

Young Australians' attitudes to violence against women

Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards
Violence Against Women Survey for respondents 16–24 years

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Foreword



As part of the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS), I am proud to present this summary report on young Australians' attitudes to violence against women.

NCAS 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.

VicHealth released the NCAS findings in late 2014. This report focuses on the attitudes of young people aged 16 to 24 who responded to the main survey and revealed some important patterns within this age group. While violence against women is a whole-of-community issue, it is crucial to understand any differences that exist within particular segments of the community as this can help us to develop more effective prevention strategies.

There is growing international consensus that violence against women can be prevented, and changing attitudes is one important step. Attitudes that condone or tolerate violence are recognised as playing a central role in shaping the way individuals, organisations and communities respond to violence.

Measuring community attitudes and increasing our knowledge about what influences these attitudes tells us how well we are progressing towards a violence-free society for all women. It also reveals the extent of the work that lies ahead, where to focus our efforts, and the messages and approaches that are likely to be effective.

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. It has been encouraging to see community-driven leadership on this issue in recent times. 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.

The findings of this report confirm that we need to maintain a focus on young people in our prevention efforts. We recognise that young people are at a critical life stage and the development of respectful relationships and healthy attitudes will benefit them across the lifespan. VicHealth is also seeking new ways to build young people's mental wellbeing through strengthening resilience in the community.

VicHealth is pleased to be part of the growing movement to build positive, respectful and healthy environments for young people now and into the future.

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

Jerril Rechter
CEO, VicHealth

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The opinions, comments and/or analysis expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department of Social Services and cannot be taken as expressions of the policies of the Commonwealth.

Terms used in this report

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.

Family violence – see *violence against women*.

Gender – economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female in a particular society 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 & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 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 & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 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 & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2010). See also *gender equality*.

Gonzo porn – a particular cinematic style of pornography, but this term is increasingly used to refer to a genre of ‘hard-core’ pornography characterised by an emphasis on the act of sex (as opposed to characters and plotlines). It is typically filmed from the male point of view and is regarded by many observers as extremely disrespectful of and violent towards women (Crabbe & Corlett 2013; Dines 2010).

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 & London School of Tropical Medicine 2010).

Raunch culture – 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).

Relationship – used in this report to refer to relationships between men and women or an individual man and woman. However, it is recognized that in regard to intimate relationships, there is a diversity of forms (e.g. same-sex relationships).

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.

Socioeconomic status – umbrella term used in this report to refer to education, occupational status, employment and degree of area disadvantage.

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). Violence may occur in other relationships (e.g. in same sex relationships). However, the focus of this report is on violence perpetrated by a man against a woman (see *gender-based violence*).

Violence-supportive attitudes – in this report, attitudes that justify, excuse, minimise, or trivialise 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.

Young people/youth – in this report, people aged 16–24 years.

About this report

This report summarises findings and discusses implications relating to the youth sample in the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS). The NCAS involved interviews with 17,500 Australians, including 1923 people who were aged 16–24 years.

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

The NCAS is conducted to:

- gauge community knowledge of, and attitudes towards, violence against women to identify areas that need attention in future
- assess change over time, with previous iterations of the survey conducted in 1995 and 2009
- improve understanding of factors influencing knowledge, attitudes and responses
- identify segments of the population that may particularly benefit from efforts to prevent violence.

This report:

- discusses the case for ensuring that strategies to prevent violence against women reach and are tailored to the needs of young people
- draws on prior research to outline the factors contributing to attitudes towards violence and gender relations among young people
- includes findings from the 2013 NCAS survey for the age cohort of 16–24 years, and where relevant for particular demographic groups within this age group
- assesses whether there has been any change in findings for this group between 2009 and 2013
- compares the findings for the 16–24 years cohort against those for respondents aged 35–64 years with the aim of identifying strengths among young people, as well as issues warranting particular attention. This analysis can also help to build understanding of factors influencing attitudes among young people
- discusses findings in light of other research and explores their implications for future prevention policy and practice.

A summary report for the sample as a whole along with a technical report containing more detailed information on the survey methodology can be found at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/ncas.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than 1 in 3 Australian women have experienced violence by a male perpetrator since the age of 15. 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. Its prevalence is highest among young women. A large proportion of men who have perpetrated sexual violence against women did so for the first time when young. This violence has particularly serious consequences for young people given that exposure occurs at a critical life stage. This stage is also a time during which prospects for prevention are particularly strong.

Violence against women is a complex problem to which multiple factors contribute. Significant underlying factors are inequalities between men and women, manifest in inequalities and disrespect in relationships and rigid and stereotyped gender roles and identities (WHO & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2010; UN 2006; VicHealth 2007; Flood & Pease 2006, 2009).

Prevention strategies designed for the community as a whole are likely to reach and benefit young people. These can be strengthened by a sound comprehension of the particular patterns of knowledge and attitudes among young people and the factors shaping them. Accordingly, this report has been developed as a resource for planning strategies to prevent violence against women, to ensure that they reach and are as relevant as possible to young people.

About the survey

NCAS addresses four factors involved in violence against women and its prevention:

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

The survey's focus is on partner violence, sexual assault, stalking and sexual harassment.

