in Australians agreeing that rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex.
- Nearly 8 in 10 agree that it's hard to understand why women stay in a violent relationship.
- More than half agree that 'women could leave a violent relationship if they really wanted to'.
- Compared with physical violence and forced sex, Australians are less inclined to see non-physical forms of control, intimidation and harassment as 'serious'.
- More than half agree that women often fabricate cases of domestic violence in order to improve their prospects in family law cases and nearly 2 in 5 believe that a lot of times women who say they were raped led the man on and later had regrets.
- Up to 1 in 5 believes that there are circumstances in which women bear some responsibility for violence. There has been no change since 2009.

3. ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

	2009	2013
Attitudes towards gender roles in public and private life (% agree)		
Men make better political leaders	23	27**
When jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job than women	11	12
University education is more important for a boy	4	5
A woman has to have children to be fulfilled	11	12
It's okay for a woman to have a child as a single parent and not want a stable relationship with a man	60	66**
Attitudes towards decision-making in relationships (% agree)		
Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household	18	19
Women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship	27	28
Attitudes towards the status of women (% agree)		
Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the workplace in Australia	11	13**

Strengths

- Most Australians support gender equality in areas of public life.
- Most believe that women still experience inequality in the workplace.

Challenges

- Over a quarter believe that men make better political leaders.
- Up to 28% of Australians endorse attitudes supportive of male dominance of decision-making in relationships, a dynamic identified as a risk factor for partner violence (see p. 34).

4. RESPONSES TO WITNESSING VIOLENCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF RESOURCES

	2009	2013
Preparedness to intervene (% agree)		
If a known woman is being assaulted by her partner	n/a	98
If an unknown woman is being assaulted	n/a	92~
Knowledge of sources of assistance and responses (% agree)		
Would know where to get help regarding a domestic violence problem	62	57**
Police response times have improved	44	44
Women with disabilities are less likely to be believed when reporting sexual assault	37	42**

Strengths

- Most Australians state they would intervene if they witnessed a woman being assaulted by her partner.

Challenges

- Since 2009 there has been a decrease in those who would know where to go to get help with a domestic violence problem.
- Less than half recognise that police response times have improved. This percentage did not change from 2009 to 2013.
- A new challenge is to engage the community in responding to known risk factors for violence, such as controlling behaviours or disrespect towards women.

Factors influencing understanding and attitudes

- Those with high levels of support for equitable gender roles and relationships are more likely to understand violence against women as comprising a range of physical, psychological, social and economic means of intimidation and control (versus physical violence and forced sex alone).
- Those who understand violence against women as comprising this range of behaviours and have more equitable attitudes to gender roles and relations are less likely to endorse attitudes supportive of violence against women.
- Once attitudes towards gender and understanding of violence against women have been taken into account, the survey found that demographic factors (e.g. age, gender, country of birth) have a limited influence on Australian's attitudes.

Knowledge and attitudes in particular groups and places

While demographic factors are not strong predictors of attitudes, some differences can be reported. Those Australians more likely to have low levels of understanding of violence against women, as well as those least likely to reject violence-supportive attitudes and have a low level of support for gender equality are:

- men, especially young men and those experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage
- younger people (attitudes towards equality in relationships)
- people from countries in which the main language spoken is not English, especially those who have recently arrived in Australia.

Older people are more likely to hold violence-supportive attitudes; are less likely to have a high level of support for gender equality; and are less knowledgeable about violence against women.

There are few differences between rural, remote, urban and regional areas, on the basis of socioeconomic status, or between states and territories.

Executive summary

About the survey

Violence against women is violence involving men and women in which the female is usually the victim, and which may result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women. More than one in three Australian women has experienced violence by a male perpetrator since the age of 15. This violence has serious consequences for individual women and their children and for the wider community. There is no single cause of violence against women. Rather, it is the result of multiple and inter-related factors, including the characteristics of individuals and their relationships, as well as influences in organisations, communities and at the broader societal level. Significant underlying factors are the distribution of power and resources between men and women, and the ways in which gender roles and gender identities (i.e. what it means to be masculine or feminine) are shaped.

The National Community Attitudes Survey addresses four factors involved in violence against women and its prevention:

- community knowledge of violence against women
- attitudes towards violence against women
- attitudes towards gender roles and relationships
- responses to witnessing violence and knowledge of resources.

Its focus is on partner violence, sexual assault, stalking and sexual harassment. More than 17,500 twenty-minute telephone interviews were undertaken with a cross-section of Australians aged 16 years or more. The survey was undertaken between January and May 2013, and this is the third time it has been implemented. Previous surveys were conducted in 1995 and 2009. Findings are compared across these three survey waves.

Knowledge is high, but it is declining on some key issues

Strengthening understanding of the prevalence, nature, dynamics and causes of violence against women, and legal responses to it, are important both to ensure appropriate responses to those affected by violence and to facilitate wide community engagement in preventing the problem. The survey supports other research indicating that understanding influences the formation of attitudes (Ajzen & Fishbein 2005; Chaiken & Trope 1999; Fazio 1990).

There is a high level of knowledge on most of the measures in the survey and an improving trend on some. In particular there is increasing recognition in the community that violence against women comprises a range of behaviours from physical and sexual violence through to social, emotional and financial forms of control, and indirect harassment via telephone and email. However, there is a need to maintain a focus on strengthening understanding of violence. This is indicated by the following:

- Social, financial and emotional forms of abuse and control, such as repeatedly criticising one's partner to make them feel bad or useless, or controlling their social life, are still less likely to be recognised as partner violence than overt physical behaviours such as forced sex and slapping and pushing.
- There has been a 15 percentage point drop since 1995 in recognition that it is mainly men who commit partner violence (86% in 1995; 74% in 2009; 71% in 2013). There has also been a reduction in the percentage of people agreeing that women are most likely to suffer its physical harms (89% in 2009; 86% in 2013). Barely half agree that women are more likely than men to experience fear (55% in 2009; 52% in 2013).
- People tend to see violence as caused primarily by the characteristics of individual men using violence. This is in contrast to the evidence, which shows that violence is learned behaviour and that social factors such as the media, laws and the attitudes of others are strong influences.

“We often talk about this issue in terms of numbers and statistics so we can better understand the magnitude of the problem. But I sometimes think this takes us away from the reality of seeing women with broken eye sockets, missing teeth, broken arms and broken spirits.”

Ken Lay, Victoria Police Chief Commissioner
White Ribbon Day, 25 November 2012

“I would see family violence as the greatest social epidemic of our time... It is corroding the fabric of Australian society. The damage that it does to women’s ability to participate is enormous and I think many people don’t realise that.”

Annette Gillespie, Chief Executive Officer, Women’s Domestic Violence Crisis Service of Victoria
Sydney Morning Herald, 23 June 2013

Other research has found that people who understand that violence against women is common are more likely to take action when they witness violence and its precursors (Gracia & Herrero 2006a). Public opinion about a problem is among a range of factors influencing whether governments take action to address it (Burnstein 2003). Although the majority of Australians recognised that violence against women is common (68%), there has been a decline since 2009, when 74% did so. A minority of Australians (41%) recognises the higher prevalence of violence affecting women with disabilities. This suggests the importance of continuing to strengthen community understanding of the prevalence of violence against women in general and among vulnerable groups of women in particular.

Similarly, there is a need to strengthen understanding of the much greater risk of sexual violence posed by known persons (ABS 2013b). The percentage aware of this declined 12 percentage points between 1995 (76%) and 2013 (64%). This misconception is understood to be among the beliefs driving low rates of reporting, prosecution and conviction in relation to sexual assault (Larcombe 2011).

Few believe that violence against women is justified, but more are prone to trivialising, minimising or excusing violence and to blaming the victim

The relationship between attitudes held by an individual and their behaviour is relatively weak. However, attitudes held by many individuals, or by powerful individuals, shape broader social norms, which in turn do influence behaviour.

Attitudes can provide a culture of support for violence by justifying or excusing it, trivialising or minimising the problem, or shifting responsibility for violent behaviour from perpetrator to victim.

Because attitudes reflect broader social norms and cultures, they are also an indicator of progress in addressing violence against women.

Only a minority (between 4% and 6% depending on the scenario) of Australians are prepared to *justify* violence. However, substantial numbers believe that there are circumstances in which it can be *excused*. More than 1 in 5

agree that partner violence can be excused if the person is genuinely regretful afterward (21%) or if they temporarily lost control (22%), while 2 in 5 (43%) agree that rape occurs because men are unable to control their sexual urges.

Most support the principle underpinning contemporary policy approaches that the violent person rather than the victim and her children should be removed from the family home (89%). The proportion agreeing that women who are sexually harassed should be left to sort things out themselves has declined steadily since 1995 and in 2013 was held by just over 1 in 10 Australians (12%). There is minority support for domestic violence being a private matter to be handled in the family (17%) and to be tolerated by women to keep the family together (9%). However, most Australians have a poor understanding of the barriers women experience to seeking safety from violence. Seventy-eight per cent agree that it’s hard to understand why women stay in a violent relationship, and 51% agree that a woman could leave a violent relationship if she really wanted to.

Although most believe that violence against women is serious, people are more inclined to rate obvious physical behaviours (for example forced sex) as more serious than psychological, social and economic forms of abuse such as repeatedly criticising one’s partner to make them feel bad or useless, or controlling their social life.

Despite evidence that false allegations of sexual assault are rare, fewer than 3 in 5 (59%) believe this to be the case; nearly 2 in 5 (38%) believe that ‘a lot of times, women who say they were raped had led the man on and then had regrets’. More than half (53%) believe that women often make false claims of domestic violence to improve their prospects in cases concerning care arrangements for children following separation.

In recent years, sexual assault law in most Australian jurisdictions has been reformed to reflect a more respectful and mutually negotiated approach to sexual relations. Contrary to common legal understandings, 1 in 10 (10%) Australians agree that ‘if a woman doesn’t physically resist – even if protesting verbally – then it isn’t really rape’. Although this was asked for the first time in 2013, this is an area in which attitudes appear to be changing for the better, since it is less likely to be endorsed by people under 65 years of age than older Australians.

Sizeable numbers of Australians surveyed believe that there are circumstances in which the victim of violence can bear some responsibility, including 1 in 10 agreeing that domestic violence can be excused if the victim is affected by alcohol (11%) and 1 in 5 that sexual assault can be excused if the victim is affected by alcohol and drugs (19%).

“What are we as a society doing that makes some men violent? The answer to that question, for me, is in the expectations we have of young men and the way we define masculinity. The challenge now is to change it.”

Luke Ablett, former AFL footballer

Herald Sun, 12 January 2014

Various measures of attitudinal support for unequal and disrespectful gender relations and rigid gender roles and identities have been found to be associated with violence-supportive attitudes and with the perpetration of violence. Such attitudes are also associated with unhelpful responses by people who witness violence and by health and law enforcement professionals.

The National Community Attitudes Survey includes questions to gauge attitudinal support for roles based on gender and male dominance of decision-making in relationships. Attitudinal support for inequality in these roles continues in Australia. Of particular concern is the high rate of agreement with statements reflecting the unequal relationship dynamics implicated in the perpetration of partner violence. Nearly 2 in 10 agree that ‘men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household’ (19%), while more than a quarter agree that ‘women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship’ (28%). These views are more likely to be supported by young Australians.

Engaging the community in prevention is possible, but more work is needed to facilitate this

Most survey respondents say they would take action if witnessing violence and this is marginally higher if the victim was a known person (98% say they would take action) rather than a stranger (92% say they would take action). This suggests considerable potential to enlist community support in reducing violence against women. Other research suggests that intent is not always matched by action, but that the prospects of action being taken can be maximised by addressing barriers and strengthening facilitators to this. In this regard, there is a need to promote awareness of sources of assistance. Many say that they would not know where to go for help about a domestic violence problem. The percentage saying that they would know where to get help decreased from 62% in 2009 to 57% in 2013.

Research suggests that perceptions of the likely efficacy of intervention may influence preparedness to intervene (Powell 2011). The response of the police are among a range of factors determining the outcomes of intervening. However, only 44% are aware of efforts made by jurisdictions across Australia to improve police response times, and this is unchanged from 2009. While only a minority of people (42%) are aware that women with disabilities reporting sexual assault are less likely to be believed than other women, the percentage aware of this increased from 2009 when it was 37%.

Understanding and attitudes to violence are strongly influenced by gender equality attitudes

Three composite measures were developed from existing questions in the survey to assess the extent to which respondents:

- understand violence against women as comprising a continuum of physical behaviours, as well as non-physical forms of harassment, abuse and control
- endorse attitudes supportive of violence against women
- endorse attitudes supportive of gender equality.

People with a high level of support for gender equality have a higher level of understanding of violence against women and are less inclined to endorse violence-supportive attitudes. Understanding of violence against women and attitudes towards gender equality are the first and second strongest influences on attitudes towards violence against women. This suggests that improving understanding and strengthening attitudes to gender roles and relations, both in general and as part of violence prevention activity, are likely to improve attitudes towards violence against women.

There is a need for prevention strategies targeted to particular groups, as well as strategies that reach the whole community

Although demographic factors have only a modest influence on understanding and attitudes, the most influential factors are age, gender and place of birth. Groups with a lower understanding of violence against women and that are less likely to reject violence-supportive attitudes are:

- men
- younger people (16 to 24 years), in particular young men. This may be due in part to developmental factors. However, researchers have pointed to the different social conditions encountered by young people, such as the rise of ‘raunch culture’ (see p. 7 for a definition), a greater emphasis on individuals looking after themselves and a belief that gender equality has been achieved. These may influence the way young people understand gender relations and violence and their attitudes towards them.

- people born overseas in non-main English speaking countries. This is most likely to be due to differences in beliefs and practices regarding violence and relationships between men and women in the countries people come from.

Older people (65 years and over) are more likely to hold violence-supportive attitudes and demonstrate a poorer level of knowledge of violence. This pattern has been found by other researchers and has been attributed to the less egalitarian and flexible gender roles that prevailed when people of this age became young adults.

Indigenous persons have a higher level of understanding of violence against women than non-indigenous persons.¹ However, disadvantaged Indigenous men have a higher level of attitudinal support for violence. This is also the case for men with disabilities. The results for attitudes held by these two groups are likely to be due to the intersecting influences of gender (being male) and various forms of disadvantage faced by these groups. Such disadvantage challenges power dynamics in relationships and impacts on men's ability to meet the expectations of the traditional masculine gender role. Also, men in these groups may live in communities in which formal and informal sanctions against violence are weak.

The understanding and attitudes of people who are newly arrived from non-main English speaking countries change over time to more closely resemble those of people born in Australia. However, the process of change may involve the loss of cultural attitudes and practices that protect against violence, as well as exposure to new influences that contribute to violence-supportive attitudes (e.g. objectification of women in Australian media). Working in partnership with new arrival communities is important to ensure that protective factors are preserved and the impacts of new risks in Australia are minimised.

In addition to targeting those groups mentioned above, there is a need to maintain strategies that reach the whole population. Many people who are not in these groups also have a poor understanding and endorse violence-supportive attitudes.

Change is possible, but it is dependent on policy commitment to gender equality, respectful gender relations and freedom from violence

Understanding and attitudes have remained stable between 2009 and 2013 on the three composite measures introduced above (understanding, attitudes to violence, attitudes to gender equality) in the sample as whole. Change on individual questions is generally modest. There are some promising results, but also some concerning findings. However, it is difficult in the short period covered by the surveys to determine if these are trends or variations due to transitory

causes, such as a single high-profile media case close to or during the survey period.

There was a substantial reduction in the proportion of young people, in particular young men, holding violence-supportive attitudes at the extreme end of the spectrum. Work to prevent violence against women to date has had a particular focus on young people. While it is not possible to determine from the survey the precise factors contributing to the change among young men, it is possible that recent prevention work has made a contribution.

“We have to change the culture, we have to change the way people think about violence against women. We have to stop people making excuses for violence against women.”

**Phil Cleary, sport and politics commentator
(sister killed by her ex-boyfriend)
*Bendigo Advertiser, 11 June 2014***

Other findings both from this survey and prior research also provide encouragement that change is possible. Consistent with evidence that attitudes are shaped by factors in the social environment, such change is dependent on changing social conditions and on policies and practices to promote gender equality and reduce support for violence. This is evidenced by:

- change in attitudes of immigrants as they come into contact with different approaches to gender relations in Australia (although, as indicated above, this change may not necessarily be in a positive direction)
- understanding and positive attitudes being more likely among those reaching adulthood in the decades between the mid-1960s and 1990s when there was rapid social change in the areas of gender equality (e.g. increase in women's participation in education and paid work), gender relations (e.g. greater freedoms that came with the advent of the contraceptive pill) and violence against women (e.g. public funding of women's refuges and legislation specifically prohibiting rape in marriage). This pattern of change in attitudes is confirmed in other research (Carlson & Worden 2005; Cotter et al. 2011; van Egmond et al. 2010)
- international studies showing that there have been substantial changes in attitudes in response to prevention efforts (Pierotti 2013) and that both attitudes supporting violence and violence itself are lower in countries with comprehensive legislative programs to combat the problem (UN Women 2011 p. 34).

This points to the need for an ongoing commitment to strengthen gender equality and respectful relations between men and women, as well as to extending social and legal reform to prevent and address violence against women.

¹ Significant at the p<.05 level.

No time to stall on reducing violence against women

In 2010, The Commonwealth and state and territory governments developed the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*.

This National Plan aims to make a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children in Australia. It is based on the understanding that reducing violence against women will involve a continuum of strategies – from responding to those affected by violence to preventing violence before it occurs by addressing broader organisational, community and societal level factors implicated in the problem.

The National Plan has four Action Plans. Each plan will build on the other, over 12 years. The Second Action Plan (2013–2016), *‘Moving Ahead’*, was released in July 2014. Substantial progress was made in the course of the First Action Plan (2010–2013), particularly in establishing the infrastructure required for preventing violence against women. This included a centre dedicated to primary prevention, The Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children. A second centre, Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS), will build the evidence to tackle the problem.

Five priorities are identified in the National Plan. These are:

- Priority One: Driving whole of community action to prevent violence
- Priority Two: Understanding diverse experiences of women
- Priority Three: Supporting innovative services and integrated systems
- Priority Four: Improving perpetrator interventions
- Priority Five: Continuing to build the evidence base.

Measuring, understanding and, crucially, strengthening community attitudes, knowledge and responses towards violence against women will be important to fulfilling each of these priorities.

Given the link between attitudes and the social norms underpinning violence, strengthening knowledge and attitudes will be important for securing whole-of-community change to prevent violence against women before it occurs (*priority one*).

Attitudes are a ‘barometer’ of how we as a society, as well as particular groups, are faring in relation to violence against women. Accordingly, understanding attitudes and the ways in which they vary makes an important contribution to the evidence (*priority five*). Understanding variations in attitudes and knowledge between and within groups can help target prevention efforts and tailor responses to meet their needs (*priority two*).

The knowledge and attitudes of personnel within key service systems are critical to ensuring appropriate responses by professionals, making attitudinal change and knowledge-building important goals in service system reform and innovation (*priority three*). Similarly, wide community understanding of the goals of these systems and of perpetrator programs (*priority four*) helps to ensure that such goals are reinforced and supported by people in the social sphere of those affected by violence. In particular, perpetrator programs are likely to have greater prospects of success when the message that violence is unacceptable is also reinforced by family, friends and work colleagues.

It will be important to continue to strengthen systems established to respond to violence and its consequences, e.g. law enforcement, housing, crisis support. However, a key issue raised in the consultations for the Second Action Plan was the need to embed the primary prevention work of the Foundation nationally. To this end, a framework will be developed to guide action and ensure that resources are appropriately targeted.

The research on which this study is based suggests that sustained change in attitudes and behaviours is most likely to be achieved by addressing violence-supportive attitudes themselves, as well as the factors responsible for their formation, and for whether they are ultimately translated into violence or violence-supportive behaviour. Australian and international experience in primary prevention of violence and other complex health and social issues indicates that this is most likely to be successful when a multi-disciplinary approach is adopted, involving multiple and reinforcing strategies implemented with individuals and families, organisations and communities and at the broader societal level (Jakarta Declaration 1997; WHO 2002; WHO & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2010; UN 2006). These include:

- activities that engage individuals to strengthen their knowledge and attitudes and build their skills to prevent violence against women (e.g. bystander programs that support people to take positive action if they witness violence or its precursors)
- work with organisations to build cultures that take a strong stand against violence and disrespect towards women (e.g. programs in schools to reform wider school policies and cultures to support respectful relationships education being delivered to students). This includes developing skills among relevant professionals and volunteers to build healthy cultures and to respond to violence and disrespect when they occur
- work with communities to build their capacity to promote respectful and non-violent gender relations (e.g. locality based programs that support communities to identify ways of reducing violence against women and its precursors, such as identifying and supporting local leaders or raising awareness via local media)
- support for groups and coalitions to identify gaps and advocate for change
- social marketing and community education campaigns to raise awareness and build positive attitudes

- reform of policies to ensure an appropriate resource base for responding to and preventing violence against women, along with law reform to enable non-violent social norms to be established and reinforced. Collaboration with others seeking to reform policies pertaining to other factors contributing to violence against women will also be beneficial (e.g. policy development to improve gender equality, reduce child abuse or address entrenched disadvantage).

Key settings to focus upon include the media and school, workplace, community and recreational settings.

“There are too many women who are now unable to speak up about the violence they experienced. We all owe it to them to talk, loudly, on their behalf.”

Virginia Trioli, journalist

The Weekly Review, 20 June 2013

The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* provides a sound basis for a coordinated nationwide strategy to reduce violence against women. In the early years of its implementation substantial infrastructure has been established to achieve this goal. The finding that there has been an improvement in young men’s attitudes is encouraging.

However, the 2012 Personal Safety Survey found that there has been no reduction in the prevalence of violence against women between 2005 and 2012. This, together with the findings of the National Community Attitudes Survey that understanding and attitudes at the overall population level have remained stable, suggests that sustained effort will be critical not only to achieving a reduction in violence against women, but to guard against the risk of an increase in its prevalence and associated health, social and economic consequences.

How the survey was done

About the questionnaire

The survey instrument was initially developed on behalf of the Australian Government in 1995, drawing on an earlier 1987 instrument. It has been reviewed by national experts on violence against women. To the extent possible, questions and question wording have been maintained so that changes can be monitored over time. However, adjustments have been made to reflect emerging issues, and changing language and theoretical understanding.

The survey includes questions to identify people from the three communities of interest (those born in, or with one or both parents born in, a non-main English speaking country (N-MESC), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) Australians and persons with a disability) and to enable the influence of factors such as age, gender and occupation to be assessed.

Implementing the survey

Participants aged 16 years and over were randomly selected from across Australia and invited to participate in a 20-minute telephone interview. Half of the interviews were conducted with people contacted on land-line telephones and half with people contacted on their mobile phones. Including both land-line and mobile interviews meant that a broader range of people were included in the survey than would have been the case if only land-line interviewing had been used. This is because fewer young people, especially young men, ATSI Australians, and people born in N-MESCs live in households with land lines.

To maximise the range of topics explored, some groups of questions were divided into two. Half were asked of one half of the sample, and half of the other. Interviewing was undertaken in eight community languages, using translated versions of the survey. Ethics approval was obtained from The University of Melbourne.

A response rate of 26.9% was achieved. At least 1,000 interviews were held in each state and territory, and a larger number in more populous jurisdictions. The large sample size, together with combining land-line and mobile phone interviews, ensured sufficient randomly selected interviews with the groups of special interest to enable inferences to be drawn about these populations. This included:

- 341 interviews with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians
- 3,453 interviews with people born overseas in a non-main English speaking country
- 1,923 people aged 18 to 24 years
- 1,967 people with a disability.

Analysing and reporting the results

REPORTING CATEGORIES AND THEMES

The survey results are reported in three categories:

- knowledge of violence against women
- attitudes to violence and to gender equality. Questions concerning attitudes to violence were categorised into five themes including those that justify, excuse, trivialise or minimise violence or shift blame to the victim
- responses to violence against women.

COMPOSITE MEASURES OF UNDERSTANDING AND ATTITUDES

As well as reporting results for each individual question, three measures were developed from existing questions in the survey. Referred to in this report as 'composite measures' they allow assessment of:

- overall change in understanding and attitudes over time
- the relationship between understanding and attitudes
- the relationship between attitudes and understanding and other characteristics of interest, such as age, gender or place of birth.

These composite measures are:

- **Understanding Violence Against Women Scale** – developed from a series of questions designed to assess the extent to which people understand violence against women as a continuum of behaviours from obvious physical assault and forced sex through to social, emotional, psychological and economic forms of control, abuse and exploitation. People were given a score according to their responses to these questions and ranked as having a high, medium or low understanding of violence against women. This set of questions was chosen because this understanding of violence underpins international and Australian Government strategies to address violence against women and is pivotal to understanding the dynamics and causes of violence (see p. 43 for further discussion)

- **Violence-Supportive Attitudes Construct** – developed from questions gauging attitudes across the five themes (justifying, excusing, trivialising, minimising and victim blaming) that were suitable for amalgamation. On the basis of their responses to these questions, respondents were given a score according to whether they had a high, medium or low level of attitudinal support for violence against women
- **Gender Equality Scale** – adapted from an existing scale developed by researchers Ingelhart and Norris (2003) to assess attitudinal support for gender equality. Based on answers to eight questions it ranks respondents according to their level of attitudinal support for gender equality (high, medium or low).

SAMPLE ADJUSTMENT

It is usual to adjust the data collected by sample surveys to take account of unequal chances of selection and the effects of non-coverage and non-response. This is commonly referred to as 'weighting' the data. Part of the weighting process involves aligning the sample to external population benchmarks so that it mirrors the population as a whole as closely as possible. This strengthens our ability to say that the results from the survey have a high likelihood of representing those of the total population.

Comparisons were made between 1995, 2009 and 2013 data. The 2009 and 2013 samples were weighted to mirror the structure of the Australian population as closely as possible. The weighting techniques used in 2013 were different to those used when the data was analysed in 2009. To make sure that the samples from both years were as comparable as possible, the same approach was applied to the 2009 data. This means that there may be small differences between descriptions of the 2009 data in documents published in 2009 and those given here.

As the Indigenous population has a different structure than the Australian population as whole (e.g. it has a higher percentage of young people), it was weighted separately using benchmarks for the ATSI population.

More detail about this weighting approach can be found in the technical report.

TESTS OF STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE

When a sample has been randomly selected, some differences found can be due to chance, rather than being an actual difference. To help decide whether a difference is likely to represent a real change, rather than just being a random variation, tests of statistical significance have been carried out. A result that is statistically significant is marked as such on the relevant table or figure. Unless otherwise stated, only results found to be statistically significant at the 99% level ($p \leq .01$) are reported in the text. Not all differences are reported because some may be very small and so are not meaningful for practical purposes (e.g. a 2% difference between men and women on a particular measure may be statistically significant but would not generally suggest the need to treat men and women differently).

Terminology and data use

Different terminology may be used in this report to refer to similar concepts to those introduced on p. 7. This is sometimes necessary to reflect the terms used in the survey instrument, which was first developed in 1995. Terminology has evolved since this time to reflect refinements in understanding of violence, but in most cases wording in the survey instrument has been retained to enable comparisons over time. In particular the term 'domestic violence' is sometimes used when referring to partner violence and 'rape' is sometimes used when referring to sexual assault.

To explore attitudes by place of birth the sample was divided according to whether each person was born:

- in Australia
- overseas in main-English speaking countries (e.g. New Zealand, Canada, USA)
- overseas in other countries.

For clarity and accuracy of description of results, respondents born in 'other countries' are referred to as people from a non-main English speaking country (N-MESC).

2012 PERSONAL SAFETY SURVEY DATA

This report draws extensively from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2012 Personal Safety Survey (ABS 2013b).

In considering the data from the Personal Survey Safety presented in this report it is noted that the ABS advises that caution should be taken when making inferences about a person's current socio-demographic characteristics and their experience of violence. To assume a person's current socio-demographic characteristics were present at the time of the violence could be inaccurate. ABS advises that the best way to assess current socio-demographic characteristics is by a person's recent experiences (i.e. those that occurred in the past 12 months). These are much more likely to match the person's current socio-demographic characteristics rather than assessing their lifetime experiences of violence. Socio-demographic data items such as state of usual residence, remoteness area and disability status do not remain the same over a person's lifetime. It therefore cannot be assumed that these were the person's characteristics at the time of experiencing violence, emotional abuse, sexual harassment or stalking since the age of 15.

Violence is defined in the 2012 Personal Safety Survey as any incident involving the occurrence, attempt or threat of either physical or sexual assault experienced by a person since the age of 15. It includes sexual violence and/or physical violence. The following definitions are used in the survey and summarised here.

- **Physical violence** – any incident involving the occurrence, attempt or threat of physical assault experienced by a person since the age of 15. This includes any incident of *physical assault* or *physical threat*.
- **Physical assault** – use of physical force with the intent to harm or frighten a person.
- **Physical threat** – attempt to inflict physical harm or a threat or suggestion of intent to inflict physical harm, that was made face-to-face where the person believes it was able to and likely to be carried out.
- **Sexual violence** – any incident involving the occurrence, attempt or threat of sexual assault experienced by a person since the age of 15. This includes any incident of sexual assault or sexual threat.
- **Sexual assault** – act of a sexual nature carried out against a person's will through the use of physical force, intimidation or coercion, and includes any attempts to do this.
- **Sexual threat** – threat of acts of a sexual nature that were made face-to-face where the person believes it is able to and likely to be carried out.
- **Sexual harassment** – when a person has experienced or been subjected to behaviours which made them feel uncomfortable, and were offensive due to their sexual nature.
- **Stalking** – various activities, such as loitering and following, which the person believed were being undertaken with the intent to harm or frighten. To be classified as stalking, more than one type of behaviour had to occur, or the same type of activity had to occur on more than one occasion.
- **Emotional abuse** – when a person is subjected to certain behaviours or actions that are aimed at preventing or controlling their behaviour with the intent to cause them emotional harm or fear. These behaviours are characterised by their intent to manipulate, isolate or intimidate the person they are aimed at. They are generally repeated behaviours and include psychological, social, economic and verbal abuse.

Importance of preventing violence against women

Violence against women is global

Violence against women is an issue across the globe and ending this violence has been a significant concern of the international community (Htun & Weldon 2012). It has been addressed in recent comprehensive studies by the United Nations (2006, 2012c) and the World Health Organization (WHO 2010, 2013; WHO & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2010; Garcia-Moreno et al. 2005). The impact of violence on women with disabilities was the subject of two UN studies in 2012 (UN 2012a, 2012b) and in 2013 the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund and its partners investigated its consequences for Indigenous women and girls (UNICEF et al. 2013).

Violence against women is prevalent

Since the 1980s, Australian jurisdictions have done much to respond to and prevent violence against women (National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009a). However, as is the case with other comparable countries, violence against women remains unacceptably common.

Australia's most recent population survey on the experience of violence, the 2012 Personal Safety Survey (ABS 2013b), found that:

- more than one in three women (39%) over the age of 18 years have experienced violence by a man since the age of 15 (ABS 2013b). Closer examination of the types of violence experienced shows that 32% have experienced physical violence by a man and 19% have experienced sexual violence by a man (ABS, customised report, 2014)
- one quarter of women aged 18 years and over have experienced emotional abuse by a current and/or previous partner since the age of 15 (ABS 2013b)
- 17% of women aged 18 years and over have experienced stalking by a male perpetrator during their lifetime (ABS 2013b).

Twenty-two per cent of Australian women aged 15 to 64 years have experienced sexual harassment (McDonald & Flood 2012 p. 1).

There has been no statistically significant change in the proportion of women experiencing violence between the previous Personal Safety Survey in 2005 and the most recent survey in 2012 (ABS 2013b).

In a number of studies conducted in other countries, men have been asked if they have perpetrated behaviours constituting violence against women:

- In a US community sample of unmarried men, 25% report having perpetrated at least one act of attempted or completed rape since the age of 14, while a further 39% report that they had engaged in some form of forced sex or verbal coercion (Abbey et al. 2006).
- Across nine South-Pacific countries, between 26% and 80% of men disclosed perpetrating physical or sexual intimate partner violence and between 3% and 27% disclosed non-partner rape (Fulu et al. 2013; Jewkes et al. 2012).
- Among US college students, between 25% and 33% of men report engaging in some form of sexual aggression since the age of 14 (Loh et al. 2005) and 10% report physical aggression against their most recent partner at least once in the relationship (Luthra & Gidycz 2006).

Violence is not a problem confined to those directly subject to it. The fear of such violence extends to a much larger group of women. The 2012 Personal Safety Survey found that women are more likely than men to report feeling unsafe about using public transport, walking alone in their local area, or being alone at home at night. They are more likely to have avoided such activities as a consequence of feeling fearful (Table 2 overleaf). Such fear is not trivial: it curtails women's freedom of movement and choices and compromises women's economic and civic participation (Koskela 1999).

Ongoing vigilance is needed to maintain a safe environment for women. The gains in women's safety and equality achieved in times of relative prosperity and stability are vulnerable to being eroded when such conditions are tested. Women are particularly vulnerable to violence in the aftermath of natural disasters (Felten-Biermann 2006; Fisher 2010; Thornton & Voigt 2007), during war and civil conflict (UN 2002) and conceivably during economic downturn (Renzetti & Larkin 2009; Smith & Weatherburn 2013; Weatherburn 2011; Weissman 2007).

Although violence against women occurs across the social spectrum, women affected by the intersecting impacts of gender and other forms of discrimination and determinants of social inequality may be particularly vulnerable both to violence itself and/or to its consequences (Brownridge 2009).

Why a focus on violence against women?

Interpersonal violence can take many forms other than against women, involving, for example, violence perpetrated against men, children (child abuse), abuse of the aged and violence between individuals in same-sex relationships.

