

# Preventing Violence Against Women



**WOMEN'S HEALTH & WELLBEING**  
Barwon South West

## Fact Sheet:

### What is violence against women?

Violence against women refers to any act of violence that causes – or could cause – physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women (UN 1993). This includes all forms of gender-based violence experienced by women, including intimate partner violence, domestic and family violence, sexual violence and sexual harassment.



### How prevalent is violence against women in Australia?

In Australia:

- One in four women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner since the age of 15 (ABS 2017).
- One in five women has experienced sexual violence from any perpetrator since the age of 15 (ABS 2017).
- Almost nine out of ten women has been harassed on the street (Johnson & Bennet 2016).
- One in four women has experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the past 5 years (AHRC 2012).
- One in two adult women has experienced sexual harassment during their lifetime (AHRC 2012).

Evidence show that some groups of women experience higher rates of violence perpetrated against them or face more barriers to accessing support services. The sexism that drives violence against women combines with other forms of discrimination, such as racism, ableism, homophobia or transphobia, resulting in more frequent or more severe forms of violence. For instance, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women face disproportionately higher rates of violence than non-Indigenous women (Our Watch 2018).

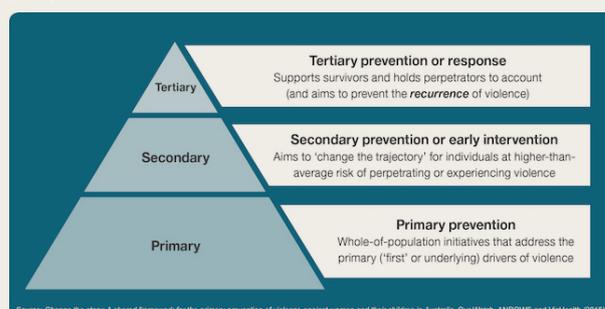
### What are the impacts of violence against women in Australia?

Violence against women is a serious human rights issue in Australia.

- On average, one woman a week is killed by a current or former partner (Cussen & Bryant 2015)
- Intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15-44 (Webster 2016).
- Violence against women costs the Australian economy \$21.7 billion each year (PwC 2015).
- Domestic or family violence is a leading driver of homelessness for women (Mission Australia 2018).

### How can we prevent violence against women?

A primary prevention approach seeks to stop violence against women before it occurs. This is distinct from – but works alongside – efforts that responds to violence after it takes place by supporting victim-survivors and holding perpetrators to account.



The relationship between primary prevention and other work to address violence against women. Source: Our Watch et al 2015

In order to prevent violence against women, a primary prevention approach uses evidence to understand what factors make violence more or less likely to occur in a society.

International evidence consistently shows that higher levels of violence against women occur in societies with lower levels of gender equality. Where gender inequality exists in personal and public life, violence against women is more likely to occur. (Our Watch et al 2015). This research identifies four specific gendered drivers of violence against women:

Gender driver	Example
Condoning violence against women by excusing or minimising it, or blaming the victim	Responses to acts of violence that ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If it's so bad, why doesn't she just leave?</li> <li>• What was she wearing?</li> <li>• Why was she walking alone at night in the first place?</li> </ul>
Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public life and relationships	Barriers to women holding leadership positions. For instance, there are more men named Andrew running ASX200 companies than women (Liveris 2020).
Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity	Stereotyped breadwinner/homemaker gender bias and beliefs that sees 95% of all primary carer leave taken by women (ABS 2017a)
Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women	Men bonding over 'jokes' or behaviour that objectifies women or is homophobic or transphobic.

Primary prevention work seeks to challenge these drivers as they occur across all levels of society. This includes our beliefs, our behaviours, and the legal structures and systems that govern us.

- Challenging the condoning of violence against women.
- Promoting women's independence and decision-making.
- Challenging harmful gender stereotypes and roles
- Strengthening positive, equal and respectful relationships.
- Promoting and normalising gender equality in public and private life.

A best practice approach to preventing violence against women incorporates:

- the principles of effective health promotion
- an intersectional feminist approach

Find out more about preventing violence against women:

- Our Watch Prevention Handbook, <https://handbook.ourwatch.org.au>
- Action to Prevent Violence Against Women, Gender Equity Victoria [www.actionpvaw.org.au/home](http://www.actionpvaw.org.au/home)

## What is happening in the Barwon South West region to prevent violence against women?

Primary prevention action is taking place across a range of settings in the region including local government, schools, TAFE and universities, community organisations, sporting associations and the business sector. Respect2020 is the collective gender equality partnership movement for south-west Victoria [www.respect2040.com](http://www.respect2040.com)

Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West is the region's lead organisation for preventing violence against women and promoting gender equality. We support our region to deliver coordinated, best practice activities through the Respect2020 partnership and provide primary prevention capacity-building training, organisational development and expert advice.

Get in touch to find out more about how you can take action to prevent violence against women [www.womenshealthbsw.org.au](http://www.womenshealthbsw.org.au)

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