Between January and May 2013, more than 17,500 20-minute telephone interviews were undertaken with a cross-section of Australians aged 16 years or more, 1923 of them with young men and women aged 16–24 years. In this report, findings for people aged 16–24 years are compared with those for the 9566 respondents aged 35–64 years. The survey was also conducted nationally in 2009. Findings for young people are compared across these two survey waves.

Encouraging results and areas of concern

Some of these survey results on knowledge of and attitudes and responses towards violence against women are encouraging; in other areas there is much work to be done as indicated in the following summary tables.

	Encouraging results	Areas of concern
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young respondents (those aged 16–24 years) have a good appreciation that violence against women comprises a range of behaviours designed to intimidate and control women, not just physical assault • Most recognise that partner violence and sexual assault are against the law • Most young Australians recognise that partner violence is perpetrated mainly by men and that it is women who are most likely to suffer physical harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people are less likely to identify non-physical behaviours as violence than they are to recognise physical violence and forced sex • Only 60% of young people agree that violence against women is common • Only 50% of young men and 65% of young women recognise that a woman is more likely to be assaulted by a known person than a stranger • There has been a decline in the percentage of young people recognising that partner violence is perpetrated mainly by men and that women are more likely to suffer physical and psychological harms (a decline also apparent in the sample as a whole; VicHealth 2014) • Only 50% of young people recognise that women are more likely than men to experience fear as a result of partner violence, and the proportion doing so declined by 4 percentage points between 2009 and 2013 • Most young people believe that violence against women is due to men being unable to manage their anger

Attitudes	Encouraging results	Areas of concern
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only a minority of young people (fewer than 6% depending on the scenario) is prepared to justify violence • Most young people do not agree that it is a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship, or that partner violence is a 'private matter' to be handled in the family • Most young people agree with current policies that women should not be left to sort sexual harassment out themselves and that the violent person (rather than women and children) should be made to leave the family home • Most young people agree that violence against women, and a range of violent behaviours, are serious • Young people have a high level of support for equality in gender roles in the public sphere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to a quarter of young people are prepared to excuse partner violence (depending on the scenario) and 2 in 5 young people agree that 'rape results from men not being able to control their sexual urges' (an increase from 2009, when 1 in 3 did so) • Young people are less likely to recognise non-physical behaviours as serious than they are to recognise physical violence and forced sex • Although most young people agree that tracking a partner by electronic means without her consent is serious (84%), 46% agree that it is acceptable to some degree • A large proportion of young people do not appreciate the barriers women face to ending a violent relationship, with 80% agreeing that 'it's hard to understand why women stay in violent relationships' (although this has declined by 5 percentage points since 2009) and 61% agreeing that 'a woman could leave a violent relationship if she really wanted to' • A large proportion of young people (up to a half depending on the circumstance) believe that women make false claims of partner violence and sexual assault, and there was a 9 percentage point increase between 2009 and 2013 in young people agreeing that women falsify partner violence in family law cases • Up to 1 in 5 young respondents believe that there are circumstances in which women share some of the responsibility for sexual assault • Sizeable proportions of young people support male dominance of decision-making in relationships

Responses	Encouraging results	Areas of concern
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overwhelming majority of young people say they would intervene if they saw a woman being assaulted by her partner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only just over a half of young people would know where to get help for a partner violence problem (54%). The same percentage recognise that police response times in cases of domestic violence are improving • The percentage of young people knowing where to get help and recognising improvement in police response times declined between 2009 and 2013

Gender and age group differences

On many measures in the survey there are no differences between young men and women and between young people and those aged 35–64 years. Where there are differences, many are small in size. However, on a number of questions the differences are noteworthy:

- On all but one measure on which there are differences between young men and young women, young men show a lower level of knowledge and a higher level of attitudinal support for violence against women.
- On all but one measure on which there are differences between young people and people aged 35–64 years, young people show a lower level of knowledge and a higher level of attitudinal support for violence against women.

Composite measures were devised by combining questions in the survey. These measures assess overall levels of understanding of the nature of violence against women, attitudinal support for violence and attitudinal support for gender equality.

Using these measures it was found that young men are more likely than young women to be classified as having a low level of understanding that: violence against women comprises psychological, social and financial forms of abuse and control, not just physical violence and forced sex; a low level of support for gender equality; and a high level of attitudinal support for violence against women.

Young people are less likely than people aged 35–64 years to have a high level of understanding of violence against women. They are also less likely to have a low level of attitudinal support for this violence. They are equally likely to have a high level of attitudinal support for equality in roles between men and women, but are less likely than those aged 35–64 years to support gender equality in decision-making in relationships.

Influences on understanding and attitudes

The strongest influences on attitudes towards violence against women among young people are their understanding of violence (i.e. that it comprises more than physical violence and forced sex) and their attitudes towards gender equality.

Young people who understand violence against women as comprising more than physical violence and who support gender equality are less likely to hold violence-supportive attitudes.

Once understanding of violence against women and attitudes towards gender roles and relationships have been taken into account, demographic factors have limited influence. However, demographic factors with the strongest influence on attitudes towards violence against women are gender and country of birth.