All types of interpersonal violence are inexcusable, have serious consequences and warrant the attention of communities and governments (WHO 2002). However, there are distinct gender differences in the patterning of both the perpetration of violence and victimisation (Table 1).

The fact that all forms of interpersonal violence are significantly more likely to be perpetrated by men suggests that efforts to prevent it will need to be targeted towards men and boys and to engage men as partners in prevention.

The fact that violence against women is often perpetrated by a person with whom women are socially and in many cases emotionally and economically connected adds a particular layer of complexity to this form of violence.

The dynamics that distinguish men's violence against women from other forms of violence have particular consequences for women's mental health, their risks of further victimisation, for the ways in which others respond to violence and for preventing ongoing victimisation.

Some common factors underpin men's violence, whether this violence is directed towards men or women (WHO 2002). However, studies suggest that some factors underlying men's violence towards women are particular to this form of violence. As discussed in Chapter 5 following, these are inextricably linked with the different and unequal status of men and women; with the ways in which men and women are socialised to fulfil gendered roles and identities and the manner in which these are supported by societal institutions and cultural norms.

Together these differences suggest that while preventing all forms of interpersonal violence is vital, there are some unique challenges in ending violence against women. Efforts need to be tailored to reflect particular causal factors and the very different context in which much of this violence occurs.

Table 1: Differences between violence against women and men

Experience of violence	Women	Men
Perpetrator	Much more likely to be a man. More likely to be current and/or previous partner or boyfriend or date (ABS 2013b).	Much more likely to be a man. More likely to be a stranger (based on ABS data 2013b).
Place	More likely to be in the home or other private contexts (based on ABS data 2013b).	More likely to be in a public place (e.g. on the street, at a place of entertainment or recreation such as a pub, nightclub or sporting venue) (based on ABS data 2013b).
Sexual violence	Substantially more likely than for men (ABS 2013b).	Substantially less likely than for women.
Pattern	More likely to involve abusive and controlling behaviours designed to intimidate, belittle and control the victim (Krebs et al. 2011; Mouzos & Makkai 2004; Stark 2009; Wangmann 2011). More likely to be repeated (based on ABS data 2013b; Flood 2006).	Violence less likely to involve abusive and controlling behaviours designed to intimidate, belittle and control the victim. More likely to be a single incident.

**“Violence against women is a global health problem of epidemic proportions
... the world's health systems can and must do more for women who experience violence.”**

Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General, World Health Organization
20 June 2013

Table 2: Feelings of safety in the last 12 months in selected settings by sex, 2013 (%)

		Total 17,201,700	Total males 8,466,200	Total females 8,735,400
		%	%	%
Feelings of safety using public transport alone at night	Used and felt safe	21	28	15*
	Used and felt unsafe	6.2	5.7	6.6
	Did not use because felt unsafe	12	4.9	18*
	Total felt unsafe (used and did not use)	18	11	25*
	<i>Did not use for other reasons</i>	61	62	60
Feelings of safety waiting for public transport alone at night	Waited and felt safe	19	27	12*
	Waited and felt unsafe	8.3	6.8	10*
	<i>Did not wait alone at night</i>	73	67	78*
Feelings of safety walking in the local area alone at night	Walked alone and felt safe	46	62	30*
	Walked alone and felt unsafe	6.5	5.1	7.8*
	Did not walk alone because felt unsafe	16	5.2	27*
	Total felt unsafe (walked alone and did not walk alone)	23	10	34*
	<i>Did not walk alone for other reasons</i>	32	28	36*
Feelings of safety when at home alone at night	Felt safe	89	94	83*
	Did not feel safe	6.6	2.7	10*
	Was not home alone at night because felt unsafe	0.1	0.0	0.3*
	Total felt unsafe (home alone and did not stay home alone)	6.7	2.7	11*
	<i>Was not home alone at night for other reasons</i>	4.7	3.3	6.1*

* Difference between males and females is statistically significant, $p \leq .05$.

Estimate has relative standard error between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey, customised report 2014.

INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Indigenous women are widely understood to experience some of the highest rates of violence against women in Australian society (Al-Yaman et al. 2006; Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2006; Cripps et al. 2009; McGlade 2012; Taylor & Putt 2007; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence 1999), a plight shared with their indigenous counterparts in other parts of the globe (Al-Yaman et al. 2006; Brownridge 2008; UNICEF et al. 2013).

In 2013, the United Nations called for international action on violence against Indigenous women (UNICEF et al. 2013). Reducing violence against Indigenous women is a key objective of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, and the Indigenous Family Safety Agenda (Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs n.d.). Reducing Indigenous family violence is the focus of a number of state and territory plans to reduce violence against women (Al-Yaman et al. 2006).

“Violence against indigenous girls and women cannot be separated from the wider contexts of discrimination and exclusion to which indigenous peoples as a whole are often exposed in social, economic, cultural and political life.”

‘Breaking the Silence on Violence against Indigenous Girls, Adolescents and Young Women’ report, UNICEF 2013

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

There is considerable diversity among women with disabilities, both in the nature of their disabilities and in their social and economic circumstances. Not all women with a disability face an increased risk of exposure to violence. However, international (Healey 2013; Hyman et al. 2006; Martin et al. 2006; Smith 2007; Stockl et al. 2011) and Australian research (Heenan & Murray 2006; Murray & Powell 2008) finds that women with disabilities face a greater risk of violence than women without disabilities. Depending on the nature and extent of their disability, women with disabilities may be exposed to a wider range of potential perpetrators of violence. In addition to partners and other family members are other residents in institutional settings, carers and healthcare and transport providers (Murray & Powell 2008; Powers et al. 2009). Women with disabilities may experience additional forms of violence related to their disability (e.g. destruction of medical equipment, physical neglect). Compared with women without disabilities they are exposed to violence over a longer period of time (Plummer & Findley 2012) and to more severe forms of violence (Powers et al. 2009).

WOMEN FROM NON-MAIN ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES

Some Australian surveys indicate that there is no difference in the experience of violence between Australian-born women and those from N-MESCs (Mouzos & Makkai 2004). It is not known whether these patterns reflect actual experiences of violence or are due to under-reporting (Mitchell 2011) or to cultural factors which may influence the way people from different cultures respond to surveys (Survey Research Centre 2010). Other studies identify that regardless of the rate of experience of violence, many women from N-MESCs face additional barriers to securing safety from violence once it has started (Allimant & Ostapiej-Piatkowski 2011; Kasturirangan et al. 2004; Taylor & Putt 2007). In the 2012 Personal Safety Survey, women born in a N-MESC were less likely to have experienced physical or sexual violence in the 12 months prior to the survey and since the age of 15 (ABS 2013b).² However, it should be kept in mind that it is possible that women from N-MESCs are under-represented in the survey.³

Survey findings based on all persons from N-MESCs obscure differences between birthplace groups. International comparative studies show that the prevalence of partner violence against women varies considerably. Lifetime rates of reported physical violence across countries range between 13% and 61% of ever-partnered women and comparable rates for sexual violence vary between 6.2% and 59% of women (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2005 pp.xii-xiii). It is likely that these variations are present in Australia's settler population,

as is the case in other settler societies (Fanslow et al. 2010; Yoshihama 2009). Qualitative studies conducted in Australia suggest that intimate partner violence may be a particular issue for women from some country backgrounds, especially countries affected by war and civil strife (Fisher 2009; Pittaway 2004; Rees & Pease 2006; Zannettino 2012).

While many settler communities offer factors known to protect women from violence (e.g. stronger bonds within communities), studies suggest that many of the risk factors for violence discussed below may be present in some birthplace groups (e.g. gender inequality in countries of origin, exposure to other forms of violence in the course of war and civil conflict) (Rees & Pease 2006; 2007).

Violence against women is serious

CONSEQUENCES FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH

Exposure to partner violence is associated with an increased risk of a range of health problems including suicide, anxiety, depression and other mental health problems; substance misuse; and reproductive health problems such as low infant birth weight and sexually transmitted infection (WHO 2013; Rees et al. 2011; VicHealth 2004).

Seventy-three per cent of intimate partner homicides between 2008 and 2010 involved women being killed by their partners (Chan & Payne 2013 p.19). Intimate partner homicides constituted 9% of homicides involving male victims, but over half of those in which a woman was the victim (Chan & Payne 2013 p.19).

Significant health consequences have been found to be associated with other forms of violence against women, including sexual harassment (McDonald & Flood 2012) and non-intimate partner sexual assault (WHO 2013). Women subject to sexual assault, for example, have been found to be 2.3 times more likely to have alcohol use disorders and 2.6 times more likely to have depression or anxiety than women who have not experienced such violence (WHO 2013 p.2).

Given the prevalence of violence against women, these health consequences contribute significantly to the burden of disease – and its associated health, social and economic costs – at a population level. Intimate partner violence alone has been found to be the greatest contributor to disease burden among women aged 15 to 44 years. This is greater than the burden contributed by many other known risk factors such as smoking and alcohol misuse (VicHealth 2004).

² This data does not enable conclusions to be drawn as to whether violence experienced, particularly since age 15, occurred in Australia or in another country. This information was not collected in the Personal Safety Survey for any respondents regardless of birthplace.

³ For safety and data quality reasons it was a requirement for Personal Safety Survey that all interviews be conducted in a private setting. No interpreters were used. A small number of interviewers with foreign language skills were trained for the Personal Safety Survey. Where a respondent required the assistance of another person to communicate with the interviewer (and an interviewer who spoke their language was not available), interviews were not able to be conducted. Therefore it is possible that the Personal Safety Survey may under-represent those from a non-English speaking background.

IMPACTS ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Young women (aged 18 to 24 years) experience significantly higher rates of physical and sexual violence than women in older age cohorts (ABS 2013b). In addition, many children and young people live with, and are affected by, intimate partner violence perpetrated against their mothers (Flood & Fergus 2008; Holt et al. 2008). The 2012 Personal Safety Survey found that almost a third (31%) of the 128,500 women who experienced violence by a current partner had children in their care at the time of the violence who saw or heard the violence. Nearly half (48%) of the 733,900 women who experienced violence while they were living with their most recently violent previous partner had children in their care at the time of the violence who saw or heard the violence (ABS 2013b).

The impacts on children are influenced by their age and stage of development as well as the presence of other adversities that increase their vulnerability (e.g. homelessness), or assets that protect them from harm (e.g. extended family support) (Holt et al. 2008; Humphreys et al. 2008). While not all children living with violence will suffer ill-effects, numerous studies suggest that they do face an increased likelihood of doing so, both during childhood and adolescence as well as later in life (Table 3).

“I opened the wardrobe door and there she was, shaking with fear, just crying. She said ‘Mum, I am frightened Daddy’s gonna kill you and then Daddy’s gonna kill me...’”

Eileen, survivor

‘Staying Home, Leaving Violence: Promoting choices for women leaving abusive partners’ report, 2004

Table 3: Potential impacts of partner violence on children’s health and development

Impacts in childhood and adolescence

Mental and emotional health

- depression
- anxiety
- trauma symptoms
- low self-esteem
- mood disorders
- poor attachment

Cognitive and behavioural development

- increased aggression
- anti-social behaviour
- lower social competence
- temperament problems
- impaired cognitive functioning

Social development

- school difficulties
- peer conflict
- loneliness

Behaviours presenting risks to health

- alcohol and substance use
- eating disorders

Longer term impacts

- partner violence perpetration/victimisation
- depression
- alcohol and substance use
- trauma related symptoms
- low self-esteem
- stress
- poor social adjustment
- disrupted employment and education

Sources: Edleson & Nissley 2006; Fergus & Flood 2009; Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2008; Humphreys et al. 2008; Richards 2011.

IMPACTS ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC, CIVIC AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Women who are subject to partner violence are more likely to experience:

- impaired job performance and productivity, high job turnover and unemployment (Banyard et al. 2011; Kimerling et al. 2009; Lindhorst et al. 2007; Staggs et al. 2007) due variously to the health impacts of violence, to women being forced to leave or change jobs to avoid future violence from a former partner, as well as to violence taking place in the workplace itself
- poverty (Lindhorst et al. 2007)
- homelessness (Tually et al. 2008)
- social isolation (Wright 2012).

Workplace sexual harassment has similarly been found to be associated with negative impacts including:

- reduced job satisfaction, commitment and productivity, and absenteeism and employment withdrawal (Banyard et al. 2011; McDonald & Flood 2012)
- reduced wellbeing and performance among those witnessing the harassment of their colleagues (McDonald & Flood 2012).

Gendered hate speech targeting women, especially those in prominent positions, is a significant problem, with the potential to compromise women's participation in civic activity (Boeckmann & Turpin-Petrosino 2002; Nielson 2002; Summers 2013). Similarly, fear of physical and sexual violence and harassment among women impacts on women's freedom of movement, use of public spaces such as parks and sporting facilities, and economic activities (Koskela 1999).

“When women are harassed they're denied an equal place in that society. Public spaces don't belong to them. It reaffirms the oppressive role of men in the society.”

Lara Logan, CBS News correspondent

The New York Times, 28 April 2011

IMPACTS ON THE ECONOMY

As well as impacting upon individual businesses (e.g. through absenteeism and employment withdrawal), the negative impacts of violence against women flow to the wider economy through:

- costs associated with responding to the consequences of violence, such as treatment costs for women and children and police, investigations and complaints systems (McDonald & Flood 2012; National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009b)
- contributing to the gap between male and female workforce participation rates in Australia, which is understood to occur at the expense of some 11% of GDP annually (McDonald & Flood 2012 p.12)
- in the case of sexual harassment, affecting staff morale and turnover, and undermining business reputation and investor confidence (McDonald & Flood 2012).

In 2009, the last year for which the economic costs of partner violence in Australia were calculated, costs to the economy were an estimated \$13.6 billion. If the prevalence of violence remains unchecked it is estimated that by the year 2021–22 the cost will be around \$15.6 billion (National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009b p.4).

Violence against women is preventable

It is widely recognised that violence against women is too prevalent to be explained by physiological or personality characteristics of individual perpetrators. There are substantial variations in the prevalence of violence against women between countries and regions (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2006). This suggests that some of the key factors influencing violence are likely to lie in population-level social and economic conditions. In the past three decades a growing body of research has identified particular factors linked to the perpetration of violence. Because many of these factors can be modified or eliminated, there are sound prospects for prevention (UN 2012c; WHO 2010; WHO & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2010).

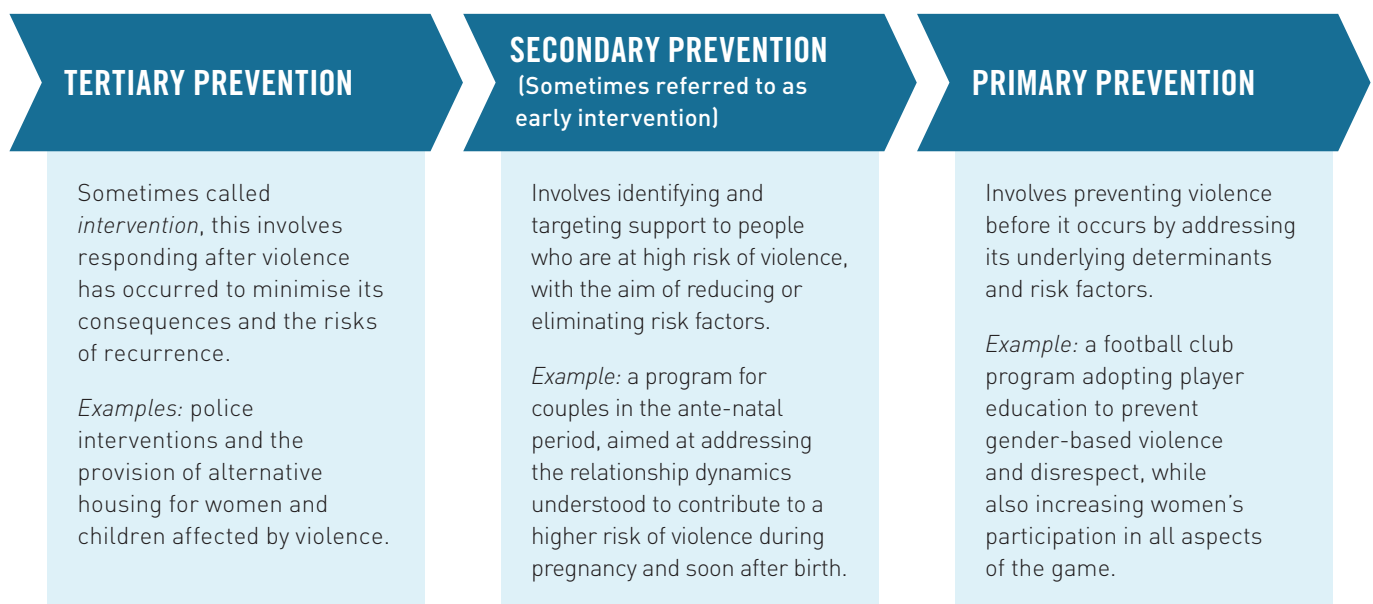
There are three levels at which violence can be prevented (Figure 1).

“Prevention must be high on our agenda if we are to act on gender inequality and violence against women. We need to engage individuals, in all their communities, to reshape the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that allow violence against women to continue.”

Professor Jenny Morgan

Melbourne Law School, The University of Melbourne,
4 August 2014

Figure 1: Levels of prevention of violence against women



Factors contributing to violence, and the role of knowledge, attitudes and community responses

What are the causes of violence against women?

Until relatively recently, most research exploring the causes of violence against women focused on individual behavioural and relationship factors, such as the presence of relationship conflict, drug use, or poor mental health. Although many studies found a relationship between these factors and violence against women, the associations were generally modest to weak. Many men without these risk factors also perpetrated violence, while many with these risk factors did not perpetrate violence (Ali & Naylor 2013). Moreover, some of these factors, such as cognitive impairments or particular personality traits, affected only a small proportion of the population. Awareness of these factors is clearly important for professionals working in a clinical context with men who use violence. However, the value of these factors in explaining the prevalence of violence at a population level is limited.

For this reason, researchers have looked increasingly to population-level factors that may help to explain violence against women. Population-level factors are influences

encountered in broader social environments that ultimately contribute to the behaviours or experiences of individuals. While they may influence some groups in the population differently or to a greater degree, they nonetheless affect large numbers of people. An understanding of population-level factors is especially important for primary prevention. That is, for taking steps to prevent violence before it occurs. Addressing these factors is the focus of primary prevention.

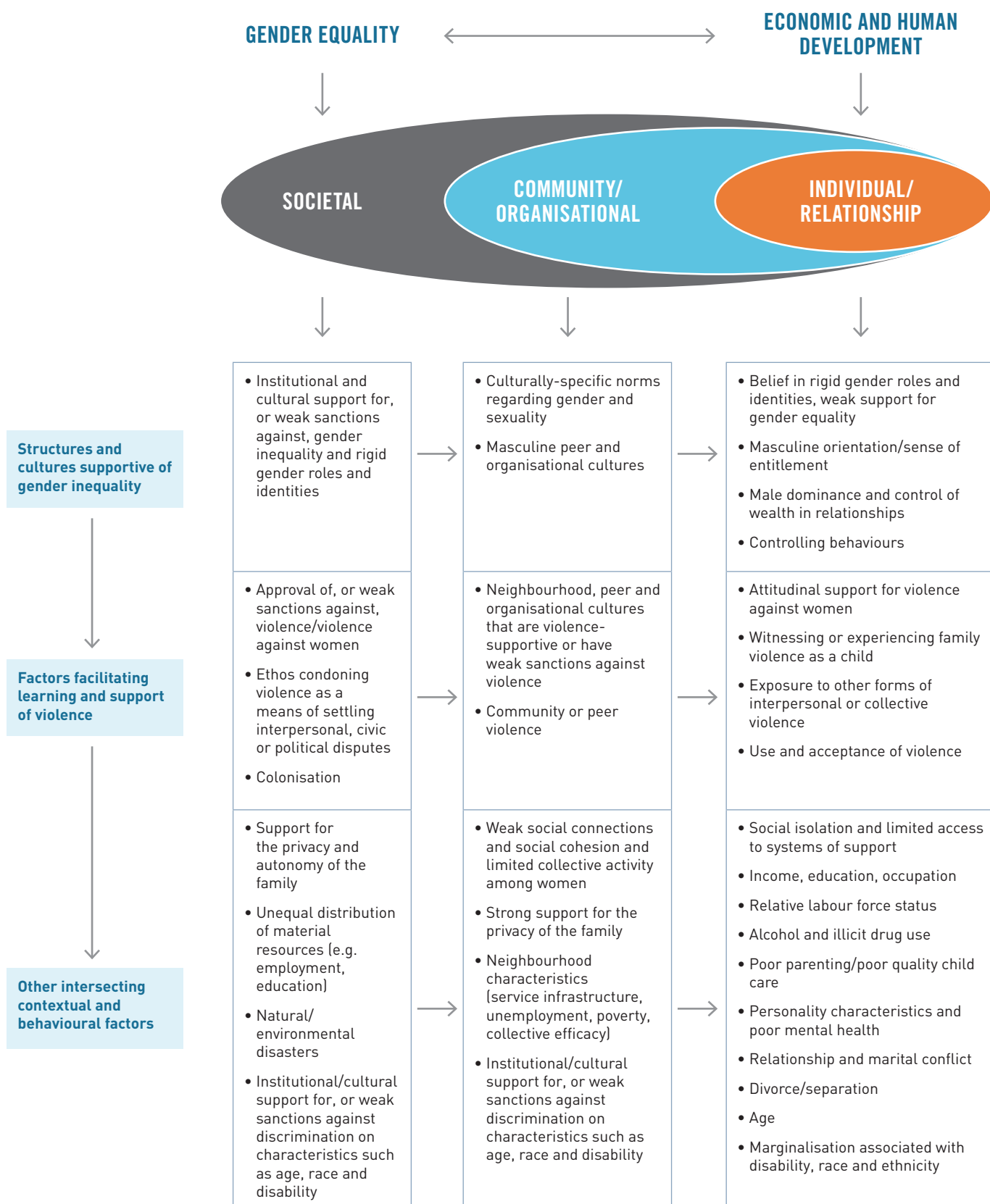
Population-level research suggests that there is no single, simple cause of violence against women. Rather, violence is best understood as the product of an inter-play between the characteristics of individuals, and influences in their families, the communities they live in, the organisations they interact with in the course of education, work and leisure, and broader societal influences, such as the media, laws and social norms and beliefs. Commonly called an ecological approach, this is illustrated in Figure 2 (see next page). This is an approach advocated by a number of expert bodies (European Commission 2010b; UN 2006, 2012c; UNICEF et al. 2013; WHO 2002, 2010; WHO & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2010).

“Millions of women and girls around the world are assaulted, beaten, raped, mutilated or even murdered in what constitutes appalling violations of their human rights... We must fundamentally challenge the culture of discrimination that allows violence to continue.”

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November 2013

Figure 2: Understanding violence against women – an ecological model to guide primary prevention



A common feature of ecological models developed to inform the primary prevention of violence against women is the understanding that a key factor is the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women, referred to as gender inequality (UN 2006, 2012c; WHO 2010; WHO & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2010). These frameworks also note the important role of economic and human development, owing to the inter-relationships between these forms of development and gender equality and gender relations (see 'human development' p. 7).

A framework developed by VicHealth on the basis of commissioned research in 2007, and updated for the purposes of this report, proposes that violence can best be understood through three inter-related clusters of influence (VicHealth 2007). Illustrated in Figure 2 (see previous page), these are:

- structures and cultures supportive of gender inequality
- factors facilitating learning and support of violence
- other intersecting, contextual and behavioural factors.

STRUCTURES AND CULTURES SUPPORTIVE OF GENDER INEQUALITY

Gender inequality involves power and resources being unequally distributed between men and women in public and private life. For example, the under-representation of women in parliament or men making all the key decisions in a relationship. Such inequality can result from laws or structures that constrain opportunities for women. However it is also supported through gender role divisions (i.e. distinctions being made between what are appropriate roles for men as opposed to those for women) and through distinctive male and female gender identities (i.e. what it means to be masculine or feminine). In most societies these roles and identities are hierarchically organised such that masculine roles and identities are typically seen to be superior and are associated with greater power and authority (UN 2006). Some of the ways in which these inequalities and distinctions can contribute to violence are outlined in the box opposite. They can occur at each level of the ecological model described above (i.e. in individual relationships, in organisations and communities and at the societal level) and are supported by social practices, cultures and norms (WHO & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2010).

There is a large and complex body of research on the relationship between violence against women and the different dimensions described above (inequality in power and resources, gender roles and gender identities) and the levels at which they are manifest (from individual through to societal). Taken together the studies indicate a strong relationship between the various markers of gender inequality and violence against women (True 2012; UN 2006; VicHealth 2007; WHO 2010; WHO & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2010).

For example, at the societal and community levels, the risks of violence against women have been found to be higher when resources such as education and income are distributed unequally between men and women (True 2012; Yodanis & Carrie 2004); women's economic, social and political rights are poorly protected (UN Women 2011 p. 34); and/or when there are more rigid distinctions between the roles of men and women and between masculine and feminine identities (Flood & Pease 2006; Sanday 1981; VicHealth 2007).

Violence is also more common in families and relationships in which men control decision making (Gage 2005; Vézina & Hébert 2007) and less so in those relationships in which women have a greater level of independence (Gage 2005; Vyas & Watts 2009).

Among the most consistent predictors of the perpetration of violence against women at the individual level are traditional views about gender roles and relationships, attitudes that support male dominance in relationships and attitudes that reflect sexual hostility towards women (Foshee et al. 2008; Grubb & Turner 2012; Nabors & Jasinski 2009; Robertson & Murachver 2007; VicHealth 2007).

Motivations and reasons for violence often reflect adherence to these attitudes. Men who use violence report more opposite sex jealousy (Foran & O'Leary 2008; Gage 2005; Garcia-Moreno et al. 2006; VicHealth 2007). Similarly, the use of behaviours to exercise power and control in relationships has been found to be a consistent predictor in studies across time and place (Antai 2011; Dalal & Lindqvist 2012; Gage 2005; Garcia-Moreno et al. 2005, 2006; Graham-Kevin & Archer 2008; Heise 2012; Kiss et al. 2012), including Australia (Mouzos & Makkai 2004). Other studies have shown that men who are hostile towards women's non-conformity to gender roles and to challenges to male authority have a particular proclivity for violence (Heise 2012; Reidy et al. 2009; Robertson & Murachver 2007).

“I wasn't going to lose everyone I had professed to love and care about. I'd got caught up in macho bullshit, what I saw as being a man.”

Rod Beckham, participant of a 12-week men's behaviour-change program in Victoria

The Age, 18 May 2014

Why is there a relationship between gender inequality and violence against women?

- The emphasis on aggression and conquest in male socialisation may lead to a greater proclivity and support for violence among some men, and a greater social acceptance of men's use of violence (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009).
- The sense of entitlement associated with the traditional masculine gender role may result in the use of force by some men to secure their will (particularly in intimate relationships), and its acceptance and legitimisation in the wider community and by key institutions (Gilgun & McLeod 1999; Hill & Fischer 2001).
- Violence, or the threat of violence, may be used to re-establish the perceived natural 'gender order', with men's violence towards women often occurring and more likely to be supported in circumstances where women have, or are perceived to have breached, socially defined feminine roles (Reidy et al. 2009). For example, violence against women has been found to increase in societies undergoing rapid economic change where women have begun to play a more prominent role in paid work and civic society (Chon 2013; Jewkes 2002; Simister & Mehta 2010; Xie et al. 2012). Similarly, studies show that people are more likely to justify rape in circumstances where women transgress standards of 'moral purity' (Whatley 2005).
- The importance attached to masculinity may result in the use of violence as a means of restoring masculine identity when it is under threat (Gallagher & Parrott 2011). For example, violence against women has been found to increase when economic conditions compromise men's role as breadwinner (True 2012; Weissman 2007). Some researchers attribute this to men's sense of entitlement and their desire to dominate women, while others see it as evidence of the fragility of masculine identity (see, for example, Carrington & Hogg 2007).
- The lower social standing accorded to women may mean that women are perceived by some men, by people witnessing violence or by victims themselves as justified targets of violence, hostility, exploitation and abuse (Forbes et al. 2004; Masser et al. 2006; Ryan & Kanjorski 1998; Sakalh 2001).
- Some aspects of feminine gender identities may involve the denigration, objectification and sexualisation of women, again potentially casting women as targets for hostility and exploitation (American Psychological Association 2010; Papadopoulos 2010).
- Gender inequalities in access to power and resources may increase women's risk of violence and compromise their capacity to seek safety once violence has occurred. This makes them vulnerable to repeated and escalating violence (Humphreys 2007).

FACTORS FACILITATING LEARNING AND SUPPORT OF VIOLENCE

Both gender relations and identities and violence are learned behaviours. This learning takes place in a range of contexts, including the family, peer cultures, communities and in organisations as well as through broader societal influences such as the media and popular culture.

The risks of violence against women are higher in organisational and community environments in which sanctions against violence and disrespect towards women are weak. For example, men are more likely to report a willingness to use sexual violence and less likely to take action to intervene in the violence of others if they perceive their peers to find such behaviour acceptable (Bohner et al. 2006; Brown & Messman-Moore 2009). Similarly, violence is more common in those communities in which there is a high level of attitudinal support for violence against women (Antai 2011; Koenig et al. 2006; York 2011). Attitudes supportive of violence and the denigration of women have been found to be especially strong in certain male-dominated organisational environments, such as the military, college fraternities and certain sporting clubs (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009).

There is also a relationship between exposure to and the use of other forms of violence and violence against women. Men are more likely to perpetrate violence against women if they have:

- witnessed partner violence as a child (Holt et al. 2008; Roberts et al. 2010) or been subject to child abuse (Banyard et al. 2006; Fang & Corso 2007; Sunday et al. 2011), although many individuals so exposed do not go on to be perpetrators
- witnessed violence in their local community (Raiford et al. 2012)
- used violence in other contexts, such as towards work colleagues or in public places (Abrahams et al. 2006; Abramsky et al. 2011; Balogun et al. 2012; Fang & Corso 2007; Foshee et al. 2011; Heise 2012; Raghavan et al. 2009).

Violence against women is also more common in communities with high levels of public violence (Fox & Benson 2006; Jain et al. 2010).

These patterns suggest that violence against women must be understood as the product of attitudes and practices towards both gender roles and relations and towards the use of violence in general.

OTHER INTERSECTING, CONTEXTUAL AND BEHAVIOURAL FACTORS

This third cluster reflects particular contexts that intersect with the influences of gender inequality to increase the probability of violence. This may include situational factors such as alcohol misuse, marital/relationship separation (Brownrigg 2006; Dekeseredy et al. 2004) and pregnancy (Bacchus et al. 2006).

Evidence is also increasing that many social problems cannot be explained in terms of one form of social inequality alone, because some groups of people are exposed to several different forms of discrimination. Grounds for discrimination in addition to gender include sexual orientation, social class, age, race and ability. These forms of discrimination may act together to produce particular patterns of oppression and marginalisation that in turn influence perpetration of violence and vulnerability to victimisation. This understanding is often referred to as inter-sectionality (Crenshaw 1991; Dhamoon 2011; Winker & Degele 2011). As discussed earlier in this report (see pp. 27–28), women with disabilities, Indigenous women and women in some migrant and refugee communities are particularly vulnerable to violence against women and its impacts.

Similarly, as discussed earlier (see p. 25), there is evidence suggesting that violence against women may increase when broader social and economic conditions are compromised, such as during natural disasters (Felten-Biermann 2006), economic downturn (Weissman 2007), when communities experience entrenched disadvantage (Fox & Benson 2006) or at the national level when there are low levels of economic and human development (Heise 2012; Johnson et al. 2008).

However, although these contexts are associated with an elevated rate of violence, the gendered patterns evident in more stable times and contexts remain (see, for example, Fisher 2010). This suggests that the explanation is likely to lie in the *intersecting* influences of gender equality and other forms of discrimination and social and economic disruption:

- Conditions of impoverishment and marginalisation may compromise men's capacity to meet gendered expectations (Jewkes 2002). For example, studies show that unemployment is a risk for violence among men holding traditional views about their status as breadwinners, but not for those holding egalitarian beliefs (Atkinson et al. 2005).
- Economic and social marginalisation and disruption impact on indicators of gender equality, thereby increasing women's vulnerability. For example women experiencing poverty have been found to have lower levels of social support, which in turn increases their likelihood of victimisation (Wright 2012). Natural disasters may compound existing gender inequalities (Felten-Biermann 2006). Marital conflict has been found to increase the risk of violence, although primarily in relationships in which there is an existing imbalance of power (Heise 1998).
- Social norms and structures that protect the rights of women and girls, including their rights to safety and security (e.g. laws against partner and sexual violence, availability of police protection or initiatives to promote gender equity and prevent violence) are often the first to be compromised in conditions of social and economic adversity (Felten-Biermann 2006; Jutting et al. 2006; Weissman 2007). Poverty and deprivation may also result in a weakening of social cohesion, trust and collective efficacy and hence the strength of formal and informal sanctions against the use of violence, including violence against women (Banyard et al. 2006; Browning 2002).

“That’s why a lot of women won’t go and get help because they hear about all what’s happened to other women and they say welfare get involved and that and you’re worried about your children getting taken off you.”

Sally, Indigenous survivor with mental health issues

‘Raising Our Voices – Hearing from Women with Disabilities’ report, 2014

Implications for the prevention of violence against women

This evidence suggests that reducing violence against women will involve moving beyond working exclusively with directly affected individuals to address broader factors in organisations, communities and societies known to be associated with a higher risk of violence. This will involve engaging a wide range of individuals, organisations and communities in a preventive effort.

Although it is apparent that a range of factors contribute to violence, the ways in which gender roles and relations are constructed and supported are key underlying factors. Other factors are best understood as intersecting with the influences of gender in shaping patterns and rates of violence against women in particular populations, communities and circumstances. Many men exposed to these factors do not use violence and the factors are not a necessary condition for violence to occur.