Attitudes and understanding in different groups and places

In addition to young men (see above), those who are more likely to have a low level of understanding, a high level of attitudinal support for violence and/or low levels of support for gender equality¹ are:

- young people born overseas in a non-main English-speaking country
- unemployed young people (having a higher level of support for violence and a lower level of understanding)
- young people living alone or not living in shared housing or with a family or partner (having a higher level of attitudinal support for violence and a lower level of support for gender equality).

¹ Significant at the 95% confidence level.

However, differences between young people in these groups and all young people are not large.

Understanding and attitudes of young people of different ages

Attitudes and understanding improve among young women as they get older. However, among young men there is only a modest improvement in attitudes towards violence across the three youngest age groups in the NCAS sample (16–17, 18–24 and 25–34 years). There is no improvement across these groups in understanding or attitudes towards gender equality in roles and relationships.

Change over time

On some individual questions there was a deteriorating trend between 2009 and 2013, on others some improvement and on yet others no change.

Using the composite measures (i.e. those combining responses to a range of questions), it was found that 10% fewer young men hold high levels of violence-supportive attitudes in 2013 than was the case in 2009. Young men's understanding of violence against women and their attitudes towards gender equality remained stable. Among young women there has been no change in any of the composite measures between 2009 and 2013.

Strategies for stronger environments

The literature on which this study is based suggests that young people's attitudes are likely to be influenced in part by their age and stage of development. However, as is the case throughout life, social context also makes a powerful contribution. Families, schools, the media, popular culture and leisure settings are critical influences on young people's attitudes. Given this, approaches that seek to reach the wider community (often referred to as 'whole-of-population' approaches) are key to strengthening the environments in which young people form their attitudes and thereby to violence prevention among young people.

The findings of the survey, along with other research, indicate value in a specific focus on settings – for example, schools and the media – that have a particular influence on the knowledge and attitudes of young people. The need for such a focus is indicated by the higher prevalence of violence among young people, their particular vulnerability to the impacts of adversity and the fact that they are at a life stage when they are subject to specific influences and when their values are being formed. There would be particular benefits in approaches that reach young people who are not in formal education or employment, as well as those born in a non-main English-speaking country.

Other research suggests that the social experience of contemporary young people is different to that of previous generations. This, along with factors associated with young people's age and stage of development, need to be taken into account when designing strategies to raise awareness of and strengthen attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality among young people. There is a need for 'whole-of-population' approaches to be augmented with activities tailored to young people, and in which messages are framed with their particular social experiences in mind.

1. How the survey was done

1.1 About the questionnaire

The survey instrument was initially developed on behalf of the Australian Government in 1995, drawing on an earlier 1987 instrument. In 2009 and 2013 it was 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, some adjustments have been made to reflect emerging issues, and changing language and theoretical understanding.

The survey includes questions to enable the influence of factors such as age, gender and socioeconomic status to be assessed.

1.2 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. The consent of a parent or guardian was sought for respondents aged under 18 years. Half of the interviews were conducted with people contacted on landline telephones and half with people contacted on their mobile phones. Including both landline and mobile interviews meant that a broader range of people were included in the survey than would have been the case if only landline interviewing had been used. This is because fewer young people, especially young men, Australians from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and those born in countries in which English is not the main language spoken, live in households with landlines.

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. Of the 17,500 people interviewed, 1923 were aged 16–24 years, a sufficient number to enable inferences to be drawn about this age group.

1.3 Analysing and reporting the results

1.3.1 Reporting categories and themes

The survey results are reported in four categories:

- knowledge of violence against women
- attitudes to violence
- attitudes to gender equality
- responses to violence against women.

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.

A brief background to each question is provided in this report. However more detail can be found in the NCAS technical and summary reports at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/ncas.

A copy of the questionnaire is included as an appendix to the technical report.

1.3.2 Data presentation

Results are presented for young men, young women and all young people (those aged 16–24 years) and are compared with men, women and all people aged 35–64 years (9566 respondents). The 35–64 years age group was selected as a benchmark for comparison based on analysis of the main sample (VicHealth 2014; Webster et al. 2014), which indicated that three age groups could be distinguished: younger people (aged 16–17; 18–24 and 25–34 years), people aged 35–64 years and those aged 65 years or more.

People aged over 65 tended to be less likely to support gender equality and more likely to hold violence-supportive attitudes. This pattern may be due to either developmental factors (people becoming more conservative or more willing to express sexism and prejudice as they age) or to contextual factors (reaching adulthood in a more socially conservative era) (see Webster et al. 2014 for further discussion).

Using the results for respondents aged 35–64 years allows comparison of young people with a group in which ageing-related developmental factors were less likely. That is, it allowed a comparison between two generations – people 16–24 years and their parent's generation (those 35–64 years), while excluding those from their grandparent's generation. Further, both groups being compared have been exposed to the social change associated with the second wave of feminism in their formative years, although in very different contexts. These changes are widely recognised as having an impact on attitudes to gender equality and violence (Cotter et al. 2011; Van Egmond et al. 2010; Worden & Carlson 2005; Carlson & Worden 2005).

Respondents aged 25–34 were not included in the analysis as findings for this group (as indicated above) are very similar to the 16–24 years group. However, this age range is outside of that defined in this report, and in many other contexts, as 'young'.

Comparisons are made on the basis of gender in addition to age because both factors have been shown in prior research to influence attitudes.