Addressing these factors is important to reduce violence against women and achieve a range of other policy objectives. However, attending to them separately from the underlying factors of gender equality and rigid gender roles and identities is unlikely to achieve sustained reduction in violence against women. Importantly, although many of these factors (e.g. unemployment, child abuse) involve adversity for perpetrators, they are not excuses for violence. Rather, consistent with policy and legislation pertaining to violence against women across Australian jurisdictions, violence is behaviour for which individuals remain accountable (Council of Australian Governments 2010 p. 29).

Role of attitudes in the prevention of violence against women

WHAT ARE VIOLENCE-SUPPORTIVE ATTITUDES?

As indicated in Figure 2 (see p. 33), attitudes have been identified among the factors contributing to violence against women. Researchers studying the role of attitudes have conceptualised them in different ways. However, five key categories or dimensions of attitudes can be distinguished. These are attitudes that:

- **justify** violence against women, based on the notion that it is legitimate for a man to use violence, particularly against a woman with whom he is in an intimate relationship, in certain circumstances (e.g. the idea that partner violence is justified if a woman has sex with another man)
- **excuse** violence by attributing it to external factors (e.g. stress) or proposing that men cannot be held fully responsible for violent behaviour (e.g. 'rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex')

- **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 (e.g. 'women who are sexually harassed should sort it out themselves rather than report it')
- **minimise** violence by denying its seriousness, denying that it occurs or denying that certain behaviours are indeed violence at all (e.g. the idea that it's only rape if the woman physically resisted)
- 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 (e.g. the idea that women ask for rape).

This does not mean that people who hold violence-supportive attitudes are themselves necessarily 'violence-prone' or would openly condone violence. However, as discussed below, such views expressed by influential individuals or held by a substantial number of people can create a culture in which violence is at best not clearly condemned and at worst condoned or encouraged.

ATTITUDES TO GENDER EQUALITY

The National Community Attitudes Survey also gauges support for attitudes to gender equality. This is because, as discussed earlier, there is a strong relationship between these attitudes and attitudes towards violence, responses to violence and the proclivity for violence itself. Such attitudes provide the context in which attitudes supportive of violence against women develop.

Why study attitudes?

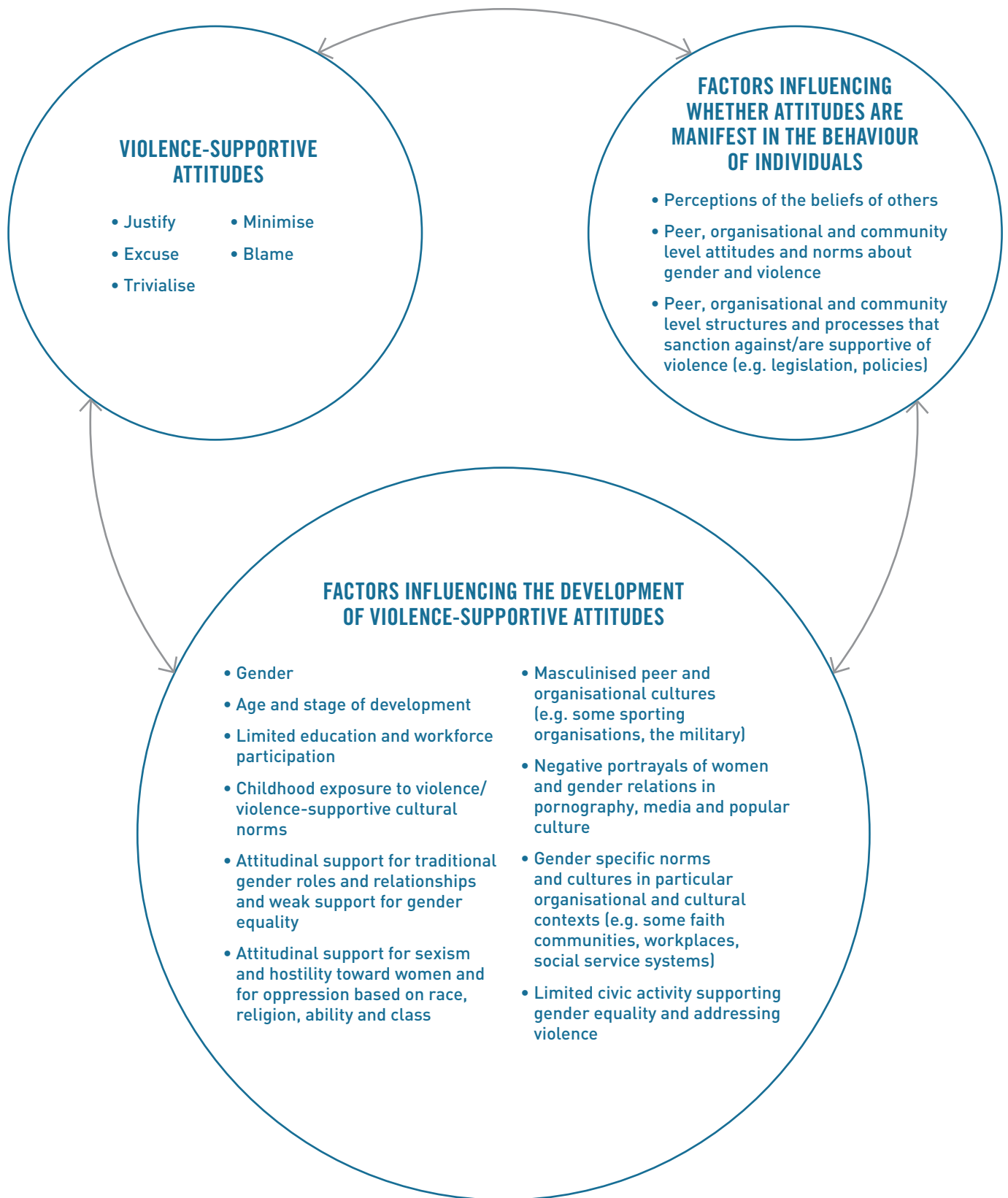
Although attitudes may influence behaviour directly, their main impact is through their influence on broader social norms and cultures (Figure 3 overleaf). That is, the strongest influences on how people actually behave in a given situation are:

- what they believe other people, especially influential individuals, believe or expect of them. These are often referred to as informal social sanctions
- expectations communicated through other formal social controls such as the rules of an organisation or laws (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009).

At the same time, collectively, attitudes influence the ways in which communities, organisations and institutions respond to particular issues, both informally (e.g. via organisational cultures) or formally (e.g. via rules) (Cialdini & Trost 1998; Newby-Clark et al. 2002) (Figure 3 overleaf).

It is also important to note that attitudes are neither innate nor fixed. Rather they are formed, shaped and can be changed by influences in the family, community and organisations and broader institutions such as the media and the legislature (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009; Pease & Flood 2008).

Figure 3: The role of violence-supportive attitudes in violence against women



Source: Based on Flood & Pease 2006; VicHealth 2010.

“Broader community attitudes that blame victims, rather than hold perpetrators to account, leave women confused about who is at fault.”

Fiona McCormack, CEO, Domestic Violence Victoria
The Age, 4 June 2014

Together these insights suggest that attitudes towards violence against women are part of a complex picture, in that they both reflect and reinforce other factors implicated in the problem. They also suggest that behavioural change is unlikely to be brought about by strategies focusing on individual attitudinal change alone (such as social marketing or community education). Rather a continuum of strategies is needed that address both the factors contributing to the formation of attitudes in the first place and whether attitudes are reflected in behaviour.

What impact do attitudes have on violence against women?

Both directly and via their influence on social norms and cultures, attitudes can contribute to violence against women in a number of ways. They can also be used to measure progress in addressing this type of violence.

PERPETRATION OF VIOLENCE

- Violence against women is more common in communities in which violence-supportive attitudes are prevalent (Antai 2011; Bleecker & Murnen 2005; Koenig et al. 2006; Locke & Mahalik 2005; York 2011).
- Men who hold violence-supportive attitudes are more likely to perpetrate or say they would perpetrate violence (Abrahams et al. 2006; Bohner et al. 2006; Foshee et al. 2008; Raiford et al. 2012).

WOMEN'S RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE

Holding violence-supportive attitudes:

- influences whether or not victims disclose violence, whether they seek help and whether they report to police (Egan & Wilson 2011; Gracia et al. 2008; Giles et al. 2005; Weiss 2009)
- increases the likelihood of long-term psychological and emotional effects and inhibits recovery from violence (Giles et al. 2005; Flood & Pease 2006; Weiss 2009)
- increases the risks of re-victimisation (Miller et al. 2007).

Victims who perceive others to hold violence-supportive attitudes are less likely to disclose, because they fear that they will be blamed or stigmatised or that disclosure is unlikely to be effective (Ahrens 2006; Flood & Pease 2006).

RESPONSES OF PEOPLE WHO WITNESS VIOLENCE AND ITS PRECURSORS

Families and friends are often the first people that women exposed to violence turn to. Further, since much violence against women takes place in informal environments, other people who witness violence (often referred to as bystanders) have the potential to take positive action, as discussed further below (Powell 2011, 2012).

Negative attitudes may:

- result in less empathy and support being given to victims of violence (Giles et al. 2005; Flood & Pease), which may in turn impact on their recovery (Giles et al. 2005; Guggisberg 2008; Humphreys 2008; Miller et al. 2010)
- reduce the likelihood of people intervening to support a woman affected by violence (Brown & Messman-Moore 2009; Gracia & Herrero 2006a; McMahon 2010; Powell 2011)
- contribute to the proclivity for violence among some men. As indicated earlier (p. 35), studies have shown that men's intentions with regard to sexually abusive behaviour are influenced by what they believe their friends would do in particular circumstances (Bohner et al. 2006)
- work against the goals of programs for men who use violence. Participants in these programs have particularly strong adherence to violence-supportive attitudes. Challenging these is an important goal of many programs, a goal that can be undermined if violence-supportive attitudes are held by others in the perpetrator's social sphere (Lila et al. 2008; Scott & Straus 2007; Weldon & Gilchrist 2012).

RESPONSES OF HELPING PROFESSIONALS AND THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR ENFORCING THE LAW

The responses of the police and the judiciary are important as these influence the extent to which women are protected from violence, whether they report future violent behaviour and the application and effectiveness of sanctions (Flood & Pease 2006). Helping professionals such as doctors, social workers, priests and nurses have an important role in providing emotional and practical support to women, and this has been found to be critical to women's wellbeing, capacity to seek safety and to their recovery in the long term (Anderson & Quinn 2008; Flood & Pease 2006; Hegarty et al. 2012; Höggblom et al. 2005; Spangaro et al. 2010; Thapar-Björkert & Morgan 2010).

Poor attitudes among personnel in the criminal justice system may similarly impact on women's experiences and safety as well as on outcomes when violence is reported (Bieneck & Krahé 2011; DeJong et al. 2008; Lee et al. 2012; Meyer 2011). Studies on the behaviour of jurors suggest that they often

draw on rape myths in their assessment of perpetrator guilt (Ellison & Munro 2009a,b; Wenger & Bornstein 2006) and that attitudes and beliefs are more influential in their judgements than the facts of the case (Taylor 2007).

RESPONSES OF POLICY MAKERS AND CIVIC SOCIETY

Community attitudes also influence the development of policies and programs to respond to and prevent the problem of violence against women. Countries with strong civic society groups concerned about violence against women tend to have better legal and policy frameworks to prevent violence and to respond to its impacts (Htun & Weldon 2012). In part this is achieved through the direct impact of civic advocacy on government decision making. However, these groups also influence policy indirectly by shifting social norms and mobilising public opinion (Htun & Weldon 2012).

ATTITUDES AS A BAROMETER OF PROGRESS AND A ROAD MAP FOR PREVENTION EFFORT

Attitudes are an important way of measuring progress in addressing violence against women. As a reflection of social norms they act like a barometer, indicating progress to create a violence-free environment for all women. They can also help to show the extent of the work that lies ahead; where to best focus efforts, and the types of messages and approaches that are likely to be effective.

Factors influencing attitudes

As discussed earlier, attitudes are not fixed; they are shaped by influences in the family, organisational environments such as schools, sports clubs and health services, community and peer groups and broader forces such as the media and popular culture. These factors are important to understand because they provide a guide for identifying to whom prevention activity should be targeted and what changes are likely to lead to improvement in attitudes and ultimately reduction in the prevalence of violence against women.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH GENDER, GENDER ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

The most consistent predictors of attitudes towards violence against women identified in existing research are gender and attitudes towards gender roles, relationships and identities. In general women are less likely to blame the victim for violence and to believe that violence can be excused or justified, and are more likely to believe that the impacts of violence are serious (Anderson & Quinn 2008; Dunlap et al. 2012; Flood & Pease 2006; Haj-Yahia et al. 2012; Rani & Bonu 2009; Sinclair 2012; Suarez & Gadalla 2010).

However, as is the case with violence itself, it is not sex per se that influences attitudes towards violence against women, but the ways in which people understand gender roles, relationships and identities.

While there are many ways in which attitudinal support for gender inequality and rigid gender roles and identities may be expressed, some of the key concepts that have been explored in existing studies are attitudinal support for:

- stereotypical notions about appropriate roles for men and women in the public and private domains (e.g. whether or not women make better political leaders than men) (Ben-David & Schneider 2005; Bhanot & Senn 2007; Capezza & Arriaga 2008; Haj-Yahia et al. 2012; Marshall & Furr 2010; Whatley 2005)
- more subtle forms of attitudinal support for gender inequality. An example of this are measures that appear either benign or positive but are actually damaging to women and gender equality more broadly (e.g. the belief that women need to be protected by men). Such beliefs are referred to as 'benevolent sexism' (Glick & Fiske 1997). Another form are views that while appearing to support egalitarianism are actually hostile towards it (Tougas et al. 1995) e.g. 'gender inequality is no longer an issue' (Chapleau et al. 2007; Masser et al. 2010; Sakanh-Ugurlu et al. 2010; Yamawaki 2007)
- sharing of power and decision making between men and women within families and relationships (e.g. 'a man should be in charge of a relationship'; National Crime Prevention 2001)
- hostility towards women, in particular women who defy traditional gender roles, and towards the bid for women's equality (Chapleau et al. 2007; Cohn et al. 2009; Gallagher & Parrott 2011; Robertson & Murachver 2007)
- narrow constructions of masculinity and femininity and masculine and feminine identities (e.g. 'men should not express their emotions in public'), including the objectification of women (Nabors & Jasinski 2009).

People with lower levels of support for gender equality and endorsement of traditional gender roles and identities, and higher levels of hostility towards women, have been found to be more likely to hold violence-supportive attitudes in general (Flood & Pease 2006); and in relation to different forms of violence in particular including rape (Grubb & Turner 2012; Suarez & Gadalla 2010), sexual harassment (Lonsway et al. 2008) and domestic violence (Bhanot & Senn 2007; Haj-Yahia et al. 2012; Marshall & Furr 2010). In contrast, people who have strong support for the women's movement have been found to be less likely to hold violence-supportive attitudes (Lonsway et al. 2008; Suarez & Gadalla 2010).

"I want to tell people that family violence happens to [anybody], no matter how nice your house is, no matter how intelligent you are."

Rosie Batty, survivor
ABC News, 14 February 2014

Strong attitudinal support for violence against women has been found in male-dominated peer and organisational contexts with adherence to norms that support masculine dominance and risk-taking (Bleecker & Murnen 2005; Flood & Pease 2006, 2009; Locke & Mahalik 2005).

A relationship has also been found between attitudes towards violence against women and the ways in which gender roles, relationships and identities are portrayed in the media and popular culture (Flood & Pease 2006). This includes a relationship between such attitudes and:

- consuming sexually violent pornography (Hald et al. 2010)
- watching sexually violent movies (Ferguson 2012) and having a preference for films featuring sex and violence, over romance and suspense genres (Emmers-Sommer et al. 2006)
- seeing news headlines that endorse rape myths (Franiuk et al. 2008)
- being exposed to sex-stereotyped views of men and women in video games (Dill et al. 2008; Fox & Bailenson 2009)
- being exposed to degrading images of women (Suarez & Gadalla 2010).

Attitudes supportive of violence against women are also shaped by laws and legislation pertaining to violence against women (Flood & Pease 2006; Salazar et al. 2003), with violence-supportive attitudes being less widely held in countries with strong legislative frameworks to respond to violence against women (UN Women 2011 p. 34).

“If no one else stands up for you, you’re left feeling like you’ve done something to deserve this.”

Survivor

VicHealth Bystander Research Project 2012

ACCEPTANCE OF AND EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION

There is a link between violence-supportive attitudes and the use, support of and exposure to violence (either as a witness or victim), with such attitudes found to be more common among:

- individuals who hold attitudes supportive of the use of violence in other contexts, such as to resolve personal disputes, or conflicts between countries (Suarez & Gadalla 2010)
- those exposed to child abuse or witnessing partner violence as a child, although some studies have not found this to be the case (Button 2008; Flood & Pease 2006, 2009; Speizer 2010)
- neighbourhoods or communities in which there are generally high rates of violence (Button 2008).

People who are personally aware of a victim of sexual assault or partner violence have been found to have a more accurate understanding of the behaviours (Worden & Carlson 2005) and to hold less violence-supportive beliefs (Gracia & Herrero 2006b; McMahon 2010). However, men who are acquainted with a perpetrator of partner violence are more likely to endorse violence-supportive attitudes (Gracia & Herrero 2006b).

OTHER FACTORS AND CONTEXTS INFLUENCING THE STRENGTH AND NATURE OF ATTITUDES

A range of other factors and contexts influence the ways in which attitudes towards violence and gender relations are manifest, including:

- differences between cultures in the degree of gender equality and the nature of gender relations and identities (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009)
- access to education, especially tertiary education (Abramsky et al. 2011; Ackerson & Subramanian 2008; Alwin & Krosnick 1991; Alwin et al. 1991)
- attitudinal support for other forms of oppression, such as racism, religious intolerance, ageism and homophobia (Aosved & Long 2006; Suarez & Gadalla 2010)
- entrenched disadvantage at the individual or community level (Browning 2002; Sabina 2013)
- age, with both young adults and older people being more inclined to hold violence-supportive attitudes (Carlson & Worden 2005; Flood & Pease 2006, 2009; Rani & Bonu 2009)
- rural location, although this relationship is hypothesised on the basis of other research (Carrington & Scott 2008; Neame & Heenan 2004).

The factors influencing attitudes towards gender equality are not dissimilar to those influencing attitudes to violence against women and include gender, age, political orientation and education, along with socialisation in the family, education and through the media and popular culture (Bolzendahl & Myers 2004; Davis & Greenstein 2009; Gauntlett 2002; Lind 2004).

Knowledge of violence against women

In addition to attitudes, the National Community Attitudes Survey includes a number of questions to gauge knowledge of violence against women.

Research on attitudes towards a range of phenomena shows a relationship between an individual's understanding of an issue and their attitudes towards it (Azjen & Fishbein 2005; Chaiken & Trope 1999; Fazio 1990).

Understanding of violence has also been found to influence women's responses. Women are less likely to report violence that does not fit with narrow definitions of violence (e.g. as involving overt physical violence or forced sex) (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009). Women victims of rape whose understanding of the law is poor have been found to be more likely than those with an accurate understanding of the law to blame themselves (Miller et al. 2007).

Knowledge and understanding of violence against women is important to strengthen responses of families and friends of women affected by violence, as well as to engage the wider community in prevention efforts (Carlson & Worden 2005; McMahan & Baker 2011; O'Neil & Morgon 2010).

The role of the law in setting new social norms is dependent on a wide community understanding of the law (Salazar et al. 2003).

Responses to violence against women

A fourth area addressed in the National Community Attitudes Survey concerns the way in which people respond to violence they witness and the factors informing and facilitating such action.

A bystander is one who observes violence or behaviours or conditions that may contribute to the problem. There has been increasing interest in exploring ways in which bystanders can be encouraged to respond to help address violence, or to be what some researchers have called 'pro-social' bystanders (McDonald & Flood 2012; Powell 2011, 2012).

Bystanders can be engaged at each level of prevention introduced earlier (see p. 31). In tertiary intervention, this might involve calling the police or taking action when it is safe to do so in relation to a specific incident of violence. Bystanders can support early intervention by talking to a perpetrator about his controlling behaviour or responding sensitively to a victim disclosing violence. In the case of primary prevention, bystanders have the potential to strengthen the conditions that work against violence occurring in the first place. This might involve challenging sexist remarks or jokes that normalise violence towards or disrespect of women, challenging degrading images of women in advertising or campaigning for improved laws related to violence (Powell 2011, 2012).

The interest in encouraging pro-social bystander behaviour has grown, recognising that:

- what other people believe, or are perceived to believe, are among the strongest influences on behaviour (Bohner et al. 2006; Brown & Messman-Moore 2009)
- only a small proportion of women subject to violence report this to the police. Similarly, many of the antecedents of violence towards women occur in everyday contexts beyond the gaze of those in official positions responsible for sanctioning against them, such as workplace human resource personnel or sports club officials
- underlying social norms relating to gender roles and identities play an important part in the perpetration of violence against women. Many of the behaviours reflecting these norms are not against the law. However, as discussed earlier it is possible to challenge them using social sanctions.

Research into the role of bystanders suggests that bystander inclination is influenced by a number of key factors including a bystander's own attitudes towards violence against women, their perception of the attitudes of others, their confidence to take action and their belief that action is likely to be effective (Powell 2012).

Community knowledge of violence against women

Definitions and dynamics

More are aware that violence against women takes many forms

A majority of Australians are aware that violence against women includes physical and sexual violence as well as emotional, psychological, social and financial forms of abuse and control, and indirect forms of harassment, such as by telephone and email (see Figures 4 and 5 overleaf).

There has been a small but consistent improvement since 1995 in the percentage of people recognising emotional, psychological, social and financial forms of partner violence (Figure 4). For example in 1995 only 74% of people recognised ‘controls the social life of the other partner by preventing them from seeing family and friends’ as partner violence. This rose to 83% in 2009 and 85% in 2013. Although not all changes are statistically significant, a similar trend is apparent for the other non-physical behaviours.

However, as was the case in 1995 and 2009, people are more inclined to identify obvious forms of physical and sexual violence as domestic violence or violence against women than non-physical and indirect forms of control, coercion and intimidation. For example while 97% recognise ‘slapping or pushing the other partner to cause harm and fear’ as a form of partner violence, fewer (85%) recognise ‘controls the social life of the other partner by preventing them from seeing family and friends’ as a form of violence.

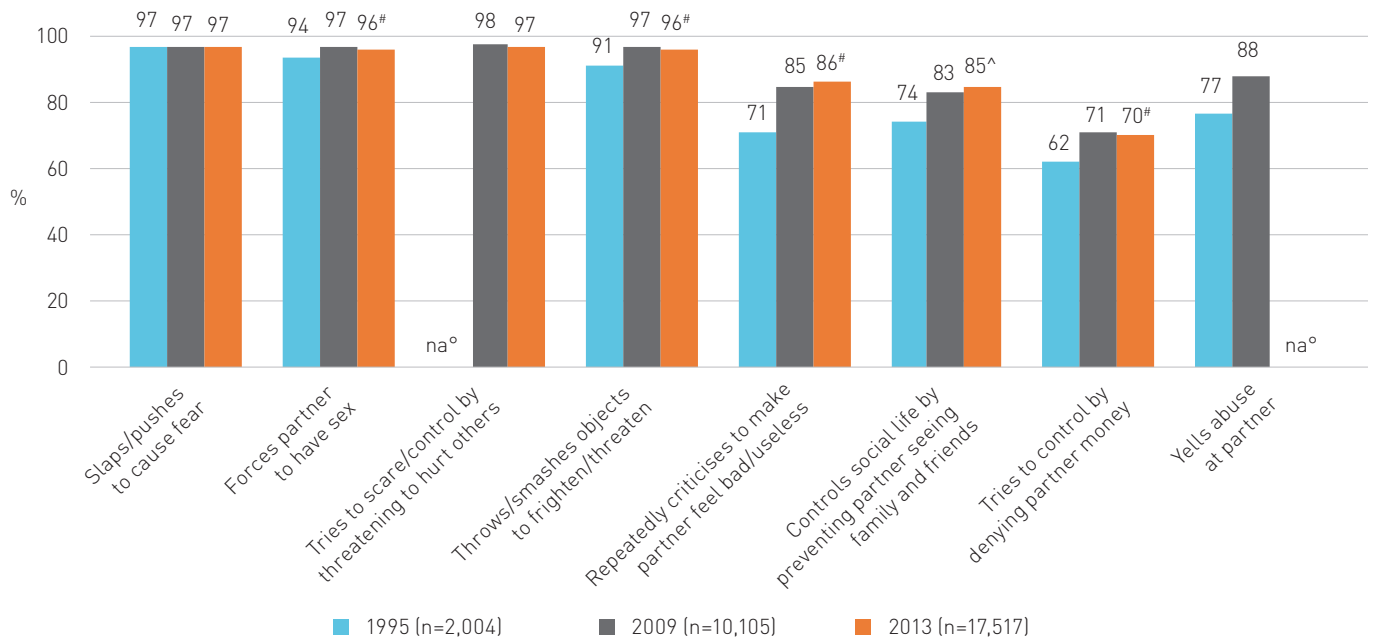
Older people are less likely to recognise forced sex in a relationship as ‘always’ violence (71% for those aged 65 to 74 years and 61% for those aged 75 years or more, versus 79% for the sample as whole), as are people born in N-MESCs (66%). Men, younger people (those aged under 24 years) and people from N-MESCs are less likely to recognise covert forms of control as ‘always’ violence.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Australia’s policy to address violence against women and their children is underpinned by the definition in the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (UN 1993). Violence is defined as occurring on a continuum, from behaviours designed to intimidate and cause psychological harm to women through to those involving forced sex and physical injury. Understanding of this definition is important because:

- non-physical forms of violence can cause equal if not greater harms (Doherty & Berglund 2008; MacDonald 2012; Postmus et al. 2011)
- psychological, social and financial means of control and intimidation frequently occur alongside more obvious physical and sexual violence. They may occur independently of physical violence, or they may be the primary sources of abuse amid infrequent episodes of physical violence (Stark 2009; Wangmann 2011). Such violence is often used in a methodological and strategic manner by some men to gain power and control in a relationship, in a dynamic commonly referred to as ‘coercive control’ (Stark 2009)
- gauging community recognition of these behaviours as partner violence (as opposed to behaviour that is normal in a relationship) can help to inform the extent to which it is necessary to strengthen understanding of the distinction between healthy, respectful behaviours and those that are damaging
- the controlling dynamic that often accompanies physical violence provides some understanding of the motivations of men who use violence. Understanding this can help to shape more effective means of identifying and addressing the problem. This understanding can also help to make sure that violence is detected by family, friends and work colleagues of men who use violence, or women who are subject to it, at the earliest possible stage
- contemporary laws provide protection from many of behaviours implied in the United Nations definition and understanding this can make sure that women are aware that they can access the law
- studies show that professionals with a greater understanding that violence comprises a continuum of behaviours are more likely to reject other false beliefs about violence against women (Tam & Tang 2005).

Figure 4: Percentage agreeing that certain behaviours are a form of domestic violence¹, 1995, 2009 and 2013



[#] Difference between 1995 and 2013 is statistically significant, p≤.01.

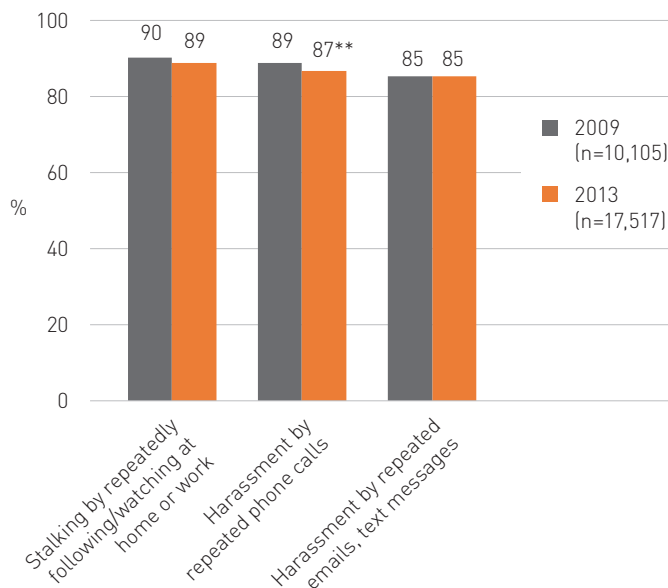
[^] Difference between 1995, 2009 and 2013 is statistically significant, p≤.01.

^o Not asked.

¹ Percent agree combines responses of 'always', 'usually' or 'sometimes'.

Note: Each of the questions in this series was consciously framed to capture the intent of the behaviour (ie to control, intimidate or abuse).

Figure 5: Percentage agreeing that certain behaviours are a form of violence against women¹, 2009 and 2013



^{**} Difference between 2009 and 2013 is statistically significant, p≤.01.

¹ Percent agree combines responses of 'always', 'usually' or 'sometimes'.

Note: These questions were added to the survey in 2009 and were framed as 'violence against women' rather than 'domestic violence' recognising that these behaviours may also occur in other intimate and non-intimate relationships.

Prevalence

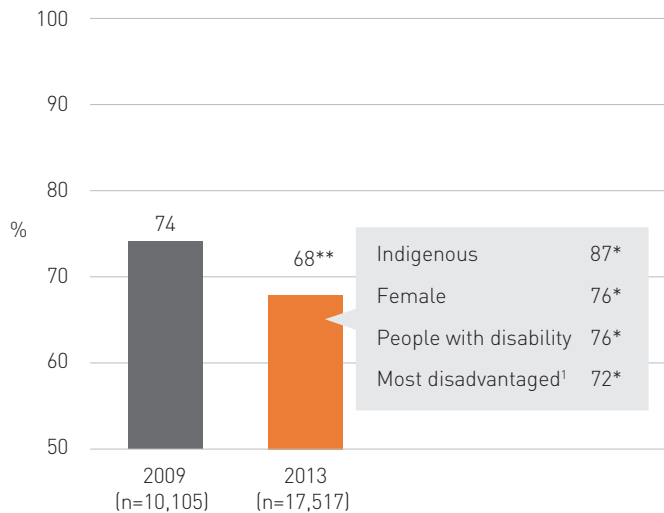
Knowledge of prevalence is high but has declined

Although a majority of Australians are aware that violence against women is common (68%), the percentage has declined since 2009, when 74% did so (Figure 6).

Many of the groups illustrated in Figure 6 as being more likely to recognise that violence against women is common are those who are especially vulnerable to it, suggesting that exposure to violence increases knowledge of its prevalence.

Groups less likely than the sample as whole to believe that violence against women is common are men (59%), in particular young men (those aged 16 to 24 years) (50%) and people born in N-MESCs (57%).

Figure 6: Percentage agreeing that violence against women is common in our community, total sample and selected subgroups, 2009 and 2013



** Difference between 2009 and 2013 is statistically significant, $p \leq .01$.
 * Difference between subgroup and 2013 is statistically significant, $p \leq .01$.
¹ Measured with an Australian Bureau of Statistics product on the basis of respondents' postcodes using multiple indicators of advantage (e.g. high income, having a degree) and disadvantage (e.g. unemployment, low income).

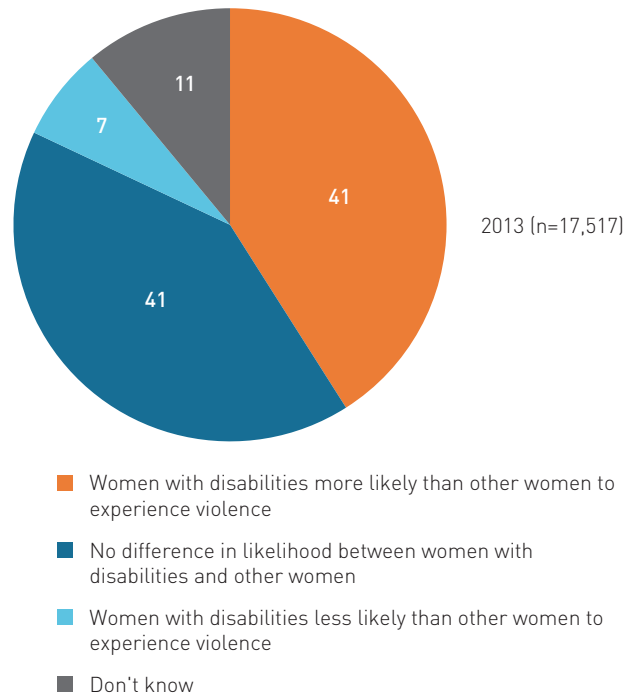
WHY DOES IT MATTER?

If people regard violence against women as commonplace, they are more likely to state an intention to take action when they witness it (Gracia & Herrero 2006a). Public perceptions of a problem are among a range of factors influencing whether governments will take action to address that problem (Burnstein 2003).

Understanding of risks for women with disabilities is low

Numerous studies show that women with disabilities face a higher risk of physical and sexual assault than other women (for a review see Healey 2013). Only 41% of the community understands this and men are less likely than women (33% v 48%). The same percentage thought that there was no difference and a substantial proportion did not know (11%).

Figure 7: Perceptions of the prevalence of violence against women with disabilities, 2013 (%)



WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Knowledge of the greater risk of violence faced by women with disabilities is important to increase the prospects of:

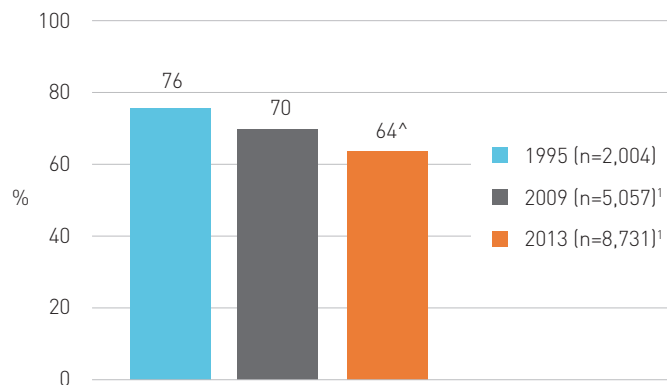
- violence against women with disabilities being identified when it occurs
- appropriate steps being taken by organisations to prevent and respond to violence against women with disabilities, especially important in residential environments providing care to people with disabilities
- violence against women with disabilities being addressed in policy and legislative reform, and when resources are allocated.

Patterns and impacts

Most are aware that rape is more likely by a known person, but fewer than in 1995

The 2012 Personal Safety Survey shows that women who had been sexually assaulted are over three times more likely to be sexually assaulted by a person known to them than by a stranger (ABS 2013b). Although nearly two-thirds of Australians (64%) understand this, the number doing so has declined steadily since 1995, when 76% did so. Young men have a particularly poor understanding, with only 50% agreeing that women are at greater risk of sexual assault by someone known to them.

Figure 8: Percentage agreeing that women are more likely to be raped by someone they know than by a stranger, 1995, 2009 and 2013



[^] Difference between 1995, 2009 and 2013 is statistically significant, $p \leq .01$.

¹ Asked of split sample.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The erroneous belief that women are at higher risk of sexual violence by a stranger:

- leads to exaggerated fears of stranger rape, and potentially to women restricting their freedom of movement as a consequence (Ryan 2011)
- may contribute to the neglect of rape by known persons in legal and policy reform
- is the foundation of the 'real rape' script (see box p. 47), which is a factor contributing to low rates of reporting, prosecution and conviction in cases of sexual assault (Larcombe 2011). When the perpetrator is known to the victim, he is viewed as less responsible for the rape, or as less likely to have violated the victim's rights. He is likely to be viewed as having a greater misunderstanding of the situation and his behaviour is also seen as more acceptable (Ben-David & Schneider 2005; Simonson & Subich 1999).

“The more I felt the incredible support from the community, the more difficult it was to ignore the silent majority whose tormentors are not monsters lurking on busy streets, but their friends, acquaintances, husbands, lovers, brothers and fathers.”

Tom Meagher, husband of Jill Meagher who was fatally physically and sexually assaulted

White Ribbon Campaign Blog 2014

What is the ‘real rape’ script?

Compared with other crimes against the person, sexual assaults are less likely to be reported, to be prosecuted or to result in conviction (Larcombe 2011). In explaining this difference, researchers have pointed to the story or ‘cultural script’ that many people hold in their heads about what constitutes a credible, genuine or ‘real’ rape (Estrich 1986). In this script, rape usually takes place at night, outdoors in a dark and secluded place. The victim is alone and the perpetrator is unknown to her. She is typically of impeccable character, is conservatively dressed, does not have a history of mental health or cognitive problems and is unaffected by alcohol. The assault takes place with the use of force, typically involving both aggression and weapons. The victim physically resists her assailant, sustaining visible injuries in the process (Anderson 2007; Estrich 1986; Larcombe 2011; McMahon 2010).

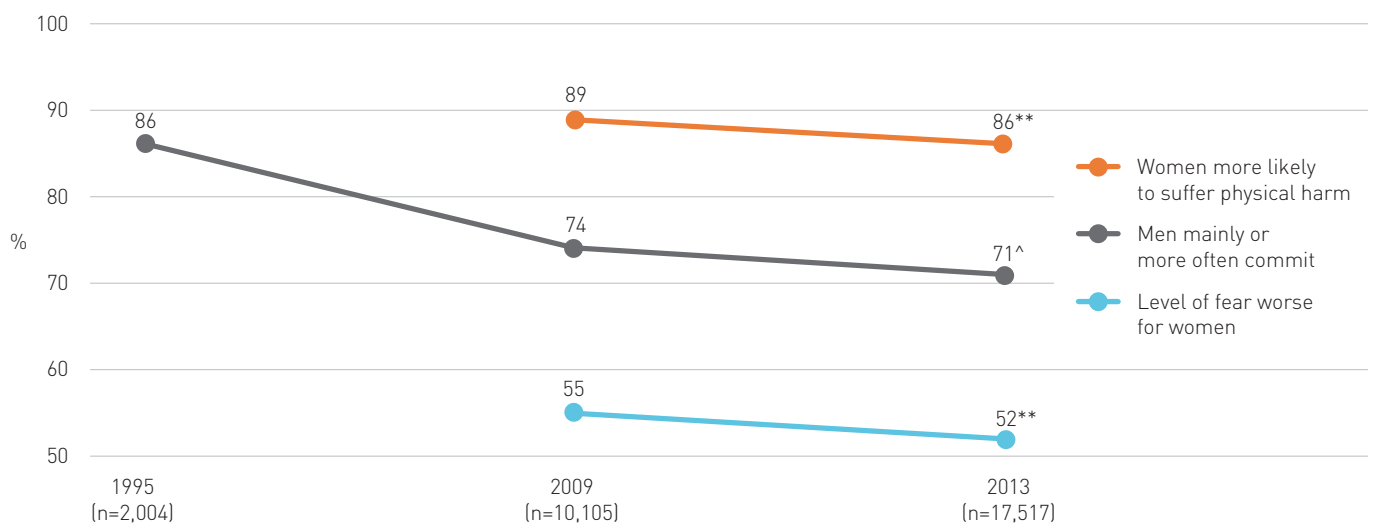
In reality, the circumstances in which most sexual assault occurs are very different. The great majority of rapes are perpetrated by someone known to the victim (ABS 2013b), with whom she may previously have had consensual sex, or with whom she will have spent at least some time prior to the assault. Older women and women with disabilities may be particularly at risk of rape in institutional settings (Clark & Fileborn 2011; Dillon 2010) and a very large proportion of sexual assaults take place in a domestic, social or workplace setting (Brecklin & Ullman 2002; Clark & Quadara 2010; Untied et al. 2013). Approximately half of all reported and unreported sexual assaults involve alcohol consumption by either the perpetrator or the victim (Abbey 2011). Weapons are involved in only a small proportion

of sexual assaults (Lievore 2003 p. 21), with submission commonly being secured through instilling fear and other forms of psychological coercion (Lievore 2003). Women subject to sexual assault respond in diverse ways. While some women do physically resist or seek flight, others may respond more passively becoming ‘frozen’ and unable to act, or psychologically dissociating themselves from the situation (Mason and Lodrick 2003). As a consequence, women who are sexually assaulted do not necessarily have visible physical injuries (Lievore 2003). A disproportionate number of victims of sexual assault have intellectual disabilities or mental health problems, conditions that make them particular targets for assault (Larcombe 2011).

Studies suggest that the more the actual circumstances and relationships in sexual assault depart from those implied in the ‘real rape’ script, the greater the chances that blame and responsibility will be transferred from the perpetrator to the victim. This is evident in the responses of victims (who are less likely to report) (Egan & Wilson 2011), those to whom they may turn for assistance (Cohn et al. 2009; Grubb & Harrower 2008; Harrison et al. 2008; Krahe et al. 2007, 2008; Weiss 2009), and in outcomes in the criminal justice system (Ellison & Munro 2009a,b; Larcombe 2011).

This leads to a vicious cycle whereby only cases with good prospects for conviction (i.e. those conforming to the ‘real rape’ script) proceed to trial, further reinforcing the script, and reducing the power of the law to communicate standards of acceptable behaviour (Larcombe 2011).

Figure 9: Perceptions of the perpetration and impacts of domestic violence, 1995, 2009 and 2013 (%)



^ Difference between 1995, 2009 and 2013 is statistically significant, $p \leq .01$.

** Difference between 2009 and 2013 is statistically significant, $p \leq .01$.

Most are aware that domestic violence is mainly a problem for women, but fewer than in 1995

A majority of Australians understand that partner violence is committed by men or mainly by men (71%) and that women are most likely to suffer physical harm (86%). However, only a small majority (52%) recognise that the level of fear is worse for women. See Figure 9, previous page.

The proportion recognising that domestic violence is more likely to be perpetrated by men has declined by 15 percentage points since 1995. Similarly the proportion recognising the greater physical and psychological harms for women has declined by three percentage points between 2009, when these questions were first introduced, and 2013.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

An accurate understanding of these patterns is important because it:

- influences understanding of the nature, severity and dynamics of violence itself, which in turn may influence responses to violence. A person's responses are likely to be very different if partner violence is understood as mutual behaviour between two equally powerful individuals, than if the power of a male aggressor is understood
- guides the level of policy attention and resourcing needed to address partner violence affecting women, relative to that affecting men.

Both men and women can suffer violence from their partners and both are capable of perpetrating such violence. However studies show that men are more likely than women to:

- perpetrate partner violence (based on data from ABS 2013b)
- use frequent, prolonged and extreme violence (Bagshaw et al. 2000; Belknap & Melton 2005; Holtzworth-Munroe 2005; Kimmel 2002)
- sexually assault an intimate partner (Swan et al. 2012)
- subject their partners to the controlling and coercive behaviours discussed on p. 43 (ABS 2013b; Caldwell & Swan 2012).

In contrast, when women do use violence in intimate relationships this is more likely to be in self-defence (Cercone et al. 2005; Dobash et al. 2004; Holtzworth-Munroe 2005).

With regard to the impacts of violence, women have been found to be more likely than men to:

- sustain physical injury, including injuries requiring medical treatment, time from work and days in bed (Belknap & Melton 2005)
- be the victims of domestic homicide (Chan & Payne 2013)
- report experiencing fear as a result of violence (Bagshaw et al. 2000; Caldwell & Swan 2012; Headey et al. 1999; National Crime Prevention 2001).

These reporting patterns are not the result of women being more inclined to report when subject to a similar level of violence (e.g. because they are more fragile). Rather, studies show that women report higher levels of injury and fear because they are subject to more serious and severe forms of violence than are men (Romito & Grassi 2007).

Why is understanding of patterns of partner violence changing?

The declining understanding of the greater impacts of partner violence on women may be due to:

- the community having a wider definition of violence in mind when responding to this question and seeing that both men and women are capable of perpetrating behaviours that do not involve physical force
- portrayal of partner violence as gender-neutral in the media and some policy and professional discourse (Murray & Powell 2009; Phillips 2006)
- the influence of campaigns by men's rights groups to change family law in which it has been argued

inaccurately that violence is perpetrated equally by both men and women and affects men and women similarly (Bryant 2009; Flood 2010)

- increasing attention to other forms of violence perpetrated by women and girls (e.g. street violence), which may have spilled over to influence perceptions about the use of violence by women in relationships. Whether there has been an actual increase in violence perpetrated by women and girls remains the subject of debate among experts (Chesney-Lind & Irwin 2008).

Violence and the law

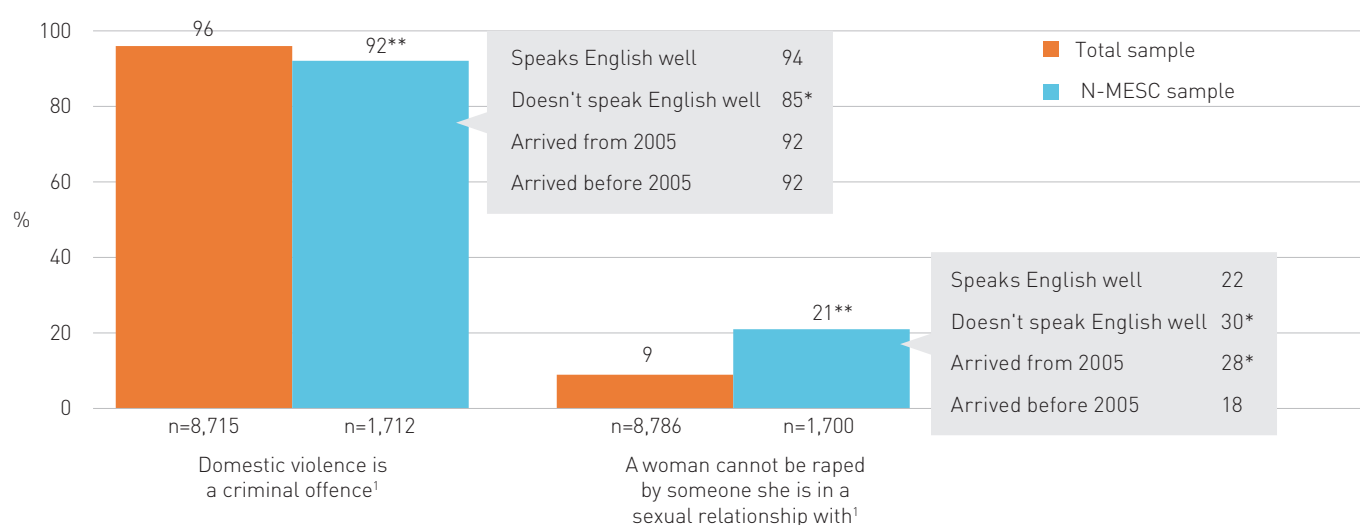
Knowledge of the law is high but lower among some groups

The overwhelming majority of people in Australia recognise that partner violence and forced sex within a relationship can be against the law.⁴ This is also the case for Australians over the age of 65 years. However, among this group a higher proportion do not recognise forced sex in a relationship as against the law (12% of those aged 65 to 74 years and 14% of those aged 75 years or more, compared with 9% for the

sample as a whole). People who are from N-MESCs are also less likely to recognise forced sex in a relationship as against the law (21%). This is particularly so among overseas-born persons who have arrived recently (28%) and those who do not speak English well (30%), than those arriving before 2005 (18%) and those with good proficiency in English (22%).

Change over time has been minimal, with understanding that domestic violence may be against the law improving by only three percentage points since 1995, and knowledge that forced sex in a relationship is not lawful *declining* by three percentage points since 2009 when this question was first introduced.

Figure 10: Knowledge of the law pertaining to domestic violence and sexual assault by selected characteristics of persons born overseas in a N-MESC, 2013 (% agree)



* Difference between subgroups and N-MESC is statistically significant, $p \leq .05$.

** Difference between the N-MESC sample and the total sample is statistically significant, $p \leq .01$.

¹ Asked of split sample.

N-MESC, non-main English speaking country.

Refer to Technical Report Appendices for base sizes of subsamples.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Since the 1980s, Australian governments have invested considerable effort to reform laws relating to partner violence and sexual assault and to the ways they are enforced. There is some uncertainty about whether the law can influence re-offending by individuals (Salazar et al. 2003). However, the law and its effective implementation can:

- play an important symbolic role by strengthening social norms against violence (Salazar et al. 2003). These in turn influence whether individuals perpetrate violence as well as the responses of those witnessing it
- increase reporting by women affected by violence (Egan & Wilson 2011)

- improve the prospects of recovery from violence. Women who are aware that violence is against the law are less likely to blame themselves (Egan & Wilson 2011). Self-blame is a factor inhibiting recovery from the psychological effects of violence (Flood & Pease 2006)
- protect women from violence in certain circumstances (e.g. where it provides for the removal of the offender from the family home).

Legal frameworks to prevent violence against women vary internationally. There are 127 countries that do not explicitly criminalise rape in marriage and many do not have laws to prevent family violence (UN Women 2011). This is likely to explain the different results for persons born overseas.

⁴ Not all of the behaviours canvassed in this report are crimes and there is some variation in definitions of partner violence between Australian jurisdictions and between civil and criminal law.

Factors influencing violence

A gap exists between community understanding and practice, research and policy

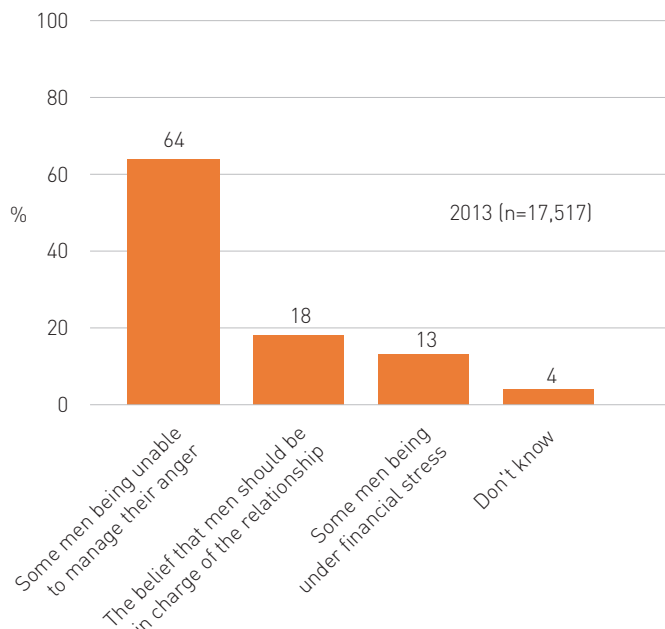
Violence against women is a complex problem to which many factors contribute. However, inequality between men and women, and associated gender relationships, roles and identities, are significant underlying factors. This is evident at the individual and relationship levels in studies showing a link between violence and male dominance of decision-making; the use of behaviours to exercise control in relationships; and attitudes that support male dominance and traditional gender roles (see p. 34).

While other factors also exert an influence they do so in interaction with underlying inequality and its impacts. As discussed earlier in this report, this understanding underpins approaches to address violence against women internationally (UN 2012c; WHO 2010; WHO & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2010) and in Australia (Council of Australian Governments 2010) and guides the practice of many experts working in specialist services to combat violence against women. It is based on international studies undertaken over many years (see p. 34).

Prior research shows a substantial gap between this understanding and the way in which the wider community understands violence against women. Specifically, this research has found that members of the wider community are:

- more likely to attribute violence to the characteristics of individuals who use violence (e.g. alcohol abuse), rather than to broader social factors
- if considering broader social factors, more likely to suggest things like unemployment and social exclusion than factors influencing relationships between men and women (e.g. objectification of women in the media)

Figure 11: Perceived main cause of why some men are violent toward women (%)



- unlikely to mention gender roles and relations unless such options are specifically included as options in a survey (European Commission 2010a; Harris/Decima 2009; O'Neill & Morgan 2010; Worden & Carlson 2005).

Survey participants were asked what they believed to be the *main* reason for *some* men being violent towards women from three options (see Figure 11). There are limitations to how thoroughly community understanding of the causes of violence can be explored through a single survey question. However, the results suggest that this gap in understanding is also likely to exist in Australia:

- Less than a third of Australians identified either of the causes associated with broader social context. Less than 1 in 5 (18%) identified the cause linked to gender roles and relationships, 'the belief that men should be in charge of relationships', while 13% selected 'men being under financial stress' as the main cause.
- The majority, 64%, selected a cause related to the characteristics of individual violent men: 'men not being able to manage their anger'.

Those most likely to identify the belief that men should be in charge of the relationship as the main cause are women (22%), young people (35% of women and 23% of men aged 16 to 24 years) and people from Indigenous backgrounds (27%).

The use of the word 'some' in this question was used to reflect the reality that most men do not use violence against women. It is possible that it may have pre-disposed respondents to identifying the response reflecting an individual cause. However, as indicated above, the pattern of response is not novel, but rather is consistent with other studies.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Gauging community understanding of the causes of violence against women is important because:

- it helps to identify strengths on which to build and gaps in knowledge that need to be addressed
- primary prevention of violence against women in particular (see p. 31 for a definition) will involve collaboration with people in the environments in which the factors contributing to violence lie (e.g. cultures in sporting clubs and workplaces, the objectification of women in the media). Such engagement will depend on a good understanding of the links between what happens in these environments and violence against women
- implementation of policy approaches 'on the ground' is more likely to be successful when the reasons for them are understood. For example, people who see violence as mainly a product of stress may find it difficult to understand the current policy environment, which emphasises the importance of holding men accountable for their use of violence (Worden & Carlson 2005).

What roles do financial stress and poor anger management play in violence against women?

Studies of women who report violence show a relationship between stressful life events and partner violence (Weatherburn 2011; Smith & Weatherburn 2013). Fewer studies have been conducted with perpetrators. They show a modest relationship between stress and the perpetration of violence (Roberts et al. 2011). That is, stress can increase the risk of violence in some, though not all, men.

As discussed earlier, stressful events are understood to increase the risk of violence mainly in relationships in which there is already marked inequality in power (Heise 1998) and because they compromise men's capacity to meet gendered expectations. For example, unemployment has been found to be a greater risk factor for violence among men who place a high value on their roles as breadwinners than those who hold less store in the traditional breadwinner role (Atkinson et al. 2005).

This has important implications for the way in which stress is dealt with as a factor both in working with individual men who use violence and in broader strategies to prevent violence. It suggests the need to address the source of the stress alongside issues associated with power in relationships and gender identities and roles.

Reviews of studies on the relationship between anger control and intimate partner violence remain inconclusive (Norlander & Eckhardt 2005). While a link has been found between men who have high levels of anger and partner violence, whether this anger precipitates specific incidents of violence is unclear (Norlander & Eckhardt 2005).

Two factors suggest that an inability to control anger is not a primary cause for many men who use violence against women. First, although some men who are violent in their intimate relationships are also violent in other contexts, many are not (Mouzos & Makkai 2004). If men are able to control their anger in other contexts, it would be expected that they would similarly be able to do so in their intimate relationships. Second, detailed studies of the dynamics of violence in intimate relationships suggest that many men who use violence go to extraordinary lengths to exercise control over women and to perpetrate violence in ways that avoid detection (Pringle 1995; Stark 2009; Victorian Law Reform Commission 2006).

These findings are at odds with the notion of violence resulting from poor control of aggressive impulses. It is of note that interventions using anger control as their basis are prohibited in many states in the USA (Greal et al. 2013; Norlander & Eckhardt 2005).

Attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality

Attitudes justifying violence

Attitudes that justify violence are based on the notion that it is legitimate for a man to use violence against women, especially their female intimate partners, in certain circumstances. These circumstances generally involve women ‘transgressing’ gendered roles, falling short of the expectations of those roles or challenging men’s ‘authority’.

Few believe that violence can be justified

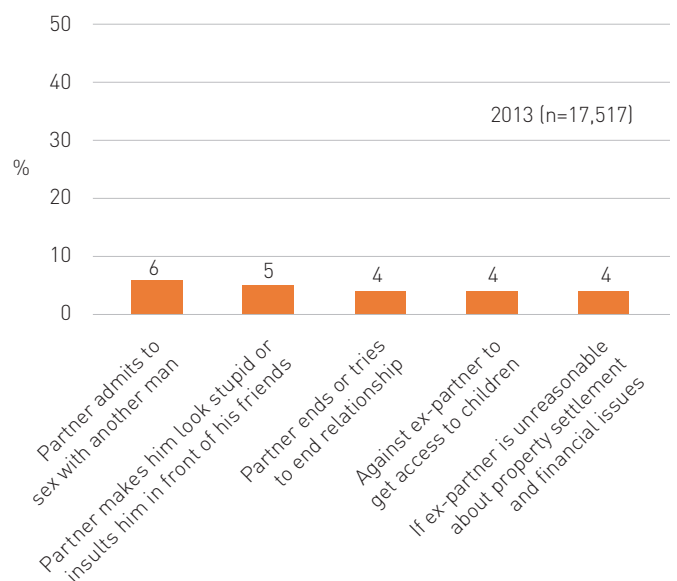
Successive waves of the National Community Attitudes Survey suggest that there is very little explicit support for violence against women in Australia. Only a small minority of Australians (between 4% and 6% depending on the scenario) agree that violence against women is justified. This is the case whether the violence is perpetrated against current or former partners.

Between 2009 and 2013, there was a very small increase in support for some of the justifications included in the survey. This was in the order of two percentage points for the propositions that a man would be justified in using violence against his partner if she makes him look stupid in front of his friends, and against an ex-partner if she is unreasonable about property, settlement and financial issues.

As was the case in the sample as a whole, only a minority of people born in N-MESCs and those from ATSI backgrounds agree that violence could be justified. However people in these samples are more likely to do so. Women in the Indigenous sample are less likely to justify violence than their male counterparts, but more likely to do so than non-ATSI women.

Similarly, although a majority of young men reject the notion that violence can be justified, they are more likely than young women and all men to agree that it can be justified in some of the circumstances put to them.

Figure 12: Circumstances in which violence toward a current or former partner can be justified, 2013 (% agree)



WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- A principle underlying Australia’s *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* is that violence is unacceptable and that individuals who use violence must be accountable for their behaviour (Council of Australian Governments 2010).
- There is a relationship between normative support for violence and its perpetration (Flood & Pease 2006).
- Freedom from violence is a fundamental human right.

“All those years, I had explained it away, minimised it, blamed myself for being in that situation...15 years after I was raped, I finally let myself call it that.”

Anon, survivor

The Citizen, 25 November 2013

Attitudes excusing violence

Attitudes excusing violence do not necessarily endorse or legitimise it. Rather they are based on the impression that there are factors leading to some men being unable to control their behaviour, or to be held fully responsible for it. Excuses for violence may be based on external circumstances such as stress; individual factors, including poor anger control or mental illness; or biological factors such as hormones.

Fewer excuse domestic violence than in 2009, but more excuse sexual assault

A substantial minority of Australians believe that violence against women can be excused in certain circumstances ranging from 9% believing that partner violence can be excused if the perpetrator is affected by alcohol to 43% believing that 'rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex'.

There was very little change between 2009 and 2013 in support for excuses for partner violence. The exception was a small improvement in the proportion agreeing that domestic violence can be excused if the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done, from a quarter of all Australians in 2009 (25%) to just over 1 in 5 in 2013 (21%). Of concern is the marked increase in the proportion believing that rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex, from 35% in 2009 to 43% in 2013.

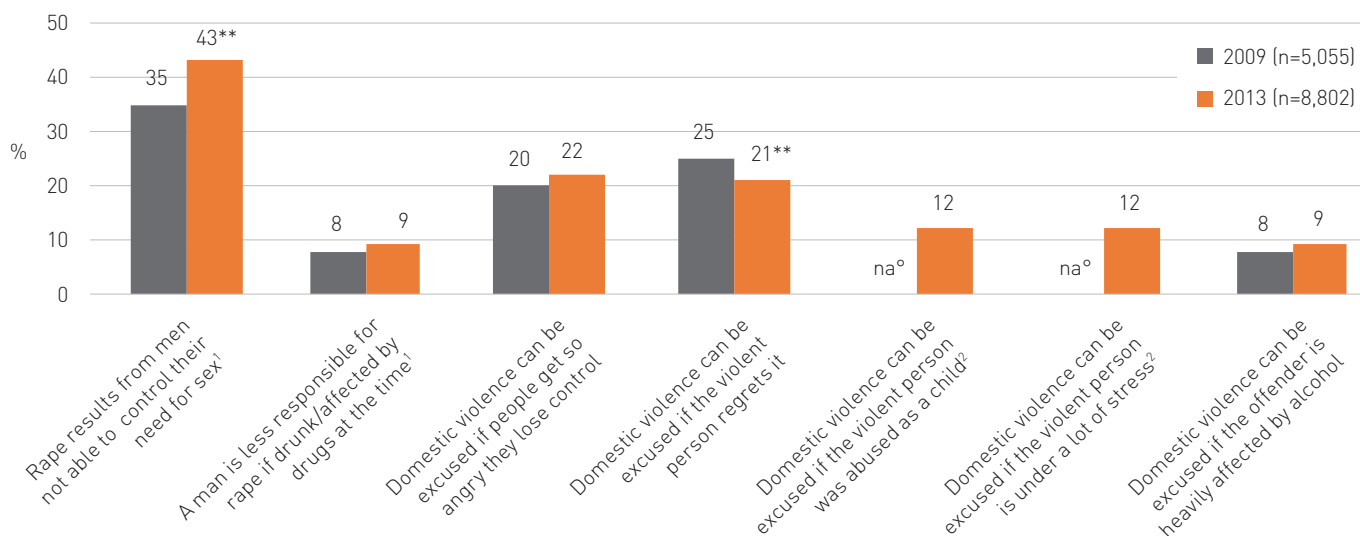
WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- The grounds on which people are prepared to excuse violence also provides some insight into what they believe the causes of violence to be. As discussed overleaf, most of the factors considered make only a modest contribution to violence against women, and typically when interacting with the influences of gender inequality and associated roles and identities.
- Social disapproval of violence is among the strongest protective factors. Excusing violence may weaken normative intolerance of its use.
- Excuses for violence shift responsibility from the perpetrator to other factors, undermining attempts to ensure accountability for the use of violence. While factors such as a history of child abuse provide important context for understanding why some men perpetrate violence, and need to be addressed, the use of violence is nevertheless a choice.

There are no differences between men and women except for the excuse of the violent person being genuinely regretful afterward (26% of men, compared with only 17% of women, agree with this excuse).

ATSI Australians and people from N-MESCs are more likely to excuse violence than the sample as a whole. Although female respondents from Indigenous backgrounds are less inclined than men from these backgrounds to excuse violence, they are more likely to do so than non-ATSI women. Young men are more likely than all men to agree that violence can be excused if the violent person is genuinely regretful afterward (33% v. 26%).

Figure 13: Beliefs about circumstances in which sexual assault and domestic violence can be excused, 2009 and 2013 (% agree)



** Difference between 2013 and 2009 is statistically significant, p≤.01.

^o Not asked.

¹ Asked of split sample 2009 (n=5,048) and 2013 (n=8,786).

² Asked of split sample 2013 (n=8,715).

Evaluating common excuses

The roles of *stress* and *anger control* in the perpetration of partner violence have been discussed earlier (see p. 51). The notion that the violent person can be excused if *genuinely regretful afterward* is especially problematic owing to the very dynamic of relationships in which violence occurs. Violent episodes are frequently interspersed with periods of intense remorse and regret (Hale et al. 2006; Heise et al. 1999; Victorian Law Reform Commission 2006). This can undermine women's resolve to take steps to seek safety from violence. If held by women themselves or voiced by those around them, the belief that violence can be excused by expressions of genuine regret compounds the impacts of this dynamic.

As discussed on p. 35 men who experienced *abuse as a child* are at greater risk of perpetrating violence against women as adults. However, many men who experienced child abuse do not use violence as adults (Banyard et al. 2007; Fang & Corso 2007; Sunday et al. 2011). Indeed there is evidence that some men abused as children grow up to be very intolerant of violence (Flood & Pease 2006). Further, many men who do use violence against women were not themselves childhood victims.

Partner violence is more common among men who misuse *alcohol*, although the association is modest (Foran & O'Leary 2008). The likelihood of violence occurring is higher after episodes of drinking and the severity of violence has found to be greater when alcohol is involved (Bennet & Bland 2008; Graham et al. 2010). In a substantial proportion of cases of sexual assault either the victim, the perpetrator or both have been drinking (Abbey et al. 2004; Heenan & Murray 2006). At the same time many men who misuse alcohol are not violent, while many men who use violence do not have a problem with alcohol (Abbey 2011; Mouzos & Makkai 2004). In the case of sexual assault, the increased risk associated with alcohol is primarily among men already predisposed to sexual aggression (Abbey 2011), such that alcohol is viewed as determinant of *when* particular men may become aggressive rather than of *which* men will perpetrate violence. Similarly where partner violence is concerned, an existing pattern of controlling behaviours often exists among men who use both alcohol and violence (Bennet & Bland 2008) and controlling behaviours have been found to be a stronger correlate of violence than alcohol misuse (Mouzos & Makkai 2004).

It is also likely that the social context in which drinking takes place contributes to the increased risk of violence, either as well as, or rather than, the pharmacological effects of alcohol. That is, some men consume alcohol in 'drinking cultures' that place a value on male conquest

and aggression, and it is the social support for violence and disrespect of women that contributes to risk (Abbey 2008; Humphreys et al. 2005; Schwartz & Dekeseredy 2000). Allied to this is the expectation in our culture that alcohol will negatively impact on our ability to behave appropriately. These claims are supported by studies demonstrating that behavioural changes occur at very low levels of alcohol consumption (i.e. at levels unlikely to have a pharmacological impact on behaviour) (Pernanen 1991, cited in Bennet & Bland 2008). There is evidence that some men consciously drink to give themselves 'time-out' to behave in ways they know are unacceptable (Bennet & Bland 2008; Rothman et al. 2011).

Both men and women who are intoxicated behave in ways that reflect their gender socialisation, with only a small proportion of women becoming aggressive when intoxicated (Taft & Toomey 2005). This suggests that masculine socialisation remains important in understanding the behaviour of men who use violence while intoxicated.

For these reasons alcohol is seen by many experts as a catalyst for violence against women, rather than a fundamental cause (Abbey 2011). This distinction is important, since it suggests that while addressing alcohol use will be important in reducing the severity and frequency of violence it will be unlikely to eliminate the problem altogether. This is demonstrated by programs where men who use violence are treated for their alcohol misuse, which have been shown to be effective in reducing but not altogether resolving their use of violence (Bennet & Bland 2008).

The excuse that *rape results from men not being able to control their sexual urges* is challenged by the substantial variation in rates of sexual violence across both time and place (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2005; Jewkes et al. 2012; Sanday 1981). This, together with evidence showing that these variations reflect differences in gender related social norms, structures and relations (Sanday 1981), suggests that rape proclivity is socially as opposed to biologically determined. Further, evidence indicating that some rapes are planned in advance suggests that these acts are unlikely to be a spontaneous response to urges beyond men's control (Abbey 1991; Ryan 2004). Also, studies with men who have used sexual violence identify the desire to assert power and control over a victim, rather than sexual gratification, as a primary motive (Chiroro et al. 2004). Importantly, this belief has a negative effect on men, reducing them to captives of biology. This belies the fact that most men maintain thoughtful and respectful gender relations.

Attitudes trivialising violence

Attitudes that trivialise violence assert that violence does not have serious impacts, or that the impacts are not sufficiently serious to warrant action by women themselves, the community or public agencies. Other trivialising attitudes, while pre-supposing women's right to seek safety from violence, question women's motivations for not doing so. They trivialise the impacts of partner violence on a woman's capacity to leave, and the risks to her own and her children's safety in doing so.