1.3.3 Composite measures of understanding and attitudes

Results were reported for each survey question and four measures were developed from existing survey questions. Referred to in this report as 'composite measures' they allow assessment of:

- overall change in understanding and attitudes over time
- differences between groups (e.g. younger people and older people)
- the relationship between understanding and attitudes
- the relationship between attitudes and understanding and other characteristics of interest, such as age, gender and 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

- **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 Inglehart and Norris (2003) to assess attitudinal support for gender equality. This scale was augmented with additional questions gauging support for covert sexism and for gender equality in relationships. Based on answers to eight questions it ranks respondents according to their level of attitudinal support for gender equality (high, medium, or low).

There was variation between young people and respondents aged 35–64 years on the two questions in the Gender Equality Scale about distribution of power in relationships. Accordingly, an additional subscale, the **Gender Equality in Relationships Scale**, was created from these two variables (see Appendix A) and used for selected analyses.

1.3.4 Tests of statistical significance

When a sample has been randomly selected, some differences found can be due to chance. To help decide whether a difference is likely to represent a real change, rather than just being a chance 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 prioritise men).

1.4 Terminology and data use

Different terminology may be used in this report to refer to similar concepts to those introduced on page 8. 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.

2. Why a focus on young people in preventing violence against women?

Violence against women is an issue across the globe and ending this violence has been a significant concern of the international community (UN 2006, 2012; WHO 2010, 2013; WHO & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2010; Garcia-Moreno et al. 2005). 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 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 2013), found that:

- more than 1 in 3 women (39%) over the age of 18 years have experienced violence by a man since the age of 15 (ABS 2013). 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 2013, customised report)
- 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 2013)
- 17% of women aged 18 years and over have experienced stalking by a male perpetrator during their lifetime (ABS 2013)
- 22% of Australian women aged 15–64 years have experienced sexual harassment (McDonald & Flood 2012).

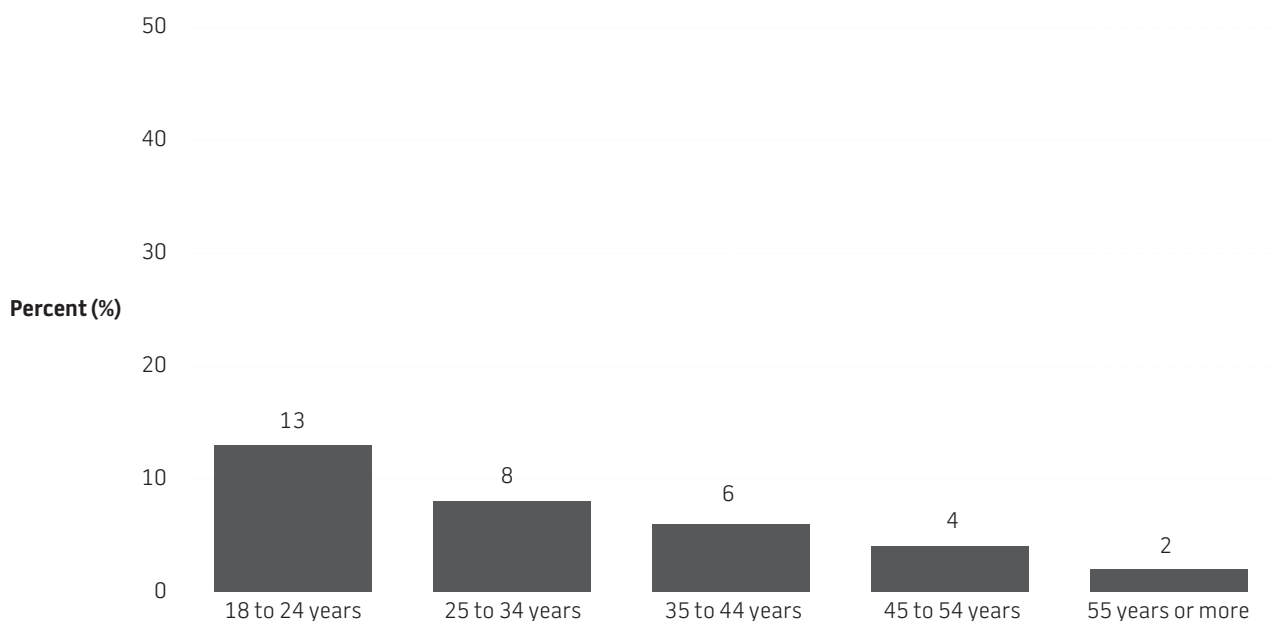
There was no statistically significant change in the proportion of women experiencing violence between the previous Personal Safety Survey in 2005 and the most recent survey in 2012 (ABS 2013).

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 also more likely to have avoided such activities as a consequence of feeling fearful (ABS 2013, customised report).

2.1 Violence is particularly prevalent in the lives of young people

Early adulthood is a life stage involving particular vulnerability to violence for both young men and women (Tucci et al. 2008). For young women, 13% aged 18–24 years experienced violence in the 12 months prior to the 2012 Personal Safety Survey. This was a higher rate than for any other age group of women. Women are more likely than men to experience sexual violence. In the 2012 Personal Safety Survey, 19% of women reported having experienced sexual violence since the age of 15, compared with 4.5% of men (ABS 2013). Other research shows that young women face particularly high levels of violence in dating relationships (Flood & Fergus 2008; Sety 2012). A recent international study found that half of all men who reported ever having perpetrated sexual violence against a woman did so for the first time before they reached age 20 (Fulu et al. 2013).