For most, freedom from violence is more important than keeping the family together

Fewer than one in five Australians (17%) believe that 'domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family'. However, this is up from 14% in 2009. Men (20%) are more likely than women (14%) to believe this, and this is especially the case for young men (27%). Fewer than 1 in 10 (9%) believe that 'it is a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship in order to keep the family together'.

Respondents from a N-MESC are nearly twice (31%) as likely as the total sample to agree that 'domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family' and are more than twice as likely as the sample as whole to believe that

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

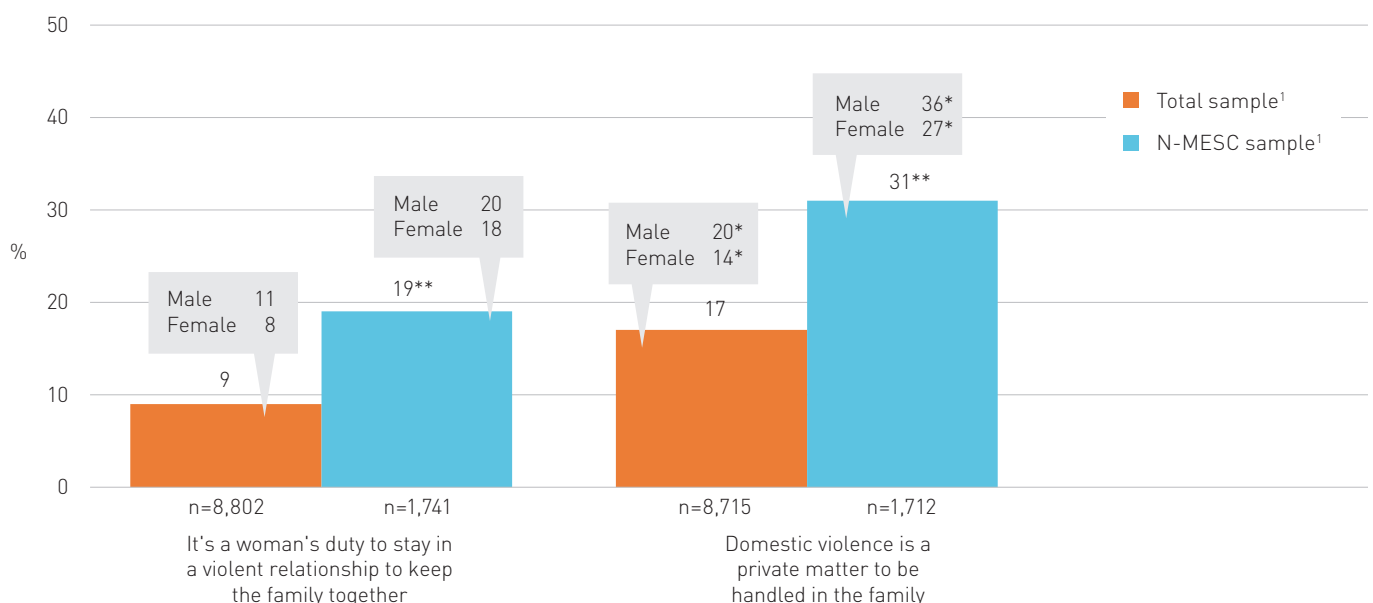
- Belief in the sanctity of the family and women's role in maintaining the family unit can act as barriers to women securing safety from violence (Schneider 1991; UN 2006).
- Such beliefs are especially strong in collectivist cultures. Collectivist cultures are those in which the preservation and wellbeing of the family and the community are more highly valued than the rights of the individual (Yoshioka & Choi 2005). Collectivist values can help to protect women from violence as they can lead to stronger connections between people and a greater sense of obligation to assist those experiencing adversity (Yoshihama 2009). However, such beliefs can lead to the expectation that women will tolerate violence to protect family and community unity, and this can increase their risk of victimisation, reduce the likelihood of pro-social action being taken by others and serve as a barrier to reporting (Yoshioka & Choi 2005).

'it is a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship to keep the family together' (19%). Again gender differences among people born in N-MESCs mirror those in the sample as whole.

"I felt it was partly my fault that we were there because he created an environment that led me to believe the abuse was being caused by what I was bringing into the relationship. I was once very self-confident, bubbly, outgoing. But I ended up feeling like a gutter-feeder in love."

Dionne Fehring, survivor
The Australian, 24 May 2014

Figure 14: Attitudes towards domestic violence, family privacy and unity by sex, people born in a N-MESC and the Australian born, 2013 (% agree)



** Difference between the N-MESC sample and total sample is statistically significant, $p \leq .01$.

* Difference between male or female and total sample or N-MESC is significantly significant, $p \leq .05$.

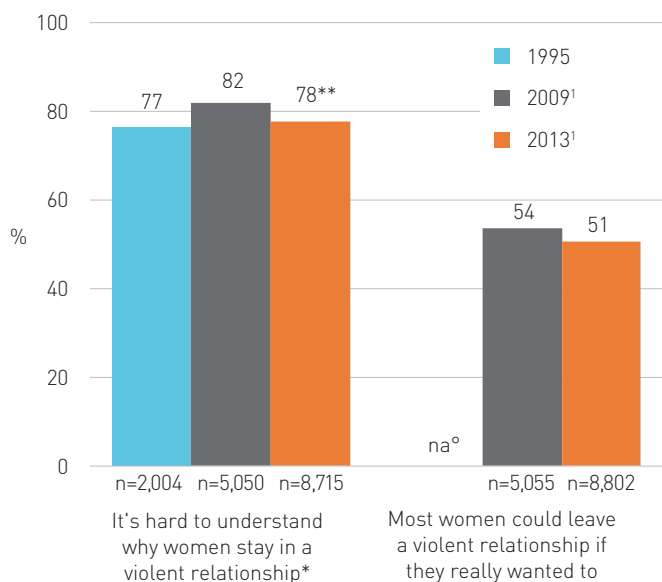
¹ Asked of split sample.

N-MESC, non-main English speaking country.

There is poor community understanding of the barriers to seeking safety from a violent relationship

Although, as noted earlier, there is only moderate support in the community for the notion that women should remain silent about or 'put up' with violence for the sake of the family, there is a poor understanding of the barriers women face to leaving a violent relationship. Eight in 10 (78%) agree that it's hard to understand why women stay while close to 1 in 2 (51%) agree that most women could leave a violent relationship if they really wanted to. There was a slight (4 percentage point) improvement in the proportion agreeing that 'it's hard to understand why women stay' between 2009 and 2013. More men (58%) than women (45%) agree that women could leave a violent relationship if they really wanted to. Young people are more likely than the sample as a whole to agree that most women could leave a violent relationship if they really wanted to (66% of young men and 55% of young women).

Figure 15: Attitudes towards women's responses to domestic violence, 1995, 2009 and 2013 (% agree)



** Difference between 2009 and 2013 is statistically significant, $p \leq .01$.

^o Not asked.

¹ Asked of split sample.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

These beliefs demonstrate a poor understanding of:

- the probability of violence escalating during and following separation (Brownridge 2006; Davies et al. 2008; Dekeseredy et al. 2004; Lievore 2003). This is a time when women are especially at risk of partner homicide (Morgan 2002)
- the serious impacts of violence on women's self-esteem and wellbeing, in turn impacting upon the confidence and skills required to establish a life independently of the abuser (Kim & Gray 2008)
- the impacts of the normalisation of some forms of violence (evidenced in this survey) by women themselves. This may impact on their capacity to distinguish a normal, healthy relationship from an abusive and exploitative one (Fanslow & Robinson 2009)
- the minimisation of violence by perpetrators (Bonomi et al. 2011) and the impacts of the cyclical nature of violence (see p. 54)
- other social, emotional and financial barriers to separating (see box below)
- the fact that many women have a commitment to maintain their relationship, but want the violence to stop (Marcus 2012). Some women may also make a rational decision to defer leaving until such a time as it is safer for them and their children to do so (e.g. when they have sufficient money saved to make a safe departure) (Marcus 2012). Protection against violence will be especially important for women in these circumstances.

Such beliefs also have the effect of attributing some responsibility for women's fate to them, leading to a culture of resignation in which violence can become normalised (Thapar-Bjökert & Morgan 2010). This can in turn act as a further barrier to separation (Fanslow & Robinson 2009).

Why do women stay in violent relationships?

Women participating in studies exploring why women stay in, or defer ending, violent relationships report that this can be for many reasons including:

- fears that the abuse will escalate or that the perpetrator will harm children (Dekeseredy et al. 2004; Davies et al. 2008)
- lack of confidence that they and their children will receive appropriate protection by police and through the family law system. Indeed, some family laws (e.g. those encouraging shared parenting outcomes) may mean that in some circumstances children are in greater danger upon separation (Myer 2012; Murray 2007)
- their lower socio-economic standing and financial dependence on the abuser (Myer 2012)
- their commitment to maintaining family unity or protecting community reputation, particularly in collectivist cultures or in marginalised minority communities (McGlade 2012; Nash 2005; Yoshioka & Choi 2005)
- unhelpful responses and lack of support from family and friends and formal support services (Fanslow & Robinson 2009).

“Enabling women and children to remain in their home benefits the whole community by reducing women’s homelessness, keeping children out of the child protection system, and placing accountability for the violence with the perpetrator.”

Robyn Edwards, author

‘Staying Home, Leaving Violence: Promoting choices for women leaving abusive partners’ report, 2004

Community support is strong for current policy directions

Support for the notion that responsibility for dealing with violence and its consequences should lie with women themselves is both minimal and declining. There has been a consistent decrease in the proportion agreeing that women who are sexually harassed should sort it out themselves: from 20% in 1995 to 13% in 2009 and 12% in 2013.

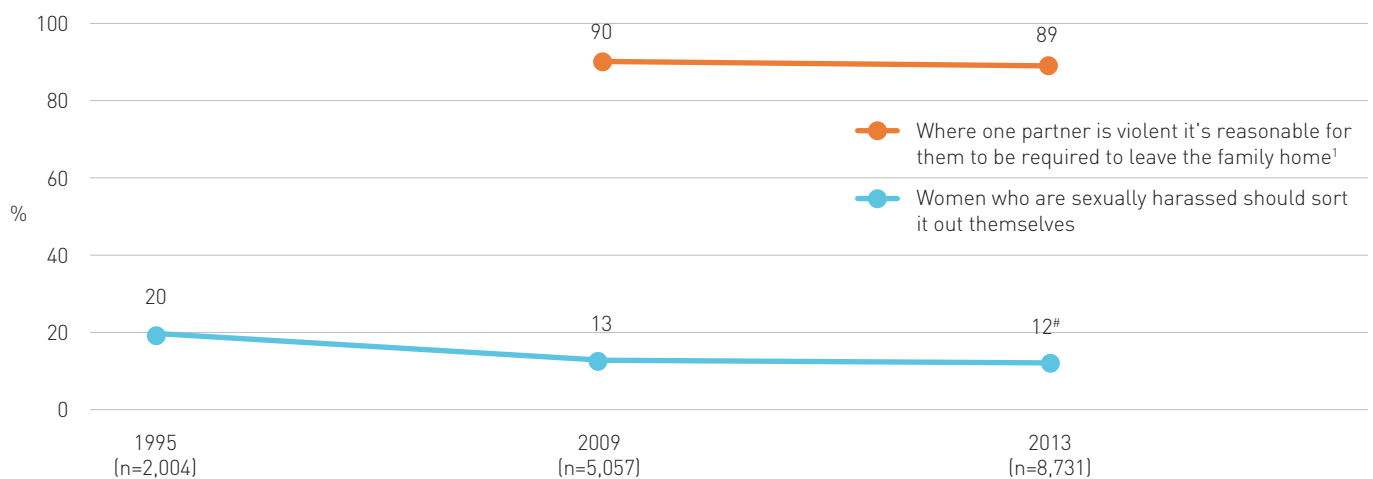
Support is high and continuing for one of the key principles underpinning law and procedural reform in the last decade: the notion that the violent person, rather than the victim, should be made to leave the family home. Nearly 9 in 10 Australians support this principle, though fewer men do so than women (87% of men compared with 91% of women).

People from N-MESCs vary from the sample as a whole in that they are more likely to agree that women who are sexually harassed should sort it out themselves (21%) and are less likely to agree that the violent person should be made to leave the family home (82%).

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- Laws play an important symbolic role in setting new social norms, in this case regarding accountability for violent behaviour (Flood & Pease 2006; Salazar et al. 2003).
- Wide community understanding of and support for the law can facilitate its implementation (Worden & Carlson 2005).
- Historically, violence was seen a private problem that women were required to deal with themselves (Schneider 1991). Wide community support for the use of the law as a mechanism to respond to and prevent violence is an indicator that the community understands the seriousness of the problem and supports it being one of public policy concern.
- Laws and procedures facilitating the removal of the violent person from the family home serve a vital practical purpose, reducing the burden of homelessness and disruption on women and children (Murray 2007).

Figure 16: Attitudes towards policy responses to violence against women , 1995, 2009 and 2013 (% agree)



Difference between 1995 and 2013 is statistically significant, $p \leq 0.01$.

¹ Asked of split sample 2009 (n=5,055) and 2013 (n=8,802).

Attitudes minimising violence

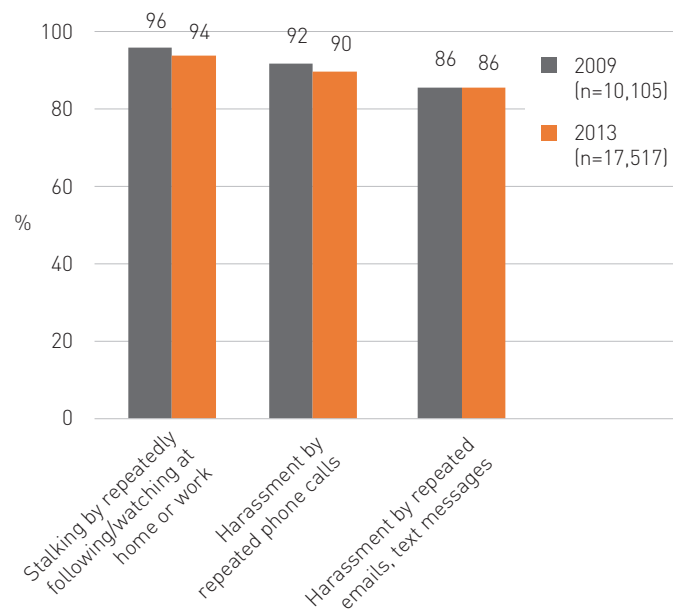
Violence is minimised by attitudes that deny the seriousness of the problem, deny that it occurs (such as when women are thought to exaggerate or falsify claims of violence), or deny that certain behaviours are violence at all (such as when only physical assault and forced sex are thought to count as partner violence).

There is agreement that violence against women is serious, but the dynamics of violence are less well understood

In 2009, there was widespread agreement in Australian society that violence against women is serious and this consensus held in 2013: 95% of Australians agree. This view is held by the overwhelming majority of both men and women, by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, across all age groups, in cities as well as remote areas, in all states and territories, and regardless of occupation, level of education or place of birth.

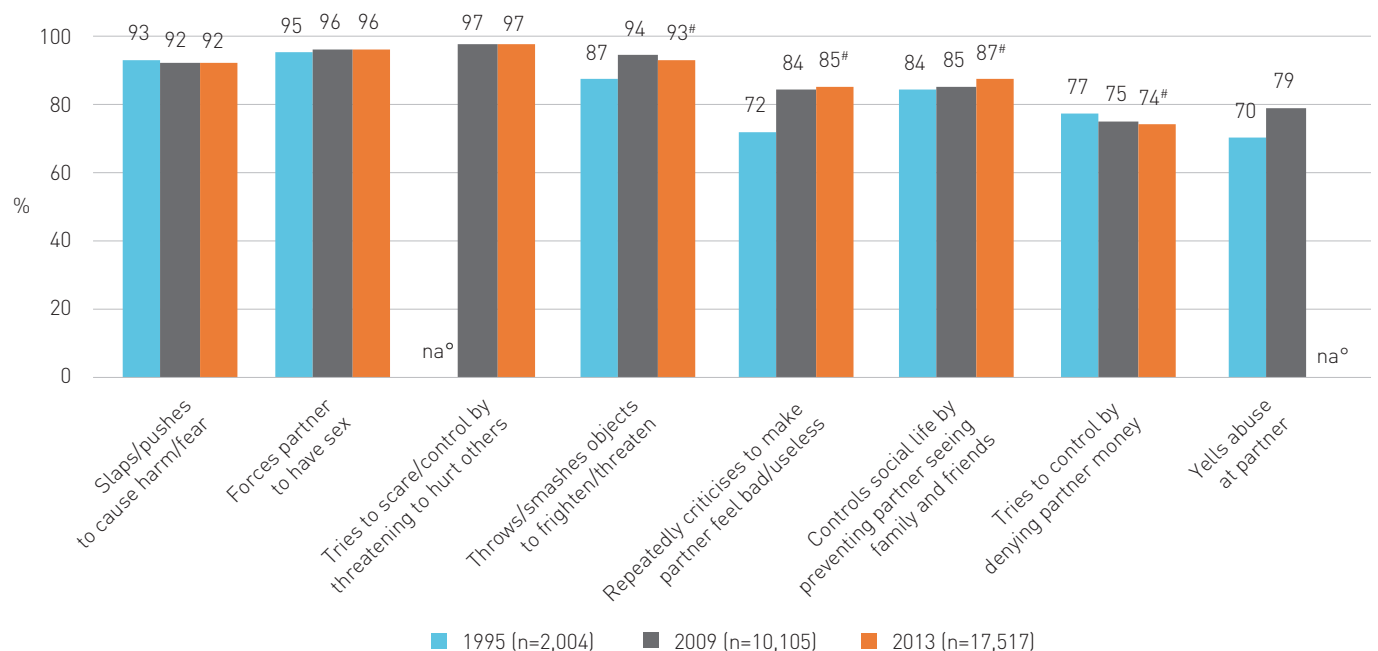
When considering specific violent behaviours (Figures 17 and 18) there is a high level of agreement that physical and sexual violence and stalking are serious. A majority also agree that emotional, social and financial forms of abuse as well as indirect forms of harassment are serious. However, fewer people are inclined to do so than is the case for more obvious physical and sexual violence, and stalking.

Figure 18: Attitudes about seriousness of violence against women behaviours, 2009 and 2013 (% agree)¹



¹ Percent agree combines responses of 'serious' and 'very serious'.
Note: These questions were added to the survey in 2009 and were framed as 'violence against women' rather than 'domestic violence' recognising that these behaviours may also occur in other intimate and non-intimate relationships.

Figure 17: Attitudes about seriousness of domestic violence behaviours 1995, 2009 and 2013 (% agree)¹



Difference between 1995 and 2013 is statistically significant, $p \leq 0.01$.

^o Not asked.

¹ Percent agree combines responses of 'serious' and 'very serious'.

Note: Each of the questions in this series was consciously framed to capture the intent of the behaviour (i.e. to control, intimidate or abuse).

The proportion agreeing that the various behaviours are serious has either stayed the same or increased since 1995. The main improvements have occurred in the proportions agreeing that social and emotional forms of abuse are serious.

Men are less likely than women to identify the behaviours put to them in the survey as serious. Both older respondents (75 years and over) and younger respondents (16 to 24 years) are more likely to rate many of the behaviours as 'serious' rather than 'very serious'.

Indigenous respondents are as likely, and in some cases more likely than the sample as a whole, to regard the domestic violence behaviours as 'very serious'. For example 6 in 10 Indigenous respondents (61%) hold the view that repeatedly criticising one's partner to make them feel bad and useless is 'very serious' compared with only 4 in 10 (41%) of the sample as a whole.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Prior research shows that people who perceive the various behaviours comprising violence against women as serious are:

- less likely to say that they find such violence acceptable (Gracia and Herrero 2006b)
- more likely to say they would intervene as bystanders to prevent or respond to violence against women (Powell 2012)

In a study of police officers, those who were more inclined to enforce the law in cases of partner violence were more likely to rank various partner violence behaviours as serious. In contrast, those who were more likely to say they would only enforce the law on the victim's request, were less inclined to perceive partner violence as serious (Gracia et al 2011).

More Australians under-estimate the seriousness of financial abuse in 2013

Trying to 'control the other partner by denying them money' is the behaviour least likely to be recognised as serious, with nearly 1 in 4 respondents (23%) believing that it was not serious. The proportion believing that this is serious declined between 1995 and 2013 from 77% to 74%. This was also the form of abuse and control least likely to be recognised as partner violence in 2013 (p. 44).

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Several recent studies conducted in Australia and elsewhere have explored a range of types of economic abuse as forms of partner violence (see Table 4). The National Community Attitudes Survey addresses one of these: economic control.

These studies find that economic control and other forms of economic abuse are:

- prevalent (McDonald 2012; Postmus et al. 2011)
- among the strongest barriers to women leaving a violent relationship
- significant contributors to the higher rates of poverty and unemployment among women who have experienced partner violence (Postmus et al. 2011).

Table 4: Types of economic abuse

Types of economic abuse

Economic exploitation

- paying bills in partners name late/not paying bills
- spending money needed for household purposes
- building up debt in partner's name, by using their credit card or phone

Economic control

- demanding to know how money was spent
- making important financial decisions without involving one's partner
- keeping financial information from one's partner
- requiring one's partner to ask for money
- demanding receipts for money spent

Economic sabotage

- stopping women from going to their job
- demanding that women quit their job
- using threats to make women leave work
- responding aggressively if a woman seeks work

Adapted from Postmus et al. 2011.

Most people regard tracking one's partner using computers and mobile phones as serious and unacceptable

More than 4 in 5 Australians (85%) agree that a man keeping track of his partner's location, calls or activities without her permission is serious behaviour.

Although 3 in 5 agree that such behaviour is never acceptable (61%), 21% believe that it is 'rarely' acceptable and 15% believe that it is 'sometimes' acceptable. There is a gender divide, with males (43%) more likely than females (32%) to find electronic tracking acceptable, and females more likely than males to believe that the behaviour is very serious (51% v. 37%).

Although young Australians are as likely as the sample as a whole to regard tracking without consent as serious, they are more likely to agree that there are circumstances in which it may be acceptable (46% of young people v. 38% in the sample as a whole).

“Men track partners on mobile phone locating devices, on GPS tracking devices... They put devices on cars. I had one man who put a tracking device inside a child's toy.”

Bernadette Dulac, coordinator, Windana Women's Refuge (Brisbane)

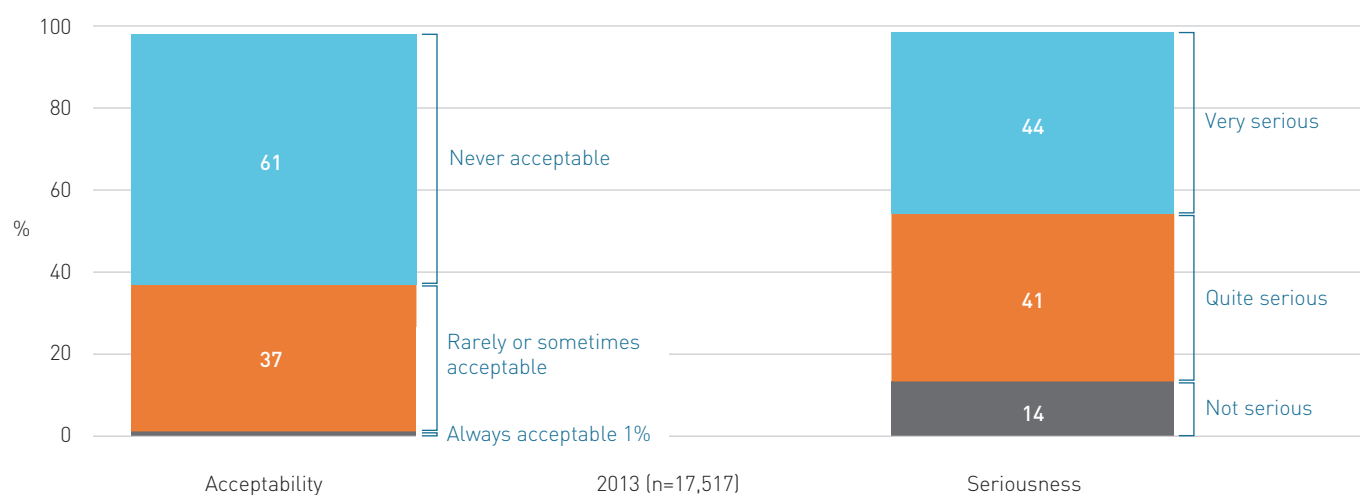
The Australian, 24 May 2014

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Rapid development in the availability and capabilities of information communication technologies (ICTs) has brought many benefits. However, there is evidence of their use in the harassment of women and in the control of their movements and communications activity (Hand et al. 2009). The latter, occurring particularly in the case of partner violence, may involve:

- checking a woman's mobile phone call register, messages and contacts
- installing and using mobile phone and computer tracking software to enable keystroke logging or computer monitoring (e.g. spyware)
- using technologies such as webcam to record, and subsequently digitally transmit, information about a woman's movements and activities
- checking a woman's instant messaging, chat room and browser activity (Hand et al. 2009)

Figure 19: Acceptability and seriousness of tracking a female partner without their consent by electronic means, 2013 (%)



Note: Differences between net and total of individual values due to rounding.

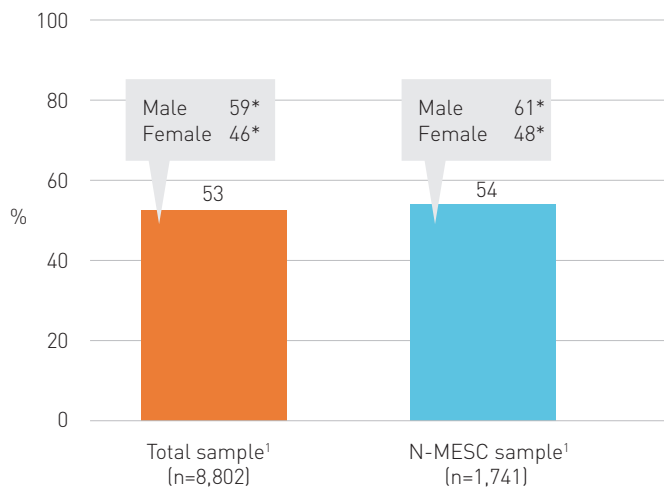
Many people believe that women fabricate partner violence in family law cases

More than half of Australians surveyed agree that women often make up or exaggerate claims of domestic violence in order to improve their prospects of success in disputes involving where children will live after divorce and separation. This view is more likely to be held by men (59%) and ATSI Australians (77% of ATSI men and 58% of ATSI women). This is contrary to research evidence showing that false allegations in these circumstances are very rare (Allen & Brinig 2011; Johnston et al. 2005; Shaffer & Bala 2003).

People living in disadvantaged areas (59%), those who do not have post-school qualifications (57%) and those in technical and trade (59%) and machinery operating and driving positions (69%) are also more likely to believe this than the sample as whole. Community and personal services workers (45%) and professionals (43%) were less likely than the whole sample to do so.

There was no statistically significant change on this measure between 2009 (when the question was first asked) and 2013.

Figure 20: Percentage agreeing 'women going through custody battles often make-up or exaggerate claims of domestic violence in order to improve their case' by sex and place of birth, 2013



* Difference between male or female and total sample or N-MESC sample is statistically significant, $p \leq 0.05$.

¹ Asked of split sample.

N-MESC, non-main English speaking country.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- The proportion of women experiencing violence from a former partner who report this violence to the police is already very low. A high proportion of women (80%) who have experienced current partner violence have never contacted the police about the violence by their current partner (ABS 2013b). The majority of women (58%) who experienced previous partner violence had not reported the violence by their most recently violent partner to the police (ABS 2013b). Research shows that if women perceive others to hold certain beliefs, they can be a barrier to reporting and help-seeking (Ahrens 2006; Flood & Pease 2006).
- As discussed earlier (p. 56), women and children are especially vulnerable to violence on separation. If the view that false allegations are commonplace is reflected in the responses of people from whom women seek help, there may be serious consequences for the safety of women and their children.

“My biggest fear was that they wouldn’t believe what had happened. I went into the room with the kids and I was crying and I said please I am not lying I am telling the truth...”

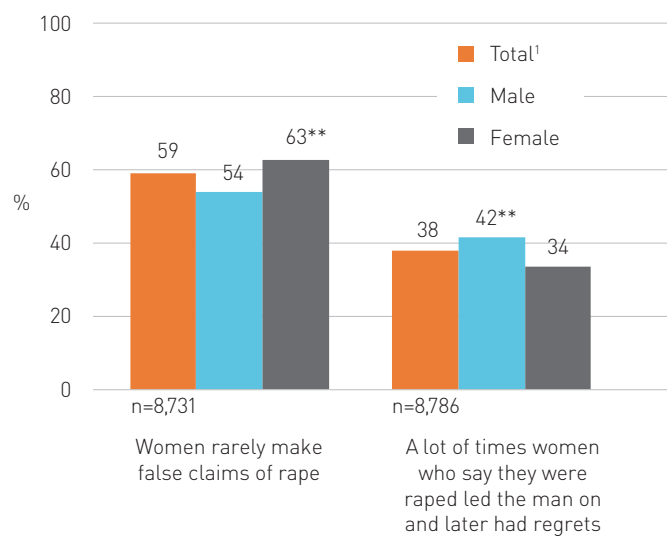
Aroha, survivor

‘Staying Home, Leaving Violence: Promoting choices for women leaving abusive partners’ report, 2004

Most agree that false allegations of rape are rare, but women are more likely to agree than men

Research in Australia and other high-income countries shows that false allegations of sexual assault are extremely rare, in the order of 1.9% of all cases reported to the police (Kelly 2010; Lisak et al. 2010). This is appreciated by nearly 3 in 5 Australians (59%). However, nearly 2 in 5 agree that women who say they were raped led the man on and later had regrets (38%). Men are less likely than women to believe that women rarely make false allegations of rape (54% of men v. 63% of women). Only the statement 'women rarely make false claims of rape' was asked in 2009 and there was no statistically significant change on this measure in 2013.

Figure 21: Beliefs about false claims of sexual assault, 2013 (% agree)



** Difference between male sample, female sample and total sample is statistically significant, $p \leq 0.01$.

¹ Asked of split sample.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The belief that women make false allegations of sexual assault:

- diverts attention from under-reporting as a key problem in preventing and responding to sexual assault (Belknap 2010)
- may act as a disincentive to women reporting and influence the responses of health and criminal justice personnel (Ahrens 2006; Flood & Pease 2006, 2009)
- is among the factors contributing to the low rate of reporting, prosecution and conviction in cases of sexual violence, thereby reducing the potential in the law to set strong norms against sexual violence (Larcombe 2011).

Attitudes to consent to sex are changing

One in 10 Australians believe that if a woman does not physically resist, she cannot be considered to have been raped (10%). This is substantially higher among older cohorts (people aged over 65 years) than among people in younger and middle age cohorts (16 years and over).

The substantial difference between younger and older respondents suggests that this is an area in which attitudes are changing for the better.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

In recent years there has been substantial reform to the laws relating to sexual assault, and to the procedures involved in their implementation, to reflect the idea that consent to sexual relations must be freely and voluntarily given.

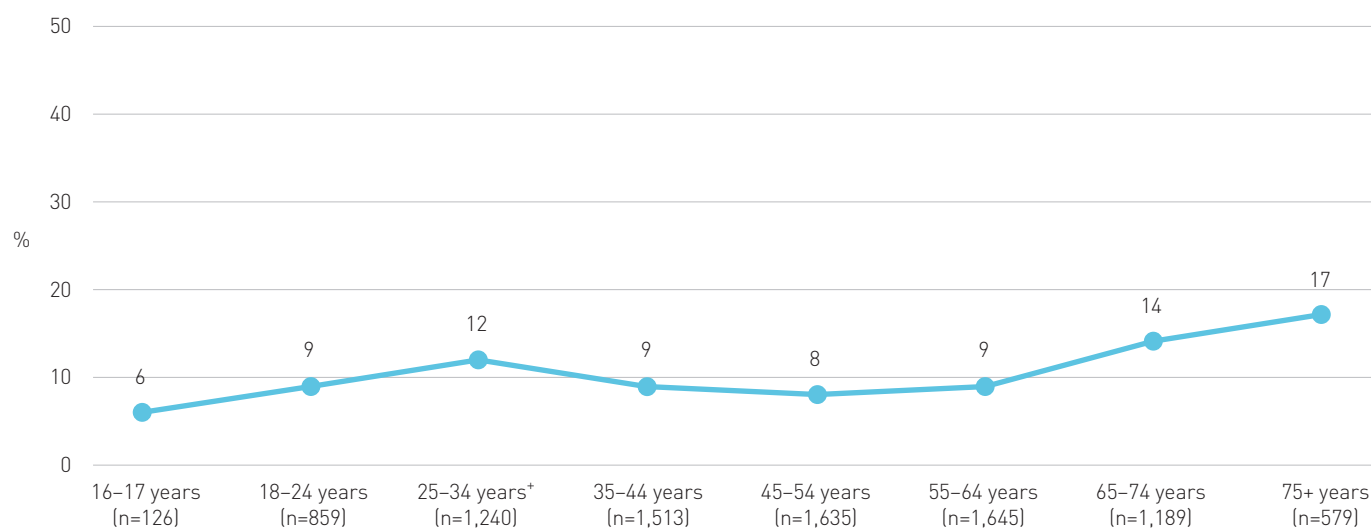
This departs from traditional approaches where women were required to make an assertive statement or action of resistance to communicate the absence of consent. The new approach was designed to reflect to a greater degree the complex circumstances in which much sexual assault occurs, as well as reflecting a more respectful and mutually negotiated approach to sexual relations (Flynn & Henry 2012).