Figure 1: Women’s experience of violence in the previous 12 months by age, 2012



Data source: *Personal Safety Survey*, Table 7, ABS (2013).

Young people may also be exposed to 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 had experienced violence by a current partner had children in their care at the time of the violence, who saw or heard the violence. This was also the case for nearly half (48%) of the 733,900 women who experienced violence while they were living with their most recently violent previous partner (ABS 2013).

2.2 Exposure to violence against women has particular consequences for young women and men

The serious consequences of violence on women’s health are now well documented (Rees et al. 2011; VicHealth 2004; WHO 2013). Although these consequences are wide ranging, violence has particular impacts on women’s reproductive health (including an elevated risk of sexually transmitted infection) and their mental health (Rees et al. 2011; VicHealth 2004; WHO 2013). The consequences are of particular concern for young women given evidence indicating that adverse experiences in adolescence, a critical life stage, have the potential to impact negatively on health, especially mental health, into adulthood.

Violence against women, and the fear of such violence, has been shown to impact upon women’s participation in education, employment and civic activity (Banyard et al. 2011; Boeckmann & Turpin-Petrosino 2002; Koskela 1999; McDonald & Flood 2012). Again, these have particular consequences for young women, who are at a critical stage of their educational and career trajectories. Dating violence in particular has been found to be a serious risk factor for depression, suicidal thoughts and poor educational outcomes (Banyard & Cross 2008; Teten et al. 2009). Adolescent dating violence is increasingly recognised as a significant public health issue (Sears & Byers 2010).

The impacts on young people of witnessing violence perpetrated against their mothers 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 young people living with violence will suffer ill effects, numerous studies

suggest that they do face an increased likelihood of doing so, both in the present as well as later in their lives (Edleson & Nissley 2006; Flood & Fergus 2008; Holt et al. 2008; Humphreys et al. 2008; Richards 2011). Among these consequences are an increased likelihood among men of perpetrating violence later in life (Holt et al. 2008; Roberts et al. 2010). This suggests that focusing on preventing violence among young people is an important strategy to interrupt intergenerational cycles of violence.

These consequences of violence are associated with significant costs to the wider society. For example, 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, by the year 2021–22 the cost will be an estimated \$15.6 billion (National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009b, p. 4).

2.3 Prospects for prevention among young people are high

Although the causes of violence against women are complex, evidence is mounting that broader social and economic factors make a contribution (UN 2006; VicHealth 2007; WHO 2002, 2010; WHO & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2010). Many of these factors can be addressed, so prospects for preventing the problem are good (WHO 2002, 2010; WHO & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2010). Significant underlying factors in the perpetration of violence against women, and attitudes towards the problem, are practices and attitudes pertaining to:

- gender roles – with violence and its risk factors being less common in contexts and relationships in which the roles played by men and women are less rigidly defined according to gender stereotypes.
- gender identities – with rigid ideas about what it means to be masculine or feminine increasing the risk of violence against women
- relationships between men and women – the risk of violence is lower in contexts and individual relationships in which gender relationships are respectful and decision-making power is more equally shared (VicHealth 2007).

Adolescence and early adulthood are widely regarded among mental health experts as critical life stages, particularly in the development of gender and sexual identities (Brannon 2011, pp. 134–136, 204–229). It is during this time that young people develop their first intimate relationships outside the family. Efforts to reduce exposure to risk factors for violence, and in particular to support the development of healthy, respectful and egalitarian gender relationships and identities during this time, are likely to reduce the risk of violence in the short term, and to provide a sound foundation for healthy gender relationships into adulthood.

2.4 Relationships are important to young people

Health, family, conflict, relationships, and physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and safety are identified as key concerns by young people themselves (Australian Democrats Youth Poll 2008; Mission Australia National Survey of Young Australians 2008; Tucci et al. 2008).

2.5 Some things are different for young people

Young people's attitudes and knowledge are shaped both by their age and stage of development and their social context (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009; Pease & Flood 2008). While they are exposed to many of the same influences as people of other ages, there are also differences. These are explored in greater detail in Chapter 4. An understanding of particular influences on the attitudes and knowledge of young people can help to guide prevention, ensuring that the focus is on the factors most strongly associated with violence-supportive attitudes. Further, as discussed later, different clusters of attitudes (or attitudinal themes) have been identified as underpinning violence against women. Establishing which of these is more likely to be held by young people can help to tailor preventative messages to address areas of particular concern.

3. Role of knowledge, attitudes and responses in preventing violence against women

3.1 Knowledge of violence against women

Strengthening knowledge of the dynamics, patterns and prevalence of violence against women and legal responses to it is important to ensure appropriate responses by and towards those affected by violence (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009) and to facilitate wide community engagement in preventing the problem (Carlson & Worden 2005; McMahon & Baker 2011; O'Neil & Morgan 2010). Knowledge about an issue also influences the formation of attitudes (Ajzen & Fishbein 2005; Chaiken & Trope 1999; Fazio 1990). The role of the law in setting new social norms is dependent on a wide community understanding of the law (Salazar et al. 2003).