“When a woman is hurt by someone who says they love her, often she does not realise that what she is experiencing is abuse. This is complicated when the perpetrators themselves minimise or deny what they have done, refuse to accept responsibility and blame the victim – ‘you made me do it’.”

Mary Garden, survivor

Women’s Agenda, 17 June 2014

Figure 22: Percentage agreeing that ‘if a woman doesn’t physically resist – even if protesting verbally – it isn’t really rape’ by age¹, 2013



⁺ This result is not statistically significant.

¹ Asked of split sample.

Attitudes that shift responsibility for violence from perpetrator to victim

Victim-blaming attitudes are those that seek to shift the blame or responsibility for violence from the perpetrator to the victim; and which hold women at least partially responsible for their victimisation, or alternatively, for preventing their victimisation.

Up to 1 in 5 believe that women bear some of the responsibility for violence

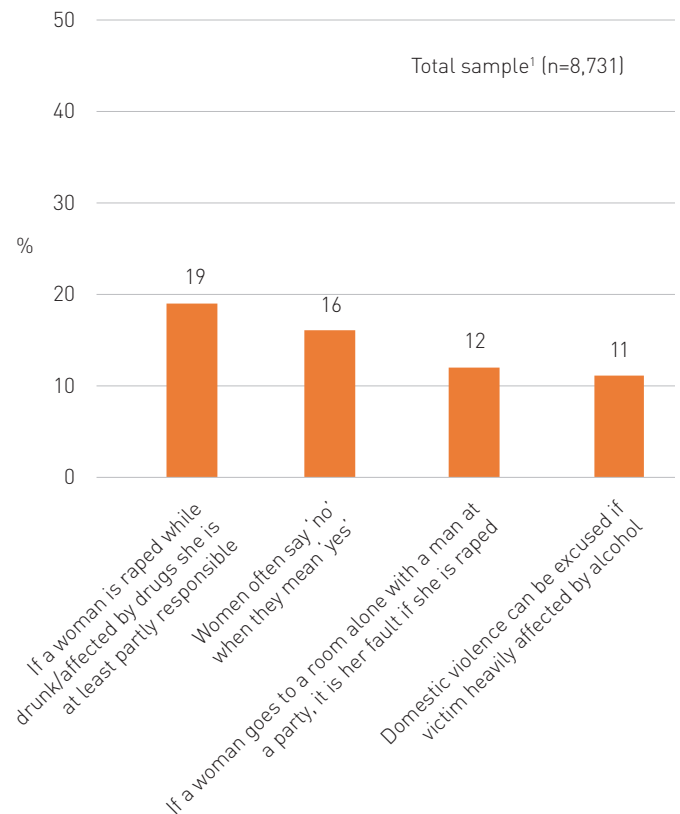
Substantial numbers of Australians agree that the victim can be blamed for violence in certain circumstances. One in five (19%) believe that the woman bears some responsibility if raped while she is affected by alcohol and drugs, while 16% agree that women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes' and 12% that if a woman goes into a room alone with a man at a party, it is her fault if she is raped. There has been no change on these measures since they were introduced into the survey.

People born in a N-MESC are more likely than the sample as a whole to endorse victim-blaming attitudes. For example, 29% of people born in a N-MESC agree that women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes' compared with 16% in the sample as a whole and 12% of those born in Australia.

In the sample as a whole, there are gender differences on two items. Women are marginally more likely than men to agree that a woman would bear some responsibility for rape if she goes alone with a man into a room at a party (14% v. 10%) or if she is affected by alcohol or drugs (18% v. 20%). However, young women are less likely than all women to agree with these statements. Eight per cent of young women

agree that women are partly to blame if they go alone with a man into a room at a party, and 15% if they are raped when heavily affected by alcohol or drugs. There are no significant differences between young men and women on these measures.

Figure 23: Beliefs about circumstances in which women bear some responsibility for violence, 2013 (% agree)



¹ Asked of split sample.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- Blaming the victim undermines efforts to ensure that accountability remains with those who choose to use violence.
- There are few other crimes in which the victim's behaviour and motivations are considered relevant to perpetrator culpability (Bieneck & Krahé 2011).
- There is some evidence that the belief that women are partly responsible if intoxicated may fuel sexual violence. This means that some men, acting individually or with others, may conspire to get a woman intoxicated in order to have sex with her in circumstances in which she would not otherwise give consent (Tyler et al. 1998).
- Beliefs pertaining to sexual violence are contrary to the law in many Australian jurisdictions which state that consent to sex must be freely given. In some states the law specifically identifies severe intoxication as a condition compromising the capacity to give free consent (Flynn & Henry 2012).
- With regard to domestic violence there is evidence that some women may use alcohol to cope with the consequences of violence and that this may increase their risk of further violence (Bennet & Bland 2008). The belief that women in these circumstances are partly responsible for their abuse not only denies the origins of their alcohol misuse, but locks them into a spiral of further violence, self-blame and blame by others.

Attitudes to equality in gender roles and relationships

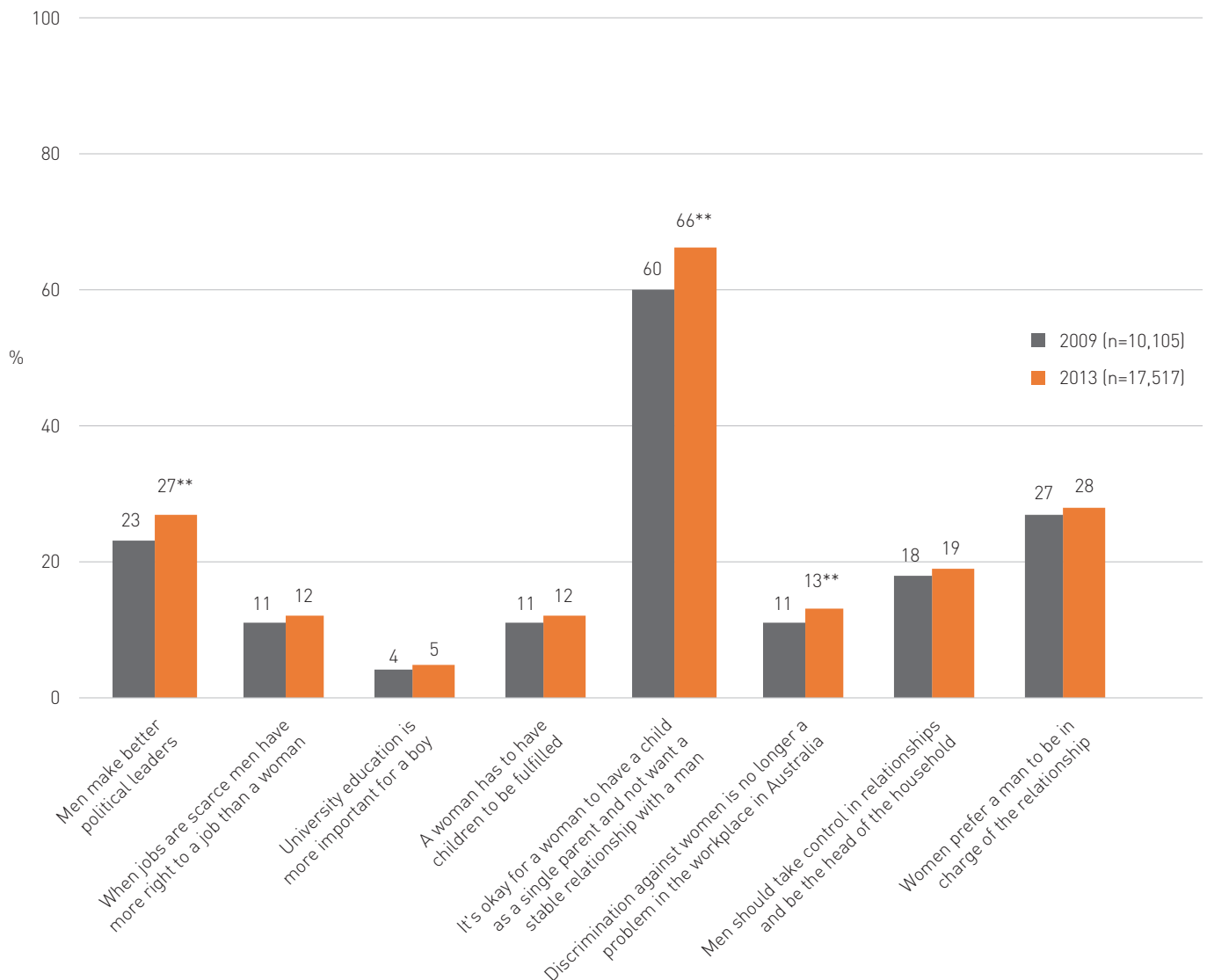
A consistent relationship has been found between various measures of attitudes towards gender equality (the distribution of resources between men and women in public and private life), gender roles and gender identities and attitudes towards violence against women. People who are less supportive of gender equality and who hold rigid, stereotyped views about the roles that men and women should play, and what it means to be masculine or feminine, are also more likely to endorse violence-supportive attitudes (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009).

Some studies have also found a link between these attitudes and the perpetration of violence and responses to it by women themselves and those witnessing violence (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009; Foshee et al. 2008; Robertson & Murachver 2007; Nabors & Jasinski 2009; Powell 2012; VicHealth 2007).

Many resist gender equality in public and private life

The questions included in the survey concerned with gender equality gauge attitudes towards only two of the range of dimensions that have been found in other research to be associated with attitudinal support for violence against women. These are support for gender role divisions and male dominance in relationships. A discussion of other relevant dimensions can be found on p. 40. Further, the questions included in the survey measure very blatant forms of these attitudes. Nevertheless, the results show that substantial numbers of Australians endorse attitudes that work against achieving equality between men and women.

Figure 24: Attitudes toward gender equality, 2009 and 2013 (% agree)



** Difference between 2009 and 2013 is statistically significant, $p \leq 0.01$.

With regard to questions gauging support for equality in gender roles, support ranges from a low 5% of Australians believing that a 'university education is more important for a boy', to 3 in 10 who believe that 'on the whole, men make better political leaders than women' (27%). Just over 1 in 10 Australians agree that 'when jobs are scarce men have more right to a job than women' (12%) and that 'discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the workplace in Australia' (13%).

Of the two items pertaining to women's roles in childbearing just over 1 in 10 (12%) agrees that 'a woman has to have children to be fulfilled'. However, a majority (66%) agree that 'it's OK for a woman to have a child as single parent ...'.

Of the two questions gauging attitudes towards equality in relationships, nearly 2 in 10 (19%) of Australians agree that 'men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household' and nearly 3 in 10 agree that 'women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship' (28%).

There has been change in a negative direction on two measures since 2009: 'on the whole, men make better political leaders' than women (increasing from 23% to 27% in 2013) and 'discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the workplace in Australia' increasing from 11% to 13%. The largest change is the six percentage point increase (from 60% to 66%) in the level of agreement that 'it's OK for a woman to have a child as a single parent ...'.

People aged 16 to 24 years are either as likely as or less likely than the whole sample to support attitudes that undermine equality in gender roles. However, they are more likely than people of other ages to endorse statements gauging attitudinal support for gender inequality within relationships. Specifically, they are slightly more likely to agree that 'men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household' (22%) and substantially more likely to agree that 'women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship' (35%).

Responding to violence against women

Most state that they would take some action if witnessing violence

The overwhelming majority of Australians state that if they witnessed a woman being assaulted by her partner, they would take some action, either by physically intervening or saying or doing something else to try and help. Respondents are marginally more likely to say they would take action if the woman was a family member or a friend (98%) than if she were a stranger (92%). Questions were asked to enable assessment of whether people are more likely to state that they would take action if children were present. However, this made no difference to stated intentions. Men and Indigenous respondents (65% and 64% respectively) are more likely than women and non-Indigenous respondents (49% and 57% respectively) to say that they would intervene physically, rather than saying or doing something else to help.

Fewer would know where to get assistance with a domestic violence matter in 2013 than in 2009

Only just over half of Australians (57%) know where to go for outside advice or support for a domestic violence issue and the proportion doing so has dropped five percentage points since 2009, when it was 62%. People aged 16 to 24 years are less likely than other age groups to know where to go for advice and support (54%), as are men (53%), compared with women (60%). Those who have recently arrived in Australia (50%) and those who are unable to speak English well (41%) are less likely than the sample as a whole to say that they would know where to go for advice and support.

Knowledge of sources of assistance was especially high among Indigenous respondents, with 7 out of 10 (71%) reporting that they would know where to go for advice and support. It was also higher among people in the most disadvantaged areas, 62% of whom say they would know where to go for assistance.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- People who witness violence have an important role to play in both supporting women to avoid harm and preventing further violent behaviour (see p. 42).
- How people respond is important because confronting the perpetrator may compound risk (VicHealth 2010). Information from this question can help assess the need to strengthen community understanding about appropriate ways of intervening.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- A factor in whether people are prepared to intervene to help a woman affected by violence is their confidence in their ability to do so (Powell 2011).
- Such information is also important to support help-seeking among women affected by violence.

Figure 25: Intentions if witnessing physical assault of a stranger by her partner, 2013 (%)

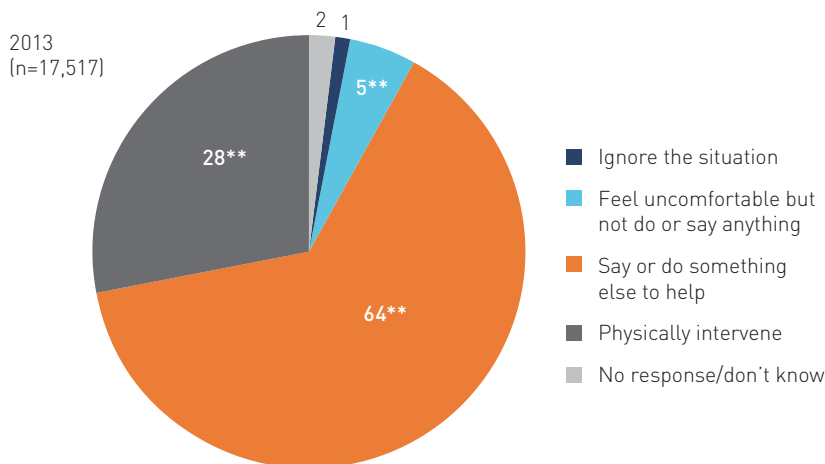
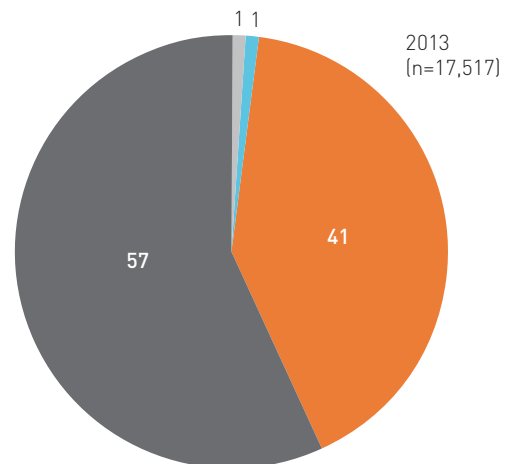


Figure 26: Intentions if witnessing physical assault of a family member or friend by her partner, 2013 (%)



** Difference between assault of a stranger and assault of a family member or friend is statistically significant, p<.01.

“Dominant attitudes about women with disabilities being undeserving of loving relationships makes it particularly difficult for women to seek help with experiencing violence from care providers and intimate partners.”

Women with Disabilities Victoria

‘Raising Our Voices – Hearing from Women with Disabilities’ report, 2014

Awareness of police efforts to improve responses to partner violence remains poor

Less than half of Australians (44%) are aware that police now respond more quickly to domestic violence calls than they did in the past. The proportion doing so remained unchanged between 2009 and 2013. Forty-two per cent of people did not know whether response times had improved or not. Indigenous respondents⁵ (54%) and young people (also 54%) are more likely than the sample as a whole to agree that response times have improved.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- Confidence in the likely efficacy of action is a factor in whether people will intervene to assist a woman affected by violence (Powell 2011).
- Knowledge of the law and its enforcement is a factor in the capacity of the law to establish strong social norms against violence (Salazar et al. 2003).

Few are aware of the plight women with disabilities face when reporting violence

Fewer than half of Australians (42%) are aware that women with disabilities reporting sexual assault are less likely than other women to be believed, although the proportion doing so has increased since 2009, when it was 37%. A substantial proportion did not know whether women with disabilities were less likely to be believed (14%).

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- Concern that they will not be believed is a barrier to women with disabilities reporting sexual assault (Clark & Fileborn 2011).
- The disinclination to believe women is a factor in poor outcomes for women with disabilities reporting sexual assault in the criminal justice system (Clark & Fileborn 2011).
- Knowledge that women with disabilities are less likely to be believed is a first step in taking action to address the problem and so is especially important among key decision makers.

⁵ Significant at the $p \leq .05$ level.

Factors influencing knowledge and attitudes

So far in this report, results for individual questions have been considered. As explained on p. 22, these questions were amalgamated into three composite measures:

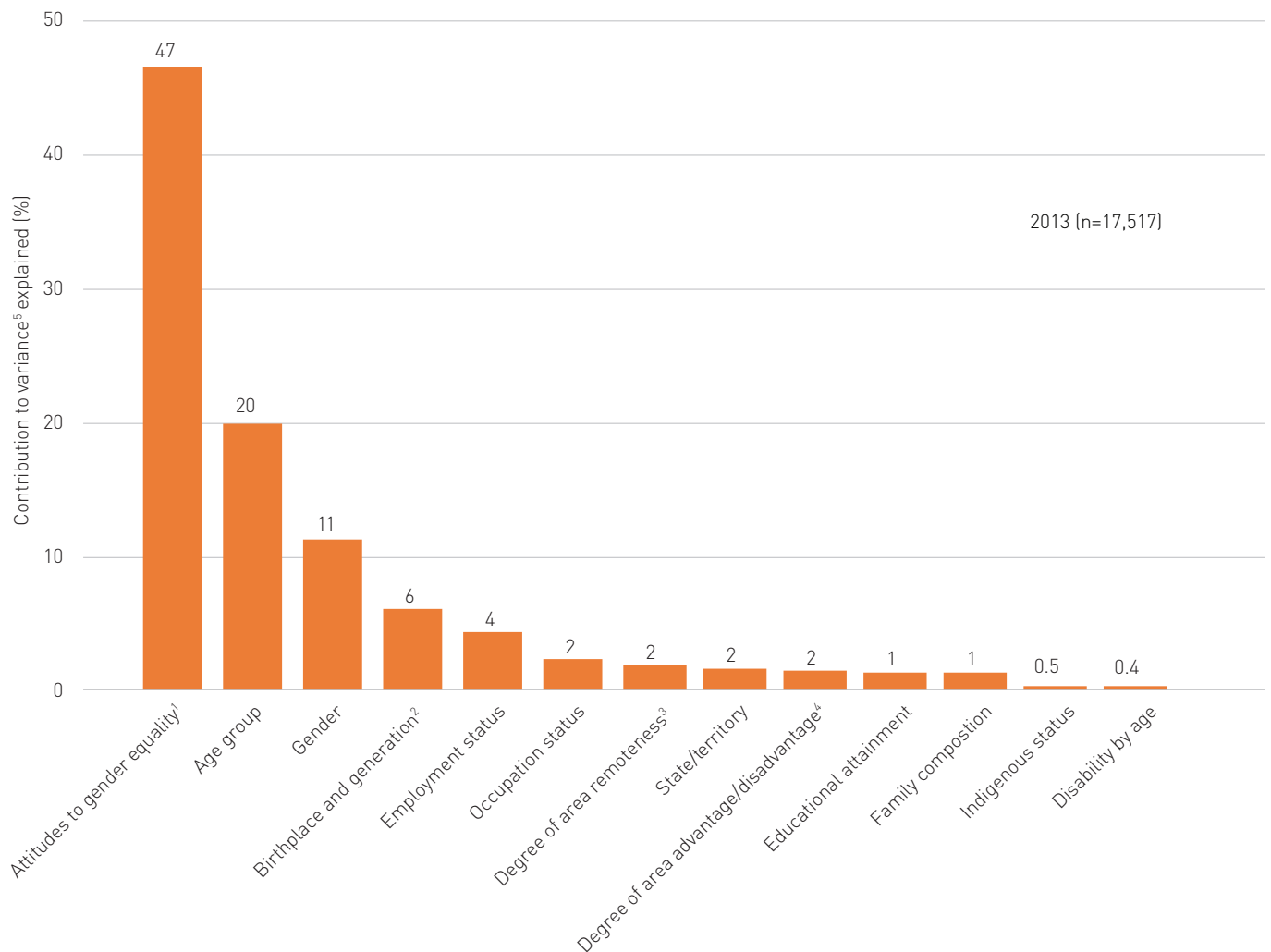
- the Understanding Violence Against Women Scale, an overall measure of the extent to which people understand violence to comprise a continuum of behaviours including physical and sexual violence, as well as behaviours using social, emotional and financial means to control and intimidate.
- the Violence-Supportive Attitudes Construct, an overall measure of the extent to which people endorse attitudes supportive of violence against women

- the Gender Equality Scale, an overall measure of attitudinal support for gender equality.

In each case, respondents are placed into three categories as having low, medium or high levels of understanding of, or attitudinal support for, violence against women or gender equality.

These measures were used, along with other factors in the survey (such as education and gender), to explore relationships between them.

Figure 27: Relative influence of factors associated with understanding of violence against women, 2013



¹ Measured using the scale described on p. 22.

² Included respondent's place of birth as well as the place of birth of their parents.

³ Measured with an Australian Bureau of Statistics product which categorises postcode areas based on their distance from facilities and services.

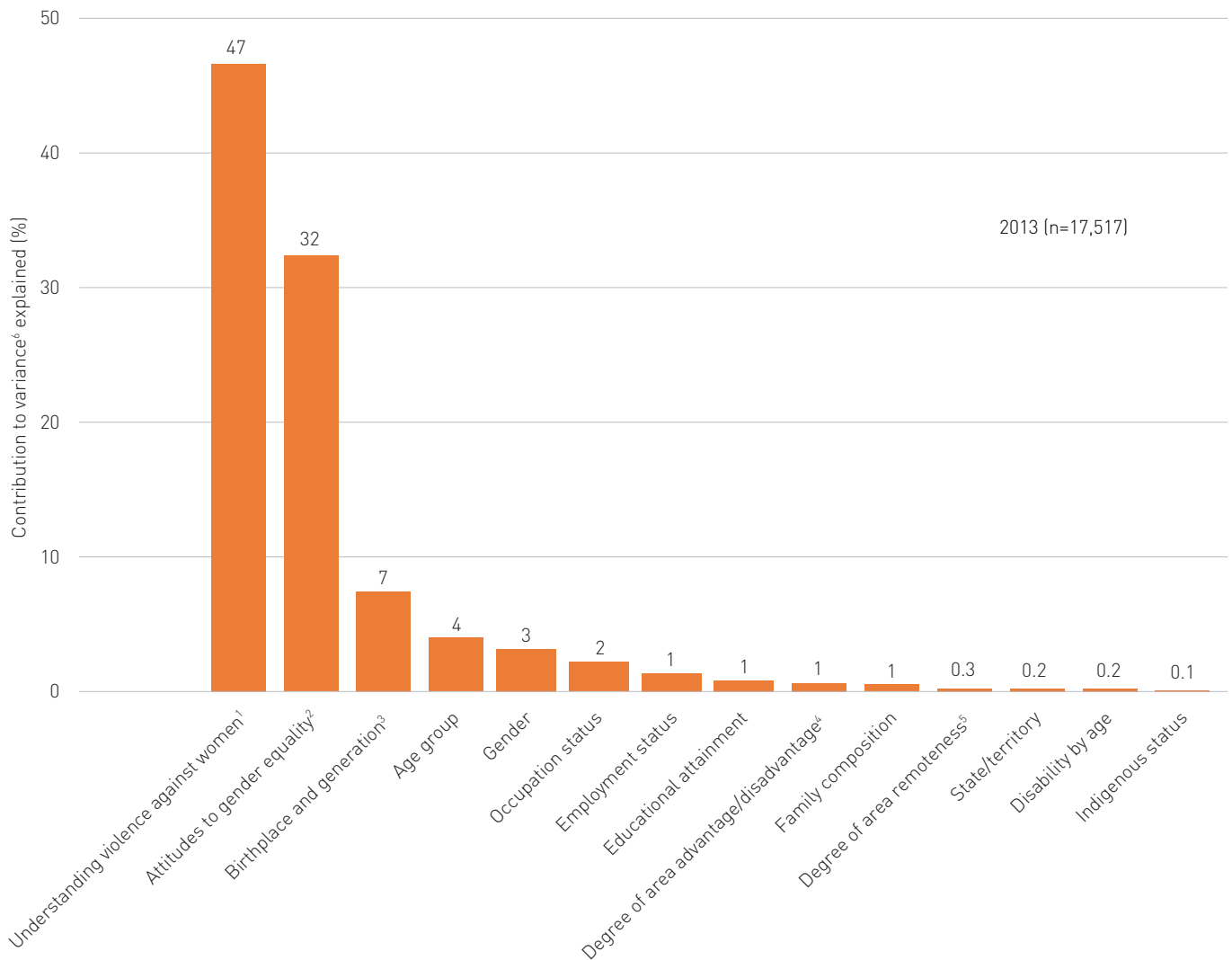
⁴ Measured with an Australian Bureau of Statistics product on the basis of respondents' postcodes using multiple indicators of advantage (e.g. high income, having a degree) and disadvantage (e.g. unemployment, low income).

⁵ Percentage of variance explained by model is 14.3%.

In this chapter these relationships are first explored using a statistical technique (multiple linear regression modelling) that allows the strength of influence of each factor to be gauged against one another. This technique is especially useful for isolating particular influences, and for

understanding how they shape attitudes. This compares with Chapter 10 in which the ways attitudes are distributed between groups and places is explored (this is especially important for making sure prevention is well targeted).

Figure 28: Relative influence of factors associated with attitudes towards violence against women, 2013



¹ Measured using the scale described on p. 22.

² Measured using the scale described on p. 23.

³ Included respondent's place of birth as well as the place of birth of their parents.

⁴ Measured with an Australian Bureau of Statistics product on the basis of respondents' postcodes using multiple indicators of advantage (e.g. high income, having a degree) and disadvantage (e.g. unemployment, low income).

⁵ Measured with an Australian Bureau of Statistics product which categorises postcode areas based on their distance from facilities and services.

⁶ Percentage of variance explained by model is 46.7%.

Gender equality attitudes and understanding of violence against women are the most influential factors

When the influence of all other factors included in the survey are taken into account, attitudes to gender equality are the strongest influence on understanding of violence (Figure 27) and the second strongest influence on attitudes to violence (Figure 28). That is, people who hold attitudes that are more supportive of equality between men and women (as measured by the composite measure of attitudinal support for gender equality) are also more likely to:

- have a nuanced understanding of violence against women (as measured by the composite measure of understanding)
- be less likely to endorse attitudes that are supportive of this violence (as measured by the composite measure of violence-supportive attitudes).

Table 5 shows that people who have a high level of support for gender equality are three times more likely to have a high level of understanding of violence against women (30% compared to those with a low level of support for gender equality (10%)). In contrast, people with a low level of support for gender equality are over eight times more likely to have a high level of attitudinal support for violence against women compared to those with a high level of support for gender equality (58% v. 7%).

This pattern also held for almost all individual questions measuring attitudes and knowledge of violence against women.

When the influence of all other factors is taken into account, understanding of violence against women has the strongest influence on attitudes (Figure 28). That is, people who have a more nuanced understanding of the range of behaviours and the controlling dynamic involved in partner violence tend to be less inclined to endorse attitudes supportive of violence against women. Table 6 shows that those with a high level of understanding are more likely to be classified as having a low

Table 5: The relationship between attitudes to gender equality and understanding and attitudes towards violence against women, 2013 (%)

		Level of attitudinal support for gender equality (Gender Equality Scale) n=17,517		
		Low A	Medium B	High C
Level of understanding of violence (Understanding Violence Against Women Scale)	Low	44 ^{BC}	30 ^C	19
	Medium	46	52 ^A	51 ^A
	High	10	17 ^A	30 ^{AB}
	Total	100	100	100
Level of attitudinal support for violence against women (Violence-Supportive Attitudes Construct)	Low	5	18 ^A	41 ^{AB}
	Medium	37	57 ^{AC}	51 ^A
	High	58 ^{BC}	25 ^C	7
	Total	100	100	100

Note: Differences between A/B/C are statistically significant across Gender Equality Scale, $p \leq .01$.

Table 6: The relationship between understanding of violence against women and attitudes, 2013 (%)

		Level of understanding of violence (Understanding Violence Against Women Scale) n=17,517		
		Low A	Medium B	High C
Level of attitudinal support for violence against women (Violence-Supportive Attitudes Construct)	Low	6	20 ^A	50 ^{AB}
	Medium	44	57 ^{AC}	42
	High	50 ^{BC}	23 ^C	8
	Total	100	100	100

Note: Difference between A/B/C is statistically significant across level of understanding, $p \leq .01$.

level of attitudinal support for violence against women (50%) than those whose understanding is classified as low (6%) or medium (20%). In contrast, those classified as having a low level of understanding are more likely than those with medium or high levels to have a high level of attitudinal support for violence against women (50% v. 23% and 8% of those with medium and high levels of understanding respectively).

Again, this relationship also held across almost every individual question in the survey. That is people who scored high on the composite measure of understanding are generally more likely than those with a moderate or low score to respond to individual questions in ways that indicated

- a higher level of knowledge about violence against women
- a lower level of endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women.

WHY IS THIS SO?

These findings support research introduced earlier in this report suggesting that social norms, especially those concerning gender roles and relationships, are the main factors influencing attitudes to violence against women.

Similarly, research on attitudes to a range of issues shows that while a complex range of factors influences attitude formation, understanding plays an important part (see p. 42). For example, if people understand that wearing a seat belt will protect them from death or injury in a motor vehicle accident, they may be more inclined to hold the attitude that it is acceptable for governments to compel people to wear a seat belt. This study shows that this relationship (the relationship between understanding and attitudes) also holds for attitudes towards violence against women.

Demographic factors have less influence on understanding and attitudes

Demographic factors have relatively less influence on shaping understanding and attitudes to violence (see Figures 27 and 28 earlier), as well as attitudes to gender equality (data not shown). Of these, the most significant are:

- gender
- heritage (respondent's own place of birth and that of their parents)
- age.

This does not mean that demographic information is unimportant. While they are generally small, these differences are statistically significant. As discussed in Chapter 10, the differences found can help to make decisions about how prevention can be targeted and shaped to meet the needs of particular groups.

However the findings above suggest that:

- prevention approaches will need to reach the whole community, since differences between groups are relatively small
- strengthening understanding of violence against women and attitudes toward gender roles and relations are key to improving attitudes.

Measures included in the survey explain only some of the factors influencing understanding and attitudes

A range of factors that might be associated with violence against women is explored in the National Community Attitudes Survey. Although these factors are important and help guide prevention, they explain only some of the differences in attitudes that are found in the analysis.

WHY IS THIS SO?

Prior research on violence and attitudes towards violence suggests that a range of factors contribute to the problem, and these factors lie in:

- characteristics of individuals, relationships and families
- organisational and community environments
- broader social factors such as the media and popular culture.

Other research on attitudes to both violence and gender equality show that demographic factors such as age, sex and place of birth are becoming less important as more liberal and egalitarian ideas spread across the population (Carlson & Worden 2005; Pampel 2011). Exposure to wider cultural norms (e.g. beliefs about gender roles in the family) and structures (e.g. gender inequality in the workplace) are thought to have a greater influence on attitudes. This is confirmed in the National Community Attitudes Survey; that is, as discussed earlier, attitudes to gender equality have a far greater influence on attitudes to violence than any of the demographic measures.

The survey included only two of a range of possible dimensions of gender equality, roles and identities that have been found to be linked with violence-supportive attitudes in other research. If other measures were included they would be expected to account for more of the influence on attitudes. Examples of these other dimensions introduced earlier (see p. 40) include measures of attitudinal support for:

- more subtle expressions of support for gender inequality
- rigidly defined gender roles (e.g. the idea that a man's main responsibility is to provide for his family)
- rigid gender identities (e.g. the idea that boys should not cry)
- objectification and sexualisation of women
- hostility towards women.

Further, many of the other factors identified in the literature as influencing attitudes (i.e. factors other than attitudes to gender roles, relationships and identities) are not currently measured in the survey. Including a wider range of measures of attitudes towards gender and other factors theorised to influence attitudes to violence against women would be useful to help determine which are especially important at the population level in Australia. This in turn would help to target effort, shape prevention strategies and to frame particular messages.

Examples of other possible factors that could be explored in future surveys include:

- measures of social connectedness, with limited social connectedness being understood to reduce the opportunity for social censure of violence-supportive attitudes. At the community level it may lead to people feeling less responsible for the behaviour and welfare of others (Browning 2002)
- the gender composition of one's workplace, place of education or sports club (given prior evidence of a relationship between attitudes supportive of violence against women and some male-dominated environments) (Powell 2012)
- attitudes towards other forms of violence (e.g. the physical punishment of children; violence in movies)
- media and popular culture consumption habits, including the use of violent pornography
- potentially harmful relationship practices, such as sexual infidelity and engagement in transactional sex (Fulu et al. 2013)
- prior experience of violence as either a victim or perpetrator (although there are ethical considerations in including material related to these last two factors in a telephone survey).

Knowledge and attitudes in particular groups and places

As discussed in Chapter 9, the main factors influencing attitudes are understanding of violence and attitudes to gender equality. The influence of demographic factors such as gender and place of birth is minimal after understanding and attitudes to gender equality are taken into account.

However, there are differences between particular groups and places and understanding these can help to work out whether there:

- are benefits in targeting prevention to particular groups (noting, however, that the differences found were generally modest)
- are particular areas of knowledge or violence-supportive themes (see p. 37) that should be emphasised in prevention work with particular groups.