3.2 Attitudes towards violence against women

Attitudes have been identified among the factors contributing to violence against women both directly and via their impact on social norms (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009). Attitudes are themselves shaped by factors in the broader social context, such as how gender roles and relationships are constructed in families and organisations and the way in which women and men are portrayed in the media and popular culture (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009). This means that attitudes are an important 'barometer' of how we are faring generally as a society in relation to violence and gender relations. It also suggests that preventing violence against women is not simply a matter of changing attitudes but will also involve changing the social factors that shape them (Pease & Flood 2008).

Researchers studying the role of attitudes in violence against women have conceptualised them in different ways. 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')
- **minimise** 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')
- **trivialise** 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, 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.

3.3 Attitudes to gender equality

There is evidence of a link between both violence against women and attitudes towards this violence and towards gender equality, gender roles and gender identities (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009). For this reason the NCAS includes a series of questions addressing attitudes on selected dimensions of these concepts of gender.

3.4 Responses to violence against women

Another area addressed in the NCAS is the way in which people respond to violence they witness and the factors informing and facilitating actions to prevent violence. This reflects a growing interest in harnessing the efforts of people who witness violence and its antecedents to prevent the problem (McDonald & Flood 2012; Powell 2011, 2012).

A bystander is one who observes violence or behaviours or conditions that may contribute to it. The objective in recent work has been to explore ways in which bystanders can be encouraged to respond to help address the problem, or to be what some researchers have called 'pro-social' bystanders (Powell 2011).

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 2010)
- only a small proportion of women subject to violence report it to the police (ABS 2013; Lievore 2003). 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 resources 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 already discussed it is possible to challenge them using social sanctions.

4. Context for young people's attitudes – a look at the literature

The literature on factors contributing to violence against women and attitudes towards the problem suggests that the issues are complex and have multiple contributing factors at the individual, organisational, community and societal levels. Significant underlying factors are inequalities between men and women, manifest in inequalities and disrespect in relationships and rigid and stereotyped gender roles and identities (WHO & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2010; UN 2006; VicHealth 2007; Flood & Pease 2006, 2009). This is also the case for young people's attitudes towards violence (Connolly et al. 2010).

Existing research suggests that young people's attitudes are influenced by many of the same factors applying to the population as whole. However, some particular factors associated with the contemporary social environment need to be considered, along with factors associated with age and developmental stage.

Prior synthesis of the research on attitudes towards violence against women suggests three broad, inter-related clusters of contributing factors:

- gender and attitudes towards gender equality, gender roles and gender identities
- acceptance of and exposure to violence and discrimination (e.g. exposure to violence as a child, to civil conflict, or to violence in the media)
- other intersecting factors such as age, ethnicity, or disability, and contextual factors such as limited education or neighbourhood disadvantage. These may intersect with gender to shape particular attitudes towards violence against women or increase the likelihood of violence-supportive attitudes (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009; VicHealth 2014).

Being young in age has been identified among the range of intersecting and contextual factors that increase the risk of violence exposure or perpetration (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009).

Issues of family, family relationships and family conflict, as well as those concerned with health, personal safety and physical, sexual and emotional abuse, are important to Australian young people. Further, young people experience a high rate of violence perpetrated against them and many witness violence in their own families (based on data from ABS 2013). Clearly, then, young people are engaged with issues related to violence against women.

Young people have been found to be very positive about the gains of feminism (Bulbeck 2008) and tend to have progressive attitudes to many other social issues such as the environment, human rights, the treatment of refugees and same-sex marriage. This suggests that in general they are well disposed towards issues of equality. However, they have also been found to hold violence-tolerant views, and in some research to be more likely to hold them than older age groups (McGregor 2009). In the 2009 NCAS, young people were found to be more likely than the sample as a whole to hold violence-supportive attitudes on a number of measures (McGregor 2009; VicHealth 2010). Similarly, in the analysis of the whole sample in the 2013 survey, age was found to be among the top three most influential demographic influences on understanding and attitudes towards violence against women. Respondents in the two youngest groups (16–17 years and 18–24 years) were less likely than the sample as a whole to be classified as having a high level of understanding of violence against women and as less likely to have a low level of attitudinal support (VicHealth 2014; Webster et al. 2014).

Young people's attitudes are subject to the same influences as those already introduced: factors related to gender and to acceptance of and exposure to violence. However, findings in the literature indicate that many of these factors may particularly influence young people. The reasons for this are associated with:

- the particular times in which the current generation of young people are living
- the developmental and social factors associated with being young.

Three considerations need to be kept in mind in assessing the meaning of this literature. First, as is the case for the population as a whole, no single factor is responsible for shaping young people's attitudes. Rather, the factors canvassed below are understood to contribute in interaction with one another (Connolly et al. 2010). Second, people in other age groups are similarly exposed to many of these factors discussed (e.g. violent pornography). However, these factors are understood to have a particular impact among young people because:

- young people are at a life stage when their identity and values are being formed
- the contemporary context is the only world known to young people, who have less prior life experience to call upon than their older counterparts
- many factors relate to consumption and leisure, which have particular significance in the lives of young people (Connolly et al. 2010).

Third, as indicated earlier, both violence and attitudes towards violence are influenced by broader social context (e.g. parenting styles, messaging in the media, school cultures and structures). Hence, although gauging the attitudes held by young people specifically is important to guide future prevention programming, many of the factors contributing to these attitudes are likely to be found in cultures, structures and practices of organisational and community environments (e.g. schools, sports clubs, or social media). Further, young people's attitudes are influenced by the attitudes and behaviours of those around them, such as parents, teachers and prominent people in sport or popular culture.

4.1 Generation effects – the times in which people live

The current generation of young people are coming of age in times when scripts about life chances and gender are being rewritten. Four key social trends identified by youth researchers may have an impact on attitudes towards violence against women among young people.

4.1.1 Individualisation

Individualisation, according to researchers, is an increased reliance on individual agency and a diminution of a societal 'safety net' (e.g. publicly funded services and benefits). Leading Australian youth researchers argue that as a result of individualisation the current generation has an 'increased need to negotiate uncertainty and make choices', by becoming active negotiators of their own lives (Eckersley et al. 2006, p. 25).

There is a widespread expectation that young people take personal responsibility for their life choices and chances. They live in a less secure and rapidly changing world where they are increasingly obliged to forge their own futures without a safety net. Young Australians are strongly influenced by ideas about choice, responsibility and the individual (see, for example, Alloway & Dalley-Trim 2009; Wyn & White 2013).

Researchers maintain that individualisation may shape attitudes to social issues, among them violence against women, in three key ways. It may:

- lead to a lack of appreciation of the social and structural causes of violence and to a lack of empathy for individuals facing social and structural barriers
- contribute to a greater sense that women have responsibility for dealing with the violence by either by leaving or by making the best of their circumstances. It may also extend to women being seen as responsible for preventing violence by, for example, dressing conservatively, avoiding travelling alone, or curbing their use of alcohol in social situations.
- increase the likelihood of violence being excused in circumstances where the perpetrator is seeking to make personal change to improve their behaviour.

In regard to responding to violence against women, the increasing diminution of a social safety net, and the greater emphasis on personal responsibility, may mean that support services are both literally less prominent in the lives of young people as well as being less likely to be in their consciousness as resources for resolving personal and social problems.

4.1.2 Post-feminism

Post-feminism, in research terms, is a contemporary era in which there is an increasingly widely held belief that the goals of the women's movement have been largely achieved, and that the movement has lost its political power and influence (Hall & Rodriguez 2003).

The belief that gender equality has been achieved has the potential to have both positive and negative effects on young people's estimations of enduring gender problems. More than older people, young people tend to be positive about feminist achievements, and to see the women's movement as having accomplished good things for women (Bulbeck 2008; Hall & Rodriguez 2003; Rúdólfssdóttir & Jolliffe 2008). Young Australians feel strongly that there are now equal opportunities in this country (Bulbeck 2008; Jonsson & Flanagan 2000, p. 198).

Given the link between attitudes to gender equality and violence, this positive assessment of gender equality may translate to similarly positive attitudes regarding violence towards women. However, a view that gender inequality is a 'thing of the past' may:

- increase the likelihood of victim-blaming (Baker 2008; Rich 2005). For example, in a 'post-feminist' world in which women are understood to have a high level of agency, the barriers to leaving a violent relationship may not be understood, and consequently staying may be seen as a personal failing.
- reduce the likelihood of violence being understood in gendered terms
- lead to a more positive appraisal of contemporary responses to violence against women than is necessarily warranted by the evidence (e.g. by police, the courts, the wider community)
- when combined with individualisation (with its emphasis on individual choice), reduce the opportunities to identify social influences on male and female behaviour. Rather, differences may be more inclined to be seen as the result of the exercise of personal choice.

Indeed, some researchers have argued that the combined influences of post-feminism and individualisation have led to a stagnation in attitudes towards gender equality, attitudes that had been gradually improving since the 1960s, coinciding with the advent of the second wave of feminism (Cotter et al. 2011; Van Egmond et al. 2010).

4.1.3 Changing images of gender and power

The combination of individualisation and post-feminism has created a picture of women today as powerful and self-determining. Young women in particular are perceived as those best able to make opportunities and successes in their lives through personal determination (Harris 2004; McRobbie 2004, 2007). In this context it can be hard for young people to see women as in any way disadvantaged. Indeed, research shows that young people feel that women today are the inheritors of the gains of feminism (Bulbeck 2008; Rich 2005). At the same time that young women are seen as highly capable, another common image is that of the girl as bully, or even as the new kind of violent offender. Girls' public behaviour is imagined to be less inhibited. Although there is little evidence that girls are becoming more dangerous and violent (see Chesney-Lind & Irwin 2008), this widely held assumption lends weight to the idea that young women can take care of themselves and 'give as good as they get'.

These influences may:

- reduce the likelihood of violence being understood in terms of power differences between men and women, and especially of women being seen as ‘victims’
- create challenges for young men as they deal with shifts in gender roles and gendered power (Keith 2013; Phipps & Young 2014; Robinson 2005).