Further, by considering patterns in the light of other research, it is also possible to identify factors which may help to explain subtle patterns in particular groups. This in turn can help to make sure that policies and programs are shaped to meet their needs.

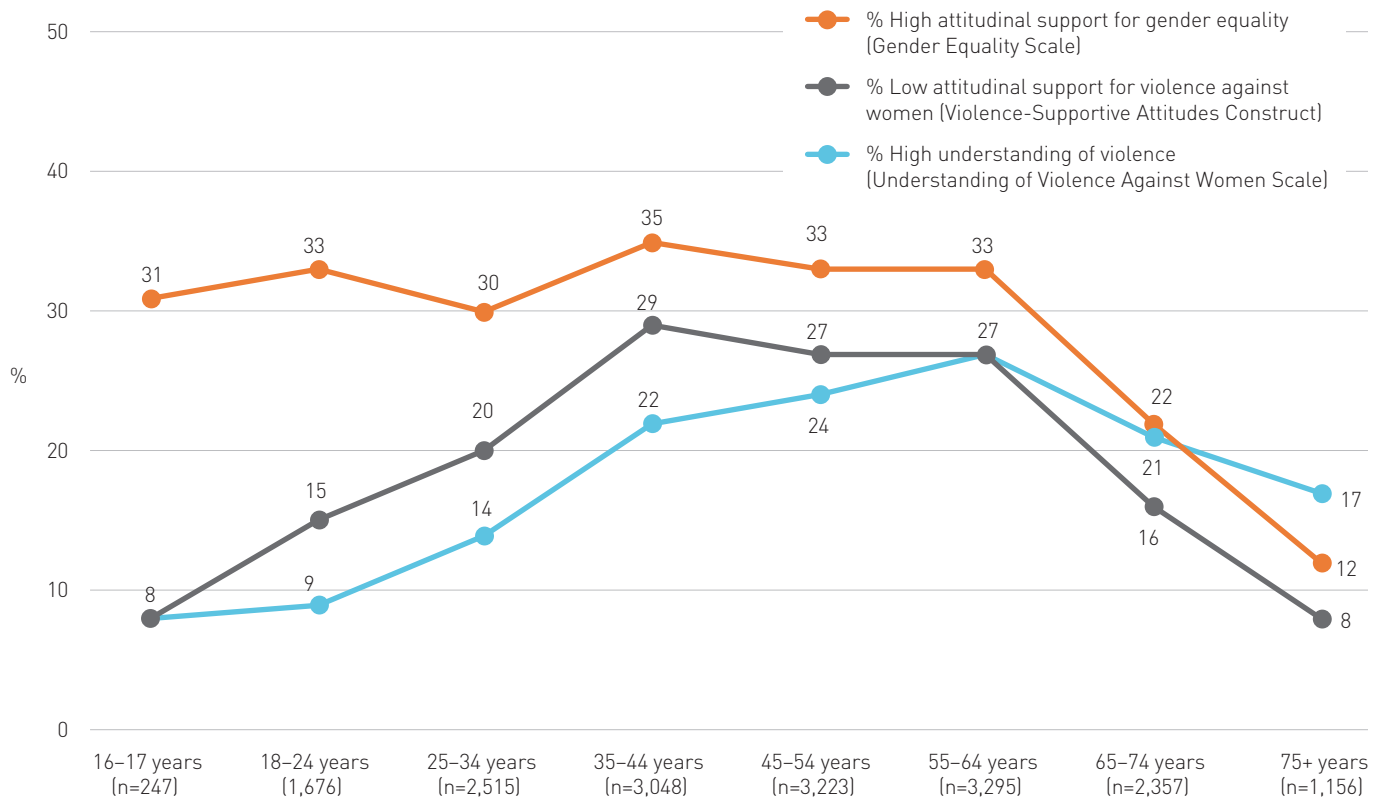
Older and younger Australians are less likely to have a high level of understanding and to have a low level of endorsement of violence-supportive attitudes

Three distinct cohorts can be identified (see Figure 29 opposite):

- People aged 16 to 24 years have a lower level of understanding of violence against women and are less likely to reject attitudes supportive of violence. The percentage of this sample with a high level of attitudinal support for gender equality is not significantly different from the sample as a whole, while the percentage with a low level of support for gender equality is smaller. However, people aged 16 to 24 years are more likely to endorse attitudes supportive of men exercising greater power than women in relationships (see p. 66). On many individual measures, those aged 25 to 34 years are similar to this cohort.
- Those aged 35 to 44, 45 to 54 and 55 to 64 years tend to have a higher level of understanding of violence against women, are less inclined to endorse attitudes supportive of violence and have a higher level of support for gender equality than the sample as a whole.
- People aged 65 years and over are more inclined to endorse attitudes supportive of violence and have a lower level of support for gender equality. They are also less likely to demonstrate accurate knowledge of violence.

As noted in Chapter 9, demographic factors have only a small influence on attitudes and understanding. That said, in the sample as a whole, age is the strongest demographic influence on understanding (Figure 27) and features among the top three demographic influences on attitudes towards violence against women (Figure 28) and gender equality (data not shown).

Figure 29: Understanding and attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality by age, 2013 (%)



WHY IS THIS SO?

It is possible that these patterns reflect changes in attitudes at different points of the life cycle. People may become more conservative and less egalitarian as they age, while younger people may be yet to have adult experiences that build their understanding and moderate their attitudes.

Another possibility is that attitudes are shaped by the times in which people live (Cotter et al. 2011; van Egmond et al. 2010). People currently in their late 30s to early 60s reached adulthood during the 'second wave of feminism' beginning in the early 1970s. This was a time when major changes were taking place in gender roles and relations, with women becoming increasingly active in the workplace and other areas of public life. One of the key concerns of the second wave of feminism was women's right to freedom from violence, and by the 1980s these concerns had begun to be addressed by government through a raft of social and legal remedies (Murray & Powell 2009).

By comparison, younger people are growing up in a time when gender equality is thought to have been largely achieved (Bulbeck 2008; 2009; Cotter et al. 2011; Jonsson & Flanagan 2000) and when there is greater emphasis on individualism (Alloway & Dalley-Trim 2009; Wyn & White 2013) and people looking after themselves. There has also been a rise in 'raunch culture', whereby women, especially young women, have been increasingly portrayed, and are encouraged to portray themselves, in highly sexualised ways, some of which were hitherto only found in pornography (Levy 2005; Squires et al. 2006). These portrayals are promoted as a reflection of freedom of expression and women's equal right to express themselves as sexual beings. However, researchers have

pointed out that, among other harmful impacts, raunch culture encourages men, especially young men, to objectify women, view them with contempt and expect sexual subservience from them. At the same time, there is very little in raunch culture about the need for love, respect and intimacy and the right to be assertive in saying 'no' to sexual relations (Burton 2013; Levy 2005; Squires et al. 2006).

These contextual differences may in turn be reflected in attitudes among younger people that are less attuned to gender inequality and to social factors that influence women's experience of and responses to violence.

People over the age of 65, meanwhile, reached adulthood prior to the changes that accompanied second-wave feminism. This was a time when laws relating to partner violence were particularly weakly enforced (Scutt 1983), and when marriage was thought to give men immunity from prosecution for partner sexual assault (Adamo 1989). There was also far greater emphasis on 'keeping the family together' and on the privacy of the family (Schneider 1991). The patterns of responses of people in these cohorts reflect this. They are the only age cohort more likely than the average for the sample to agree that:

- forced sex is not a form of domestic violence
- 'a woman cannot be raped by someone she is in a relationship with' (those aged over 65 years). Those over 75 years are also less likely to agree that domestic violence is a criminal offence
- 'a man would be justified in using violence against his partner if she makes him look stupid in front of his friends' or '... if she admits to having sex with another man'

- blame can be attributed to the victims of violence
- 'domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family'. People over the age of 75 are almost twice as likely to believe this as the sample as a whole (30% compared with 17%)
- 'women who are sexually harassed should sort things out themselves' (19% of those over 75 v. 12% in the whole sample)
- 'it is a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship in order to keep the family together' (17% of those over 75 v. 9% in the whole sample).

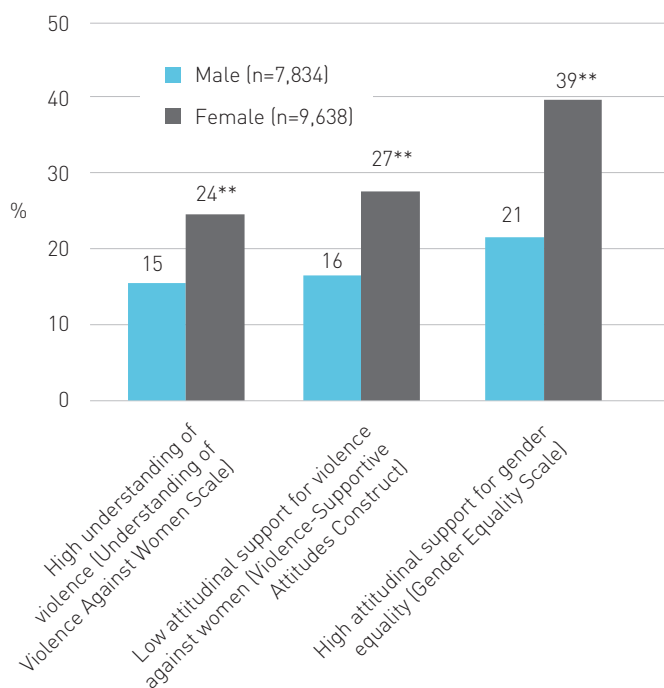
Men are less likely to understand violence and are more likely to endorse attitudes supportive of violence and gender inequality

Men are less likely than are women to have a:

- high level of understanding of violence against women (as measured by the composite measure of understanding, the Understanding Violence Against Women Scale)
- low level of endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women (as measured by the composite measure of attitudes supportive of violence against women, the Violence-Supportive Attitudes Construct)
- high level of support for gender equality (as measured by the Gender Equality Scale).

This was the case for the sample as a whole and among people from N-MESCs, ATSI Australians, young people and people with disabilities.

Figure 30: Understanding and attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality by sex, 2013 (%)



** Difference between female sample and male sample is statistically significant, $p \leq .01$.

However, on some individual measures of knowledge and attitudes there are no differences between men and women, and on a very small number of measures (three across the whole survey) the pattern is reversed. In contrast to other research, men are not more likely than women to support attitudes blaming the victim. Indeed on two measures women are moderately more likely to endorse victim-blaming than men (2% more so on one measure and 4% on the other). This is the only violence-supportive theme where this reverse gender pattern occurs.

As reported earlier the main themes in which men are more likely than are women to endorse violence-supportive attitudes are trivialising and minimising violence.

WHY IS THIS SO?

Differences between men and women have been found in many previous studies (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009; Grubb & Harrower 2009; Suarez & Gadalla 2010) and may be due to:

- the different social experiences of men and women, including the different ways in which they are socialised in families, organisations and through the media, education and so on
- gender-based violence or the fear of such violence, and gender equality, being more part of the lived experience of women, giving women a more acute understanding
- men and women holding attitudes that are in their interest (Bolzendahl & Myers 2004). While this may be the case, it is of note that substantial proportions of men do not hold violence-supportive attitudes, and many of those holding violence-supportive attitudes are women. This reflects the findings reported earlier that how an individual understands gender relations is more influential than gender itself.

When women hold violence-supportive attitudes, this may be due to them 'internalising' messages they hear (Calogero & Jost 2011; Pheterson 1986; Pyke 2010). These messages can be so powerful that some women begin to take them on as part of their own world view of themselves and women in general.

Another explanation proposed by some researchers is that people (both men and women) adopt certain attitudes as a way of coping with the fear that violence may occur to them or someone they care about (Hammond et al. 2010; Sleath & Bull 2012). If they believe that violence is something that only happens to certain women (e.g. those that misuse alcohol or dress provocatively), they can reassure themselves that it is within their power to take steps to avoid it happening to them or someone they care about. These are referred to by psychologists as 'just world' beliefs.

Variability in understanding and attitudes among people from different birthplaces

The results of this survey demonstrate that on the whole there are more similarities between birthplaces than there are differences. For many questions differences are modest. As reported in Chapter 9, a person's heritage has very little influence on attitudes after the influence of understanding and attitudes to gender equality are taken into account. As is the case with the sample as whole, understanding and attitudes to gender equality are the main influences on attitudes across birth-place groups.

Nevertheless, there is some difference between birth place groups. People born in a country in which the main language is not English are less likely than the Australian-born to have a:

- high level of understanding of violence against women
- low level of endorsement of violence-supportive attitudes
- high level of support for gender equality.

The opposite is the case for those born overseas in a MESC (e.g. UK, New Zealand). Respondents in this group are more likely to have a higher understanding and are less likely to endorse attitudes supportive of violence against women than the Australian-born and those born overseas in N-MESCs. They also have a higher level of support for gender equality.

These patterns hold for almost all of the individual questions relating to knowledge and attitudes towards violence in the survey, although the extent of the difference between people born in a N-MESC and the Australian born varies between questions.

Table 7: Understanding and attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality, whole sample and persons born in non-main English speaking countries and main English speaking countries, 2013 (%)

		Australian born	N-MESC	MESC
		Total n=11,996 A	Total n=3,451 B	Total n=2,043 C
Level of understanding of violence (Understanding of Violence Against Women Scale)	High	21 ^B	12	22 ^B
Level of attitudinal support for violence against women (Violence-Supportive Attitudes Construct)	Low	25 ^B	10	28 ^{AB}
Level of attitudinal support for gender equality (Gender Equality Scale)	High	34 ^B	17	38 ^{AB}

Difference between A/B/C is statistically significant by birthplace and gender, $p \leq .01$.
N-MESC, non-main English speaking countries. MESC, main English speaking countries.

Results for people born in non-main English speaking countries: other factors to consider

There are many points in the lifecycle of a survey at which cultural differences may influence survey results (Survey Research Group 2010). Consequently, outcomes may not necessarily reflect real differences or similarities, but rather can be a result of cultural differences between research participants and researcher, which may also be reflected in research processes (Survey Research Group 2010). Many steps were taken in the National Community Attitudes Survey to address this possibility (e.g. bilingual interviewing, translation of surveys). However, the possibility of cultural differences influencing outcomes to some degree cannot be excluded. In particular, individuals from non-Western cultures are less likely to be influenced by social desirability bias (people giving answers they believe are socially acceptable). This is because they are less likely to have the level of familiarity with the context

of the research required to exercise such a bias (Schwarz et al. 2010). This possibility needs to be borne in mind when thinking about the results for the sample of people born in a N-MESC. At the same time, it is unlikely that this explains all the difference found, since the patterning of responses within the sample (e.g. between men and women) was comparable to the main sample and was consistent across numerous questions. There were larger differences on questions where these would be expected (e.g. on questions about the privacy of the family). The survey findings are similar to those found in many qualitative studies with people from some N-MESCs.

It is also important to note that the N-MESC sample comprises individuals from a large number of countries, and hence cannot be said to represent outcomes for any individual birth country or cultural background.

WHY IS THIS SO?

As discussed earlier in this report (pp. 33-35), the main influences on understanding and attitudes towards violence against women are broader social norms relating to both gender relations and to violence. Other research shows that there is substantial variation internationally in these areas (Wike et al. 2009), with countries with a high GDP and a high level of support for civil liberties generally having more liberal and egalitarian norms concerning gender equality (Steel & Kabashima 2008) and a lower level of support for violence against women being justified (Waltermaurer 2012) than other countries. However, there is also substantial variation within each of these groupings (Steel & Kabashima 2008).

This does not mean that violence-supportive attitudes and limited support for gender equality are inevitable features of some cultures. Culture is not static; rather, it is shaped by particular historical and social forces (US Department of Health and Human Services 2011; Spencer-Oatey 2012). The variation in these forces helps to explain variability in attitudes to gender relations and violence between countries. Some of the countries from which Australia settles migrants and refugees have experienced many factors understood to negatively impact on gender equality and violence. These include limited economic and human development, conflict and war and the violence and disruption to traditional cultures associated with colonisation, and more recently globalisation (Patil 2013; Pittaway 2004; Rees & Pease 2007).

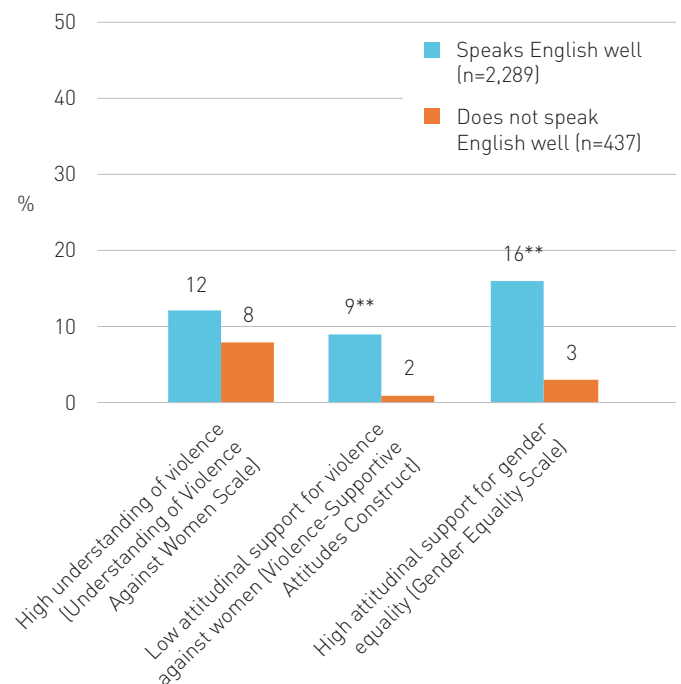
Understanding and attitudes of overseas-born change over time in Australia

Figures 31 to 33 show that there are higher levels of understanding, lower levels of endorsement of violence-supportive attitudes and a higher degree of support for gender equality among those who speak English well (compared with those whose English is poor); among second and subsequent generations than among those born overseas in N-MESCs; and among those in Australia arriving from N-MESCs before 2005 compared with more recent arrivals.

This data suggests that the attitudes of people migrating to Australia change over generation and time, so that they more closely resemble those of people born in Australia. Proficiency in English partly reflects time spent in Australia, but is also understood to be an indicator of how well people have settled in their new country (Australian Survey Research Group 2011). Accordingly, the findings (Figure 31) that people's understanding of violence against women and their attitudes to gender equality strengthen and attitudes supportive of violence lessen as their ability to speak English improves suggests that the extent to which people have settled in Australia is also likely to be a factor.

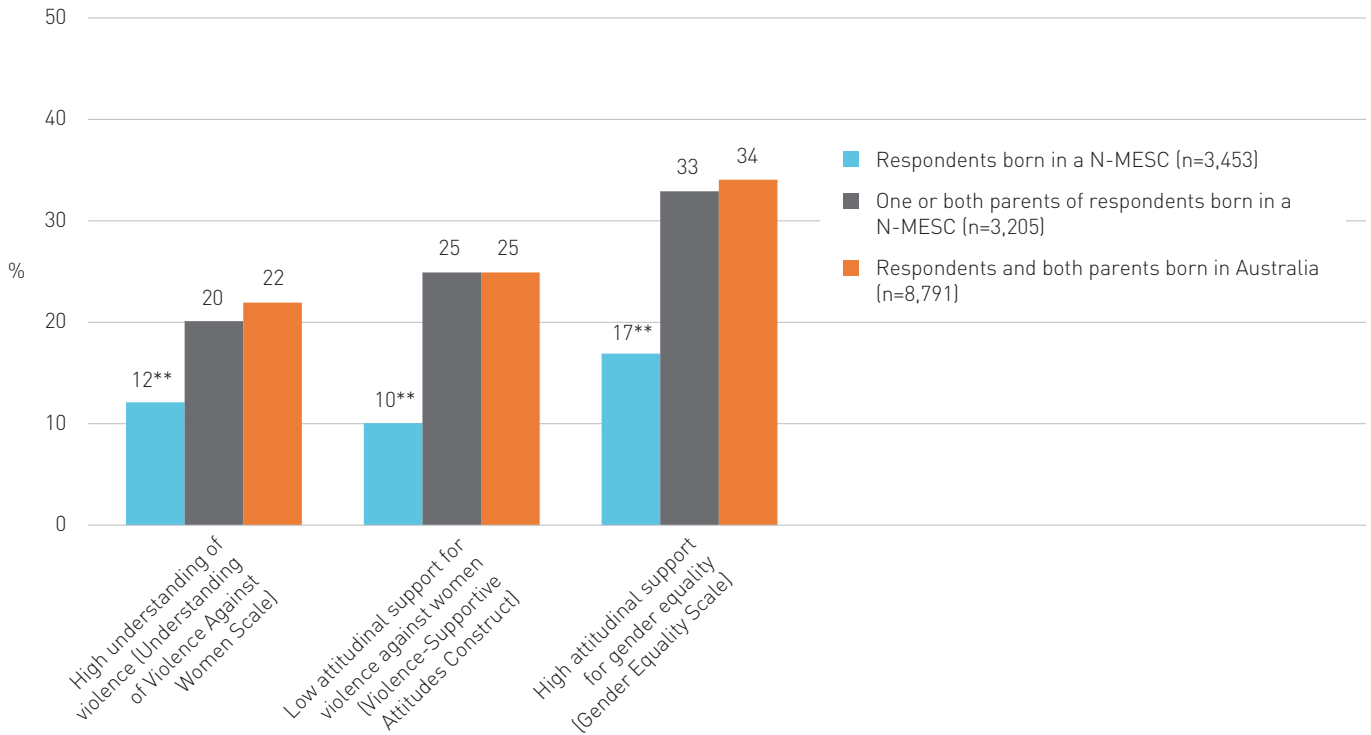
Additional statistical tests were undertaken to make sure that these patterns were not due to the changing composition of Australia's immigrant population. For example, migrants who came to Australia before 2005 are more likely to be from Europe, whereas more recently migrants have settled from Asia, Africa and the Middle East. It is possible that differences between people migrating in these two time periods simply reflect differences in attitudes between migrants from these different regions. However, the tests confirmed that, after country or region of origin were taken into account, change in understanding, attitudes to violence and attitudes to gender equality was still evident.

Figure 31: Understanding and attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality by proficiency in English, 2013 (%)



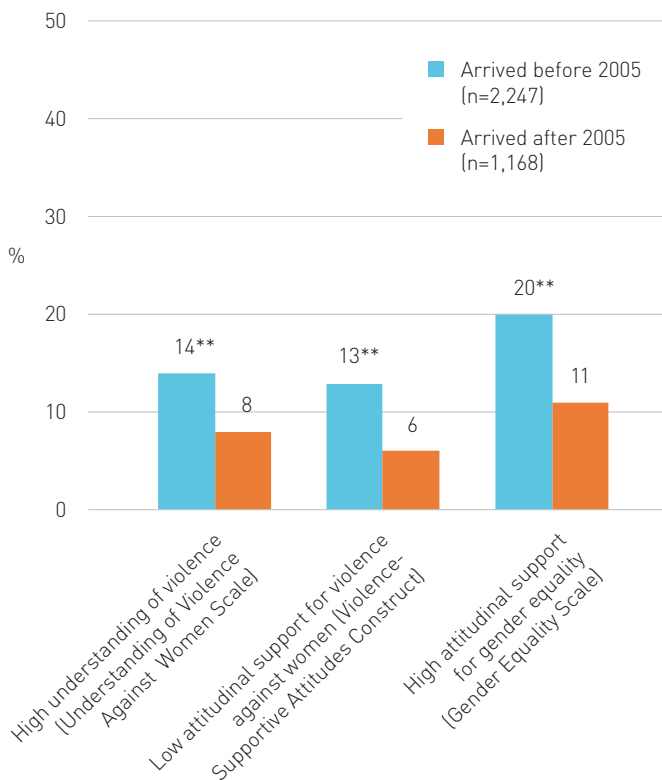
** Difference between those who speak English well and those who do not speak English well is statistically significant, $p \leq 0.01$.

Figure 32: Understanding and attitudes toward violence against women and gender equality by generation, 2013 (%)



** Difference between those born in a N-MESC and other generations is statistically significant, $p \leq .01$.
N-MESC, non-main English speaking countries.

Figure 33: Understanding and attitudes towards violence and gender equality among persons born in non-main English speaking countries by period of arrival in Australia, 2013 (%)



** Difference between those who arrived before 2005 and those who arrived from 2005 onwards is statistically significant, $p \leq .01$.
N-MESC, non-main English speaking country.

WHY IS THIS SO?

These findings confirm studies conducted in other countries (Koo et al. 2012; Phinney & Flores 2002), and provide further support for the contention that attitudes are not fixed but rather change in response to changing social circumstances.

However, they do not necessarily support the conclusion that immigrant communities bring violence-supportive cultural norms with them that lessen as they settle in Australia, thereby reducing the risk of women experiencing violence or of overseas-born men being perpetrators. Very little research has followed people after they have arrived in a settlement country to determine whether rates of violence against women increase or decline. As is the case with most studies on violence prevalence, the studies focus on victims, rather than perpetrators, so it is not possible to determine the heritage of the perpetrator. While there have been some conflicting findings (Yoshihama 2009), there is some evidence that the experience of violence increases in the time following arrival and over generations (Du Mont et al. 2012; Garcia et al. 2005; Harris et al. 2005).

Changes over time are most likely to be due to a backlash from some men as women assert greater freedoms in Australia and other countries of migrant and refugee settlement (Fisher 2009; Pittaway 2004; Rees & Pease 2007; True 2012; Zannettino 2012; see also p. 35). However, the possibility that violence may increase over generations suggests that other factors to which new arrivals are exposed in their new countries may also be influential.

Research in other areas of immigrant health and wellbeing show that immigrants bring with them a complex set of cultural norms. Some of these 'protect' health, while some have a negative impact. Similarly in a new country, arrivals encounter new social norms that have positive influences on their wellbeing along with others that may compromise health. In these other areas of research it has been found that the overall impact for some groups can be negative; that is, the health of immigrants worsens with time spent in a new country (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2006, Fuller-Thomson et al. 2011; Jatrana et al. 2013).

It is possible that this also applies in the case of violence against women. This means that while new immigrants are exposed to influences that reduce the risk of violence (e.g. explicit laws against violence; more egalitarian gender relations), they also face increasing exposure to factors which may increase risk (e.g. objectification of women in media and popular culture; violent pornography) and 'lose' factors that may have protected them against violence in their countries of origin (e.g. protective cultural values such as respect for elders and obligations to support other community members).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have high levels of knowledge and a greater capacity to take action

Respondents identifying as ATSI Australians have a higher level of understanding of violence than non-ATSI respondents on the composite measure⁶, and have a higher level of knowledge on a number of individual questions. For example, they are more likely to agree that violence against women is common (87% of ATSI respondents agree with this compared to 68% of non-ATSI respondents) and to classify certain behaviours as always domestic violence or violence against women (namely repeatedly criticising one's partner to make them feel bad and useless and harassment using emails and text messages).

As reported earlier (pp. 67–68), with regard to responses to violence ATSI respondents are more likely to be aware that police response times have improved (54% of ATSI respondents compared with 44% of non-ATSI respondents)⁷ and to say that they would know where to get advice about a domestic violence matter (71% ATSI v. 57% non-ATSI).

WHY IS THIS SO?

These findings may be due to:

- Indigenous communities having been targeted by programs designed to prevent violence against women
- the lived experience of violence both within Indigenous communities and towards Indigenous communities (see below)
- the internalisation of messages in the extensive media coverage about violence in Indigenous communities.

“This [violence against Indigenous women] is an epidemic, a horrific reality for Aboriginal women right across Australia... We're not trying to bring down the movement. We're trying to start a conversation.”

Rachel Perkins, Australian Aboriginal director and producer
The Australian, 7 June 2014

⁶ Significant at the $p \leq .05$ level.

⁷ Significant at the $p \leq .05$ level.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women differ in their attitudes to violence

Overall, ATSI respondents are more likely than non-ATSI respondents to endorse violence-supportive attitudes. However when further analysis was undertaken to account for the influences of gender and socio-economic disadvantage, it was found that disadvantaged Indigenous men are the only group to be more likely to endorse violence-supportive attitudes. Indigenous women do not vary from non-Indigenous women experiencing comparable levels of disadvantage. Likewise, there are no statistically significant differences between the proportions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous men who are not disadvantaged that hold violence-supportive attitudes.

Gender differences in the Indigenous sample are more marked than in the sample as a whole.

WHY IS THIS SO?

Factors that may contribute to the larger percentage of disadvantaged Indigenous men holding violence-supportive attitudes may include:

- exposure to violence in the community (ABS 2013a) and in institutions such as prisons and child welfare institutions (Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2006; Australian Human Rights Commission 2011; Royal Commission 1991)
- experiences associated with social and economic disadvantage
- unique exposures associated with being colonised people in Australia (e.g. intergenerational effects of frontier violence, forced child removal, breakdown of traditional controls on violence, undermining of traditional gender roles and racism) (Cripps & Adams 2014; Australian Human Rights Commission 2011, Royal Commission 1991).

However, none of these explanations alone are sufficient because they do not account for the fact that both Indigenous men and Indigenous women are exposed to them, yet women are no more likely to endorse violence-supportive attitudes than their non-Indigenous counterparts. For example, Indigenous women and men experience comparable rates of physical violence (ABS 2013a). Indigenous women's rates of imprisonment are increasing and the proportion of the female prison population that is Indigenous is higher than the proportion of the male prison population (Bartels 2010). In the National Community Attitudes Survey sample, female Indigenous respondents are equally likely to be classified as disadvantaged as Indigenous men. It has been argued that colonisation had particular impacts on men in Indigenous communities by undermining their traditional roles and denying them alternative means of identity, with violence being used as a means to reassert power over women (Day et al. 2012). However, other researchers have pointed out that colonisation had negative impacts on the roles and identities of both men and women, with women

experiencing powerlessness resulting from both racism and gender equality, the latter in both Indigenous and the wider communities (Davis 2007; McGlade 2012).

This suggests that patterns of attitudes among ATSI respondents are most likely to be due to the intersecting influences of gender (i.e. being male) and exposure to violence, disadvantage and the unique status of ATSI Australians as colonised people.

Justifications and excuses are main concerns among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents

Looking at responses to specific questions in the five attitudinal themes (see p. 37), the relatively high proportion of Indigenous men with a high level of attitudinal support for violence is largely explained by the greater likelihood of this group supporting statements tapping normative support for violence; that is, for justifications and excuses (albeit that the majority does not endorse these attitudes). Indigenous women are similarly more likely than non-Indigenous women to endorse statements in these themes (despite the fact that overall they do not differ from non-ATSI women on attitudinal support for violence).

WHY IS THIS SO?

There are two possible and related reasons for Indigenous respondents being more likely to endorse justifications and excuses. First, there is evidence that in communities subject to the external threats, such as marginalisation, human rights abuses and racism, members may be inclined to displace responsibility for violence from individual men to these external factors. Women in these communities in particular may internalise the importance of defending men in light of their oppressive experiences in the wider society (Langton 2008; Lucashenko 1996; Nash 2005).

Second, the bid to reduce violence in the wider community has had an emphasis on holding men accountable when they use violence and increasing women's protection under the law. However, such an approach may be particularly difficult for Indigenous women because it requires them to engage with a criminal justice system in which Indigenous people have been negatively treated (Atkinson 2002). Indigenous women may also fear that their children will be removed if they report violence to the police (McGlade 2012; Nixon & Cripps 2013). Both individual and collective action on violence may also be perceived as threatening the solidarity and integrity of already fragile Indigenous communities (Nancarrow 2006; Nixon & Cripps 2013). Justifying or excusing violence may be a way of resolving the conflict between competing objectives. On the one hand Indigenous respondents are clearly aware that violence is problematic and serious. On the other, they may perceive that acting on that understanding could have serious negative impacts for relationships, families and communities.

Attitudes among people with disabilities vary by gender and age

Although there is no known research on attitudes to violence against women among people with disabilities, it was hypothesised that people with disabilities would have:

- a lower level of understanding and knowledge of violence against women, due to barriers to accessing education and information on gender relations, intimacy and sexuality (Frawley & Bigby 2014; Healey 2013)
- a higher level of attitudinal support for violence, resulting from the greater likelihood of exposure to violence via their first-hand experience of violence in the family, community and in institutional settings (Fitzsimmons 2009; French et al. 2009; Healey 2013; Plummer & Findley 2012; Sobsey 1994) and the impacts of the intersecting influences of injustice associated with gender, disability and the social marginalisation that may often co-occur with disability.

The findings of the survey support the hypotheses above for men with disabilities, but for women only for those aged 65 years and over.

WHY IS THIS SO?

The greater percentage holding violence-supportive attitudes in these groups may be due to disability co-occurring with many of the other factors identified in prior research as being associated with attitudes supportive of violence against women. Disability can be both a cause and a consequence of social and economic marginalisation (Bradbury et al. 2001; UN 2012b; WHO 2011; WWDA & WWDV 2011). People with disabilities are also particularly vulnerable to other forms of violence, including violence in institutional settings (Healey 2013).

Nevertheless the fact that younger women with a disability are not more inclined to endorse violence-supportive attitudes again suggests that the findings need to be understood in the context of the intersecting influences of gender (e.g. male socialisation, stresses on ability to meet traditional masculine role expectations), disability-related discrimination and other forms of social marginalisation.

The fact that women over the age of 65 with a disability are more inclined to endorse violence than younger women with disabilities and older women who are not disabled may be due to two related influences:

- the cumulative impacts of exposure to intersecting forms of disadvantage over a lifetime; that is, this group is likely to have lived longer with a disability (increasing the likelihood of internalising negative attitudes)
- they will have experienced their adult socialisation in a period when the treatment of people with disabilities, especially in some institutional environments, was particularly abusive (Dillon 2010).

Socio-economic status differences are minimal

Socio-economic status was measured in the survey using labour force status, education, occupation and the extent of disadvantage of the area (measured using a tool developed by ABS which takes into account indicators of both advantage and disadvantage). There are modest differences for individual questions and for the three scales and constructs. Specifically:

- employed respondents are slightly more likely to have a high degree of support for gender equality and are less likely to endorse violence-supportive attitudes
- higher levels of education are associated with higher levels of attitudinal support for gender equality and a lower level of endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women
- when comparing areas based on their relative disadvantage, there is evidence of a gradient. People in more disadvantaged areas are less likely to have a high level of attitudinal support for gender equality and more likely to have a high level of endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women. In comparison, those in the most advantaged areas are most likely to show high attitudinal support for gender equality and a low level of attitudinal support for violence. However, these differences are modest in size and are statistically significant only for respondents in the most and least disadvantaged areas.

People in advantaged areas, those with a university education and those in professional occupations either have a lower level of understanding (indicated by the composite measure of understanding) or do not vary from the sample as a whole.

There are modest differences on the basis of occupation but these appear to be largely correlated with the gender composition of the workforce (as opposed to socio-economic status). People in male-dominated occupations (e.g. labourers, drivers) tend to have lower levels of support for gender equality and a higher level of endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women. The reverse is true among female-dominated professions (e.g. clerical and administrative, and community and personal services workers).

Figures 27 and 28 (see Chapter 9) show that overall socio-economic status measures had very little influence on understanding and attitudes, relative to both attitudes to gender equality, understanding (in the case of attitudes) and other demographic factors, such as age and gender.

“If a husband batters his wife, we often unthinkingly put it down to socio-economic factors or alcohol and drugs rather than how men and boys are taught and socialised to be men and view women.”

Tom Meagher, husband of Jill Meagher who was fatally physically and sexually assaulted
White Ribbon Campaign Blog 2014

WHY IS THIS SO?

- Small differences on the basis of education have been found in other research (Flood & Pease 2006; McGregor 2009) and are understood to be due to the liberalising influences of education on attitudes (Alwin & Krosnik 1991; Alwin et al. 1991).
- Differences between occupations are likely to be due to a combination of the composition of various occupations, as well as the impacts of highly masculinised cultures on organisational cultures found in other research (Flood & Pease 2006).
- Entrenched disadvantage may lead to social disorganisation whereby people have few social connections (through which they would otherwise be exposed to others with attitudes disapproving of violence) and where there are fewer informal social controls (i.e. people in these areas may feel less able to show their disapproval of negative attitudes and behaviour or be less invested in doing so) (Browning 2002; Frye 2007).

Little difference exists in understanding and attitudes by remoteness of the area

Areas across Australia were compared using a standard classification system based on the degree of remoteness from facilities and services. Areas are divided into five categories (very remote, remote, outer-regional, inner-regional and major city).⁸ There are a small number of questions on which areas differ. However, with regard to the three composite measures (understanding, violence support and support for gender equality), the only areas that differ from the sample as a whole are inner-regional areas.

Compared with the sample as whole, people in these areas are:

- more likely to have a high level of understanding of violence against women (23% in these areas v. 19% for the sample as whole)
- less likely to have a high level of support for violence (25% v. 28%)
- less likely to have a low level of support for gender equality (22% v. 26%).

WHY IS THIS SO?

Data from the 2012 Personal Safety Survey shows that women in non-urban areas are no more likely than all women to have experienced violence in the 12 months prior to the survey. However, women living in inner- and outer-regional areas at the time the survey was taken (but not necessarily when the violence occurred) are more likely than all women to have experienced physical violence by a male perpetrator since the age of 15.⁹ Those living in remote areas at the time the survey was taken (but not necessarily when the violence occurred) are more likely to have experienced sexual violence by a male perpetrator since the age of 15 (based on ABS data, customised report, 2014). Rural and remote areas predominate among localities with higher than average rates of partner violence reported to the police in New South Wales (Grech & Burgess 2011). These higher rates have been attributed to:

- a greater level of conservatism in non-urban areas
- lower levels of participation in tertiary education
- the impacts of economic downturn and rural restructuring on men and masculinity in non-urban areas
- the greater emphasis on family privacy and self-reliance (Carrington & Scott 2008; Neame & Heenan 2004).

Some regional and remote areas are also more vulnerable to natural disasters such as bushfires, floods and drought, which may in turn be associated with higher violence prevalence (see p. 25).

These factors are similarly hypothesised to influence attitudes. It is possible that attitudes do differ on the basis of area remoteness but that:

- these are masked by the way the data is analysed. There is some evidence of variation amongst rural and remote regions with many having higher rates but some having rates lower than or similar to state averages (Grech & Burgess 2011). These differences would be masked in the analysis of the survey because the results for areas in the same remoteness category are put together
- the questions in the survey were not designed to detect the sorts of differences that have been identified in prior research (e.g. a greater emphasis on self-reliance).

It is also possible, based on claims in the literature that restructuring in rural areas has had a particular impact on men, that men's attitudes do differ between areas. This would be a useful avenue for future research.

The positive findings in inner-regional areas may be due to increasing regional development and its impact on reducing some of the risk for violence and violence-supportive attitudes (e.g. increasing access to education, increasing social diversity, increasing economic development).

⁸ More detail on this approach to categorising areas can be found in the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Structure Fact Sheet www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/home/ASGS+Fact+Sheets

⁹ It should be kept in mind that this data does not enable conclusions to be drawn about whether violence experienced, particularly since age 15, occurred while respondents were living in non-urban areas because the questions in the Personal Safety Survey do not ask about the geographic location of violence experienced.

Few differences exist in attitudes and understanding between states and territories

There are few differences between states and territories and where these exist they are modest:

- People in Victoria are less likely than those in other states and territories to have a high level of understanding of violence against women (17% v. 19%) and are more likely to agree that women are at a greater risk of sexual assault from a stranger than by a known person (23% v. 20% for Australia as a whole)¹⁰.
- Those in Queensland are slightly more likely to agree that men and women are equally likely to perpetrate violence (28% v. 25%).
- People in Queensland (11%), Tasmania (13%) and the Northern Territory (13%) are slightly more likely than in Australia as a whole (9%) to believe that men and women are equally likely to suffer harm from partner violence.
- People in South Australia are more likely to agree that 'rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex' (48% v. 43%).
- Those in the Northern Territory are more likely to identify violence against women as common (79% v. 68%) and to say they would know where to go to get help with a domestic violence problem (69% v. 57%).
- People in the ACT are less likely to score high on the composite measure of violence-supportive attitudes (22% v. 28%) (i.e. they are less likely to endorse violence-supportive attitudes), whereas people in Queensland are more likely to have a moderate score on this composite measure (54% v. 50% for Australia as a whole).
- People in Victoria (33%) and the ACT (37%) are more likely to have a high level of attitudinal support for gender equality than Australia as a whole (30%), whereas those from South Australia are moderately less likely to do so (27%).

¹⁰ Administration of the survey coincided with the committal hearing and trial of the person accused of the fatal physical and sexual assault of Ms Jill Meagher in Victoria. Her assailant was unknown to her. This case was the subject of extensive media coverage.

Change in knowledge and attitudes over time

Attitudes and understanding have remained stable overall between 2009 and 2013, but attitudes among young people have improved

Given the relatively short period covered by the three surveys, large changes in attitudes would not be expected. Similarly, it is hard to distinguish sustained trends from differences that might be due to transitory factors, such as a high-profile media case around the time of the survey.

As shown in Table 8, there is no statistically significant change in the composite measures of attitudes towards violence and attitudes towards gender equality between 2009 and 2013. The only change is in the measure of understanding and this is a slight decline in the proportion of people classified as having a moderate level of understanding. This is offset by non-significant increases in the high and low understanding categories. Change in individual questions is minimal. As documented in earlier chapters, there have been some promising findings, while there are others which are concerning.

However, among young people, there is a substantial reduction in the percentage classified as having a high level of attitudinal support for violence from 38% in 2009 to 31% in 2013 (data not shown). This change has occurred particularly among young men with 48% having a high level of attitudinal support for violence in 2009, compared with 38% in 2013. However, understanding of violence and attitudes to gender equality (both of which influence violence-supportive attitudes) did not change among young people in this time period.

It is of note that prevention initiatives supported under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* have a particular focus on young people. It is not possible from the survey to conclude what factors are responsible for the change in the attitudes of young men. However, it is possible that this work may have made a contribution. Encouragingly, regardless of the factors responsible, positive change has occurred in a sub-section of the population (young men) more likely to hold violence supportive attitudes.

Table 8: Understanding and attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality, 2009 and 2013 (%)

	2009 n=10,104	2013 n=17,517
Understanding of violence (Understanding of Violence Against Women Scale)	Low	29
	Medium	53
	High	18
	Total	100
Attitudinal support for violence against women (Violence-Supportive Attitudes Construct)	Low	20
	Medium	50
	High	29
	Total	100
Attitudinal support for gender equality (Gender Equality Scale)	Low	26
	Medium	45
	High	29
	Total	100

** Difference between 2009 and 2013 is statistically significant, $p \leq .01$.

The lack of change at the population-level does not mean that improvement has not occurred or that further change is not possible. When patterns within the population (as opposed to across the population overall) are explored, they suggest that attitudes towards violence against women do change. However, crucially, this is largely in response to a changing social or policy context. This is apparent in:

- differences between age cohorts (see p. 74), a finding supported in other research and which has been largely attributed to the different social context experienced by these cohorts (Cotter et al. 2011; van Egmond et al. 2010)
- changes occurring among immigrants to Australia as they settle. As discussed on pp. 78–79, new arrivals develop a greater understanding of the laws relating to violence against women and are influenced by norms pertaining to gender equality and violence with increasing time spent in Australia and across generations (although as discussed earlier (see p. 80), these influences may not always be positive).

International researchers have also tracked attitudes in low- and middle-income countries and have shown that support for justifying violence against women fell substantially over time in response to work undertaken by international development agencies in partnership with local groups to prevent violence against women (Pierotti 2013). Such attitudes, along with rates of violence against women, are lower in countries with comprehensive legislative programs to address violence against women (UN Women 2011 p. 34).

Other research on attitudes to gender equality shows that attitudes became increasingly egalitarian from the 1960s to the 1990s, in response to major shifts in gender roles and relations at this time, in particular the movement of women into the workforce and other areas of public life. However, since the 1990s, change in attitudes has either slowed or stalled (Bolzendahl & Myers 2004; Cotter et al. 2011; van Egmond et al. 2010).

This pattern is also reflected in knowledge of and attitudes towards violence against women. Monitoring using the National Community Attitudes Survey commenced in 1995. However, the 1995 survey did draw on some questions used in a 1987 survey. There was substantial improvement on these questions between 1987 and 1995. For example, the proportion of people prepared to justify violence nearly halved and there were marked differences in the proportion recognising non-physical behaviours designed to control and intimidate as domestic violence (ANOP Research Services 1995). It is likely that this reflects the changes in gender roles described above as well as the increasing policy attention given to reducing violence against women, first by the women's movement in the 1970s and, in the 1980s, also by many jurisdictions across Australia.

Together these patterns suggest that there is considerable potential for positive change in understanding and attitudes to violence against women, and that it needs to be driven by change in social practices, policies and norms that influence attitudes. The future challenge, therefore, will be to make sure that efforts to prevent violence against women and promote equal and respectful gender relationships are maintained and appropriately targeted.

Implications for practice and policy

It is widely recognised by expert bodies that the prevention of violence against women is best achieved using multiple strategies targeted to individuals, organisations, communities and broader societal cultures and institutions (UN 2006, 2012c; WHO 2010; WHO & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2010). These strategies are most likely to be successful when they are implemented in a coordinated fashion in ways that support and reinforce one another (VicHealth 2007).

Australia is well advanced in this regard, having adopted the *National Plan to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, a 12-year strategy which aims to bring together Commonwealth, state and territory efforts, as well as work being undertaken by civic society, the business sector and the wider community to achieve a sustained reduction in violence against women. Results from this National Community Attitudes Survey suggest the importance of such an approach and of continuing to build on the investment in it to date.

There have been sustained improvements since 1995 in a number of areas. However, there are other areas in which progress has been minimal, along with some concerning negative findings. On the composite measure of attitudinal support for violence, there has been a notable improvement among young people, especially young men. Although it is not possible to tell from the survey the factors responsible for this change, young people have been the primary target of efforts supported through the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*. This suggests that prevention effort may be having a positive impact.

However there has been no change in the youth sample on the composite measures of understanding of violence and attitudinal support for gender equality and no improvement on any of the three measures for the sample as a whole. Nevertheless, among groups within the population, it appears that attitudes are amenable to change, and that this change has occurred simultaneously with changes in social context. While signalling the possibilities for further progress to be made, a cautionary note applies. It suggests that many of the gains made to date may be jeopardised if prevention efforts are not sustained. This is suggested by other research indicating that improvement in attitudes to gender equality (a key influence on attitudes to violence) may have plateaued (Bolzendahl & Myers 2004; Cotter et al. 2011; van Egmond et al. 2010). Further cause for concern is the lack of change in women's levels of victimisation between the 2005 and 2012 Personal Safety Surveys (ABS 2013b).

Particular areas requiring attention

KNOWLEDGE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Knowledge of violence against women influences responses and the formation of attitudes. It is also a necessary foundation for engaging the community in preventative effort. Wide community understanding of the law and its implementation is needed to set new social norms. While overall Australians have a high level of understanding of violence against women, responses to the survey suggest a need, in future education and awareness raising efforts, to strengthen understanding of the:

- nature of violence against women, and in particular that it extends beyond overt physical and sexual violence
- controlling dynamic often accompanying partner violence
- gendered patterns of perpetration and their implications
- causes of violence, in particular the contribution made by broader social factors
- implementation of the law, particularly the increasing rigour in police responses to partner violence.

Given declining knowledge of the prevalence of violence against women and the greater risk of sexual violence by a known person, these issues would also be important foci for future awareness raising and community education.

ATTITUDES TO VIOLENCE

Attitudes influence behaviour both directly and via their influence on broader social norms. They have been found to influence perpetration, women's responses to violence, and the responses of the community and health and criminal justice professionals. They are also an important barometer of overall progress in addressing violence against women. The survey suggests that while there is minimal normative support for violence by way of justifying it, sizeable proportions of Australians are prepared to excuse violence, minimise or trivialise it or attribute some blame to the victim.

Of particular concern in this regard are attitudes:

- related to alcohol and violence, with sizeable proportions prepared to excuse perpetrators affected by alcohol or drugs or attribute some of the blame to a victim who is intoxicated
- reflecting the notion that men perpetrate sexual assault because they have uncontrollable sexual urges
- suggesting poor understanding of the reasons women stay in violent relationships
- reflecting the notion that violence against women is essentially an 'anger management' problem
- believing that women make false allegations of partner violence and sexual assault
- under-rating the seriousness of non-physical forms of harassment and control, in particular economic control.

Overall, there is substantial variation across measures throughout this report. Some questions are endorsed by large proportions of the population (e.g. 43% agree that 'rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex' and 78% agree that 'it's hard to understand why women stay in violent relationships'). In contrast, other measures attract lower levels of endorsement (e.g. 9% agrees that 'a man is less responsible for rape if he is drunk or affected by drugs at the time' and 12% that 'domestic violence can be excused if the violent person was themselves abused as a child'). An important question for future policy and practice is 'What level of agreement constitutes a problem?'; that is, are certain beliefs only a real problem when substantial numbers support them, and what constitutes the tipping point? In responding to these questions in their review of sexual assault myths, US researchers Edwards and colleagues (2011) propose that even low levels of agreement are a concern, for four reasons:

- Many questions contained in survey instruments (including the National Community Attitudes Survey) are framed in ways that gauge explicit rather than implicit beliefs. Measures gauging more covert or subtle beliefs tend to yield higher levels of endorsement. For example, in a US survey 4% of respondents agreed with the myth that 'many women secretly desire to be raped'. Support for this myth was asked in the same survey using more subtle framing and language ('although most women wouldn't admit it, they generally find being physically forced into sex a real "turn-on"'). The level of agreement with this second statement was four times higher (16%) (Edwards et al. 2011 p. 769).
- Rejecting a particular belief does not mean that a given individual's behaviour will not be influenced by it: as discussed earlier in this report (p. 37), the formal and informal social norms climate is also a significant influence on behaviour.

- There are likely cumulative effects of the range of beliefs that provide cultural support for violence against women. This means that while any individual belief may be supported by a small proportion of the population, and some groups tend to endorse many violence-supportive attitudes, a much larger proportion endorses at least one violence-supportive belief.
- A view can have negative consequences when held by a few individuals if those individuals happen to occupy positions of social power that in turn can exert an influence on many people. For example, the proclamations of a judge, a prominent media figure or a religious cleric have the potential to influence many others, both directly and via their impact on the cultures of the institutions in which they are located. There are also critical contexts in which the negative influence of one or two people can have serious consequences (e.g. on a jury).

ATTITUDES TO GENDER EQUALITY

A consistent relationship has been found between attitudes towards violence against women and attitudes to gender equality (i.e. the distribution of power and resources between men and women in public and private life), gender roles and relationships and gender identities (i.e. what it means to be masculine or feminine). These measures have also been found to be linked to the perpetration of violence and to responses by professionals. Such beliefs are thought to set the cultural foundations in which violence against women can be justified, excused, trivialised, minimised and in which blame can be shifted to women.

Sizeable proportions of Australians continue to hold attitudes supportive of gender inequality, and this is particularly the case where attitudes towards the distribution of power in relationships are concerned. Attitudes to gender equality are the strongest influence on understanding of violence against women and the second strongest on attitudes (after understanding).

This suggests that addressing attitudes and norms about gender will be important to addressing the perpetration of violence against women and attitudes towards violence, both in their own right and in strategies focusing particularly on violence.

The questions included in the survey explore only two of a range of possibly relevant dimensions of gender roles, relations and identities identified as being associated with violence in prior research – equality in gender roles and the distribution of power in relationships. As discussed on p. 73, numerous other dimensions, such as hostility towards women (Gallagher & Parrott 2011) or more subtle expressions of support for gender inequality (Sakalsh et al. 2010) have been found to be linked with attitudes supportive of violence in other research. These warrant inclusion in work to prevent violence against women.

RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Approaches designed to support pro-social behaviour by bystanders offer some promise since most violence takes place beyond the gaze of those responsible for enforcing the law or organisational level regulations. Social censure is among the most effective means of preventing violence and disrespectful behaviour against women (Powell 2011 p. 12).

The survey indicates that the overwhelming majority of Australians have an intention to intervene if they witness a woman being assaulted by her partner. Other research suggests that intent (as stated in a survey) may not always be realised in practice (Gracia & Herrero 2006a) and that there are a number of barriers to intervening (Powell 2011). Further, a large proportion of respondents, particularly men, say that they would 'physically intervene' rather than 'say or do something else to try and help'. Services working with people affected by partner violence caution against confrontational approaches, as this may compound the situation and increase risk for all involved (VicHealth 2010). Together these findings suggest that there may be benefits in continuing to support efforts to promote bystander behaviour, address barriers to action and ensure that responses are optimal. In particular, there is a need to address the declining proportion of Australians who would know where to go to get information about a domestic violence problem.

The survey questions focused on responses to a critical incident of violence. However, bystanders are also likely to be in positions to take action to respond to behaviours that may not be against the law, but that are nevertheless harmful, are potential antecedents to more serious behaviour, or that contribute to a climate of disrespect for women. A number of positive interventions have been developed in Australia and overseas to support pro-social bystander behaviour in these circumstances. These may be especially indicated in male-dominated organisational contexts, such as sporting clubs (see Powell 2012).

IMPLICATIONS FOR TARGETING

The demographic factors influencing knowledge and attitudes provide some guidance for targeting future work. However, they account for only a small portion of all the factors influencing attitudes. People identified in the following pages as warranting targeted efforts are only moderately more likely to hold violence-supportive attitudes overall. Moreover, many people who are not in these groups also have poor understanding of violence against women, hold violence-supportive attitudes and have low levels of attitudinal support for gender equality. As indicated earlier (Chapter 9), the main influences on attitudes are understanding and attitudes to gender equality, which themselves are only partly explained by demographic influences. For these reasons it will be important to continue to implement strategies that reach the whole population on matters of violence and gender relations.

Maintaining understanding and positive attitudes at the population level is also important given the role that social censure (i.e. attitudes and responses of the majority of people, who are not violent) plays in whether men who have a proclivity for violence, actually engage in violent behaviour. Also relevant are the roles that many adult men and women play, as parents, teachers and so on, in shaping the values of children and young people.

MEN AND BOYS

In recent years increasing emphasis has been placed on working with men to prevent violence against women (Fabiano et al. 2003; Powell 2012). This recognises that men are the main perpetrators of violence and that masculine socialisation and roles are influential in its perpetration. It also recognises that most men do not perpetrate violence and hence are potential partners in prevention. The survey supports this emphasis, with men across groups being more likely to hold violence-supportive attitudes than women, but substantial proportions not doing so. The role of men as partners is especially important given that peer influences have a powerful impact on violence and violence-supportive behaviours. Work with men should have a particular emphasis on addressing attitudes trivialising and minimising violence, since these are the themes where men's attitudes are particularly violence-supportive.

“Maybe we can rest some hope on the growing activity of men of goodwill calling on each other to change. When that group hits a critical mass, the majority of men will be more likely to want to change.”

Lee Lakeman, Canadian feminist and anti-violence educator
(in Tom Meagher's White Ribbon Campaign Blog 2014)

YOUNG PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY YOUNG MEN

Young people (aged 18 to 24 years), especially young men, have a relatively poor understanding of violence against women and are less inclined than people aged 35 to 65 years to have a low level of support for violence. The likely contributors, discussed in more detail in a separate paper (www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/ncas), include developmental factors, as well as the influences of contemporary social context, including the rise of raunch culture (see p. 75), a prevailing view that gender inequality is no longer an issue and a greater emphasis on individualism. Young women face a higher risk of violence, and experiences in adolescence and early adulthood can impact upon wellbeing later in life. Together these factors support the emphasis on young people in the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* and work being undertaken around Australia to support the development of school-based respectful relationships programs. The reduction in the number of young people, especially young men, holding violence-supportive attitudes at the extreme end of the spectrum between 2009 and 2013, suggests that this emphasis may be reaping some benefits.

“Education programs that focus on teaching young people *how* to communicate about consent, and which promote mutual respect in relationships, are important for getting in front of the kinds of behaviours and attitudes that could lead to violence against women.”

Dr Melanie Heenan, Executive Director, Court Network
1 August 2014

NEW ARRIVALS

There are modest differences in attitudes and understanding between birth-place groups. People born in N-MESCs have a lower level of understanding, a greater tendency to endorse violence-supportive attitudes and lower levels of attitudinal support for gender inequality. Although understanding and attitudes to gender equality strengthen and violence-supportive attitudes lessen over time, this is probably accompanied by a loss of protective norms from cultures of origin (e.g. respect for elders) and exposure to influences in Australia that may contribute to violence-supportive attitudes (e.g. objectification of women in the media). This suggests that when undertaking violence prevention with new arrival communities it is important to work in partnership with communities to identify and build on existing ‘protective’ cultural norms as well as address factors in both immigrant and Australian cultures that increase risk.

Given the relationship between knowledge and attitudes, there are particular benefits in strengthening opportunities to provide information to new arrivals to Australia on violence against women and responses to this violence in Australia.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Although people of higher socio-economic status were less inclined to endorse attitudes supportive of violence and had strong support for gender equality, they did not have a higher level of understanding of violence. Nor were they more inclined to believe that it was common. Because individuals in positions of influence are likely to be in these groups (e.g. as school principals, senior managers of organisations), strengthening understanding of the prevalence and nature of violence may be an important early step in securing their cooperation in preventative activity.

Overall the survey suggests that socio-economic status has only a modest influence on attitudes, but that this is greater when multiple forms of disadvantage intersect with each other and with the influence of gender (being male). This suggests the importance of targeting effort to strengthen positive attitudes to disadvantaged areas and to groups experiencing multiple disadvantages

INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

The favourable results for Indigenous respondents (both men and women) on measures of understanding and familiarity with sources of information and police responses suggest that, for Indigenous communities, a greater emphasis on strengthening attitudes (as opposed to strengthening understanding of violence or the law) is warranted.

Indigenous women are less inclined to endorse violence than are Indigenous men. In this respect they are similar to non-Indigenous women. These favourable findings provide support for the emphasis in the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* to continue to strengthen Indigenous women’s leadership in addressing violence against women.

Disadvantaged Indigenous men are more likely than other men (both non-disadvantaged Indigenous men and non-Indigenous men) and all women to endorse violence against women.

There is emerging leadership among men in Indigenous communities to address violence against women and their children. A number of Indigenous men have taken a strong stand against this violence. A significant landmark in this leadership was Indigenous leader Mick Dodson’s address to the National Press Club, in which he called for an end to the silence on violence towards and within Indigenous communities, denounced the proposition that such violence was part of Aboriginal culture and tradition and asked community leaders to work in partnership with government to combat family violence as a national priority (Dodson 2003).

In 2008, participants in the inaugural national Aboriginal Men's Health Conference were signatories to the Inteyerrkwe Statement, which included a pledge to take steps to:

... develop strategies to ensure our future roles as grandfathers, fathers, uncles, nephews, brothers, grandsons and sons in caring for our children in a safe family environment that will lead to a happier, longer life that reflects opportunities experienced by the wider community (Aboriginal Male Health Summit 2008).

The statement also includes an acknowledgement and an apology for the:

... hurt, pain and suffering caused by Aboriginal males to our wives, to our children, to our mothers, to our grandmothers, to our granddaughters, to our aunts, to our nieces and to our sisters (Aboriginal Male Health Summit 2008).

The higher proportion of Indigenous men, in particular those experiencing disadvantage, endorsing violence-supportive attitudes suggests that there would be merit in continuing to support such efforts to work with men in Indigenous communities and in the community and organisational environments shaping Indigenous men's attitudes to violence.

Both Indigenous men and women were more likely than the sample as a whole to justify and excuse violence, so it will be important to address these particular themes in future work with Indigenous communities. The factors likely to contribute to this pattern are the conflict women face between securing their own right to safety and loyalty to Indigenous men and communities, as well as mistrust of the criminal justice system (see p. 81). This suggests the need for a dual approach involving change in individual and community-level behaviours and norms, as well as strategies to reduce the social and economic marginalisation experienced by some Indigenous communities and to strengthen criminal justice system responses to ATSI Australians overall, and to violence against women in particular.

MEN WITH DISABILITIES

Men with disabilities are more likely than those without disabilities and women with disabilities to endorse violence-supportive attitudes, suggesting the importance of interventions targeted to them and the environments shaping their attitudes to gender relations and violence.

Implications for strategies

The research on which this report draws indicates that attitudes are influenced by social context and that social context is also a key factor in whether attitudes are ultimately expressed in behaviour. This suggests that while strategies aimed at individual attitudinal change (e.g. social marketing and community education) are important, they are more likely to be successful when implemented alongside other strategies aimed at strengthening social censure of violence and violence-supportive behaviour in organisations and communities. This evidence provides support for increased investment in whole-of-organisation or community-wide programs that use a range of strategies alongside social marketing, education and awareness raising. These strategies might include reform of organisational procedures to clearly condemn disrespect of women, and leadership initiatives to engage respected individuals in setting new social norms related to gender relations and violence.

The literature on which this study draws indicates that law reform, the effective implementation of the law and understanding of the law can all have beneficial influence on attitudes and social norms. This suggests that there are merits in continuing to strengthen and promote positive legal responses to violence against women.

Implications for particular settings

The finding that violence-supportive attitudes are relatively high in male-dominated occupational groupings suggests that there may be some value in workplace projects targeting these groups. The survey also supports a continuing emphasis on education and sports settings as means of reaching young people, and young men in particular.

The studies on which this report draws (see p. 41) indicate a relationship between attitudes to violence against women and violent pornography and the depiction of violence and sex-stereotyped imagery of women in gaming applications for computers and other devices. There has been a marked increase in the consumption of these forms of media, especially among young people (Braun-Courville & Rojas 2009; Bryant 2010; Dowdell et al. 2011; Flood 2009; Papadopoulous 2010). Evidence is increasing of the use of social media as a site for harassing and abusive behaviour towards women (e.g. through the transmission of sexually explicit imagery of women without their permission; Strassberg et al. 2012). Although there have been significant positive developments in the way in which traditional media, such as newspapers and television, report violence against women (Morgan & Politoff 2012), there remains room for improvement. This is important as media has been shown to have the potential to reinforce negative attitudes (Franiuk et al. 2008). Together, these patterns suggest the importance of prioritising the media and popular culture as settings for the primary prevention of violence against women, especially among young people.

While women with disabilities are especially vulnerable to violence, and are less likely to be believed when reporting sexual assault, understanding of this in the community is low, and this is the case across groups in the population, including those who generally have a high level of understanding of violence against women. In addition to raising broader community understanding of these facts, the findings suggest the importance of violence against women as the focus of workforce and organisational development in settings with a high level of contact with women with disabilities.

“Responsible media reporting of violence against women...can make a world of difference to keeping women safe and to changing the attitudes and behaviours that make violence against women so frequent an occurrence in our society.”

Gee Bailey, survivor advocate
The Citizen, 7 April 2014

Implications for gender equality and other policy platforms

Given the consistent relationship found between various measures of gender equality and both the prevalence of violence and attitudes towards both equality and violence, efforts to reduce inequalities and strengthen respect between men and women, and to support more fluid gender roles and identities, will be important to reduce violence against women. Although performing relatively well in a global context, Australia is behind other countries that have similar levels of economic and human development in this regard. It currently ranks 17th among the 186 nations in the United Nations Human Development Program Gender Inequality Index, a measure of women’s disadvantage (United Nations Development Programme 2013 p. 156), and 24th out of 136 nations in the Global Gender Gap Index, a measure of the scope and magnitude of gender disparities in nations, developed by the World Economic Forum (2013 p. 8).

Both the survey findings and other research reviewed for this report indicate that reform efforts within other policy areas are likely to achieve benefits in reducing violence against women, but that these are most likely to be successful in doing so when the impacts of norms and cultures supporting violence against women, gender equality and rigid gender roles and identities are an integral part of reform.

These include efforts to:

- reduce child abuse and neglect, with people experiencing abuse being more likely to hold attitudes supportive of violence against women
- reduce violence in other contexts (e.g. public violence, workplace violence, violence in the media) and address factors leading to the acceptance and use of violence generally. This will be important given the relationship between these factors and violence against women found in other studies
- reduce violence in organisational contexts such as prisons and facilities for people with disabilities. Disadvantaged Indigenous men and men with disabilities are more likely to hold attitudes supportive of violence against women. Also, these groups experience relatively high rates of incarceration and institutionalisation
- reduce alcohol misuse and address alcohol cultures and expectancies. While alcohol is not a direct cause of violence against women, it is understood to be a catalyst (see p. 54). There is some evidence that the cultures and behaviours surrounding alcohol use may also be implicated in violence against women
- promote access to education (in particular tertiary education). A relationship has been found in this and other studies between education, in particular liberal models of education, and positive attitudes to gender equality, and a lower level of attitudinal support for violence against women
- address entrenched disadvantage and strengthen social connectedness – the survey suggests that attitudes supportive of violence are marginally more likely to be held in disadvantaged communities. It has been proposed in other research that this is because social connections and informal social controls are weaker in such communities
- support the settlement of new arrivals to Australia. The present study suggests that new arrivals with good proficiency in English – an indicator of settlement – are less likely to hold attitudes supportive of violence against women and more likely to have a high level of understanding than those with poor proficiency. Also, understanding strengthens and attitudes lessen over time. Together these factors suggest that supporting new arrivals to settle in Australia (e.g. by providing English language classes, assistance to find work and support in making social connections) is likely to hasten the process of attitudinal change. However, as indicated earlier it is important that support is provided in ways that strengthen the protective cultural norms of new arrivals and limit the impacts of negative norms in Australia
- address racism and promote social inclusion, especially among Indigenous and new arrival Australians: as discussed earlier in relation to Indigenous communities, social marginalisation has been found to influence attitudes held by both men and women within these communities
- address gender equality and violence prevention in disaster management: prior research demonstrates that social sanctions against violence often break down in the wake of disasters, making women especially vulnerable.

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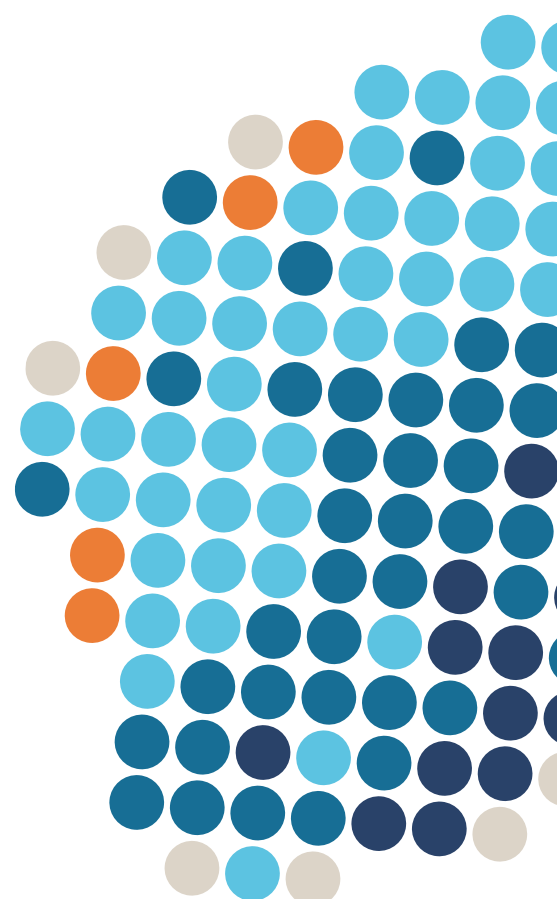
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