4.1.4 Raunch culture and new media (including social media)

Although people of all ages are influenced by new media and popular culture, young people are especially immersed in these worlds because of the centrality of leisure and consumption in their lives, the proliferation of cultural forms pitched specifically at youth, and the extension, expansion and valourisation of the period of youth as a time of popular culture engagement. The proliferation of objectifying imagery of women in old and new media (Keith 2013), combined with the dominance of ideas such as choice and agency, has made this difficult terrain for young people to navigate. For example, in youth music cultures such as pop and hip hop, young people may struggle to interpret contradictory images of women as strong and in control as well as stereotypically sexualised (Squires et al. 2006).

The rise of ‘raunch culture’ (see glossary) over the past decade is also an important influence. Everyday media and popular culture are far more sexually explicit today (American Psychological Association 2010; Chrisler 2012; Crabbe & Corlett 2011), and many more young people are routinely exposed to pornography through new media. Internet pornography, with gender-stereotyped and often violent themes and images, is now an integral element of young people’s sex education; pornographic style and motifs have become mainstream; for example, in music videos and advertisements (American Psychological Association 2010). Aggressive pornography has become more accessible and more mainstream; for example, ‘gonzo’ porn (see glossary), which desensitises consumers to sexual violence (Dines 2010), is the most commonly downloaded pornography in the US (Chrisler 2012). While both young men and women access pornography, prior research shows that young men are more likely to do so, to do so at a younger age, to do so more frequently and to have a greater preference for more ‘hard-core’ forms (Hale 2006).

Chrisler (2012, p. 810) has documented the rise of contemporary ‘bro culture’, including male-oriented television shows, pornography, magazines and music videos, in which “women are often shown colluding in their own objectification, a message that shows men that it is okay to use and abuse women (as a way of demonstrating the men’s power and status) because women expect and accept that treatment”.

The emergence of raunch culture has dovetailed with the widespread use of social media by young people, which has hastened and extended the ways in which young people communicate and connect. This includes the production and circulation of images of themselves and others (Draper 2012; Lounsbury et al. 2011; Mitchell et al. 2012; Phippen 2009; Strassberg et al. 2012).

These trends may influence attitudes towards violence by:

- encouraging both young men and women to see young women as sexualised beings (Squires et al. 2006)
- introducing a violent, gender-stereotyped pornographic style into some young people’s attitudes towards sexuality and sexual relations (American Psychological Association 2010; Chrisler 2012; Dines 2010; Crabbe & Corlett 2011; Papadopoulos 2010)
- encouraging men and women to believe that it is okay, and indeed a sign of men’s power and status, to use and abuse women (Chrisler 2012).

4.2 Age effects – being young

4.2.1 Developmental stage

The stage of development of young people's emotional and moral capacity is often seen as an important age effect shaping understandings and tolerance of violence. Such and Walker (2004, p. 222) note that a capacity for empathy and a sense of responsibility to others typically develop incrementally within children. Social factors such as family, peers, media and school are important environmental influences on such development. There is evidence that girls mature psychologically more rapidly than boys, and Flood & Fergus (2008, p. 25) have noted that some research suggests that young men in particular have more violence-tolerant views because they are yet to develop mature psychological qualities such as empathy, sensitivity and moral awareness.

There is some debate among experts about the significance of developmental factors on emotional and moral capacity relative to social factors and these are generally seen as exerting influence among a range of other factors (The Body Shop Australia 2006; National Crime Prevention 2001). Such and Walker (2004) suggest that a purely developmental discourse can be inflexible when it links moral competence strictly to chronological age. They note that research shows even young children have significant moral capacity evidenced in their discussions of relationships, justice and equality.

4.2.2 Limited personal experience

Relative to their older counterparts, younger people generally have fewer personal experiences of intimate relationships, and this is especially the case for people aged 16–17 years. Their sexual lives are often launched amidst considerable misinformation about gender and sexuality (see Carmody & Willis 2006). Their knowledge of sex, gender roles and relationships may be shaped more by what they see around them (media, popular culture, family) and less by their own embodied experience of relationships (see also National Crime Prevention 2001).

Early to mid-adolescence is a key time for young people to develop sexual identities, but these may draw on heavily gendered scripts that limit roles strictly and reproduce double standards. Young men are often expected to prove they are becoming the 'right kinds' of men by adopting dominant modes of masculinity that sexually objectify women. Research shows that young men receive little social support from peers for treating young women well (Noonan & Charles 2009, p. 1092), and the recent rise of 'bro culture' in actively encouraging abuse (see p. 29) has only exacerbated this tendency.

As Flood & Fergus (2008, p. 25) suggest, "among boys, both gender segregation and homophobia peak in early adolescence. The school and peer cultures of boys' early teens are marked by an intense gendered policing of boys' lives and relations (Flood 2002) and are saturated with homophobic references and accusations (Plummer 1999, pp. 67–68)". In this context, boys may be particularly prone to expressing views tolerant of violence against (girls and) women. For young women, taking responsibility (especially for provoking male sexual desire) is central to their construction of heterosexual identity (Harris et al. 2000). In the context of limited personal experience, misconceptions, stereotypes and dominant scripts about gender and sexuality, violence may be more likely to take hold.

Limited personal experience may also mean that young people are more affected by gendered media culture especially marketed at the young, such as music videos and video games that have been found to reproduce gender stereotypes (Dill & Thill 2007; Dunlop 2007) and, according to some research, to increase young viewers' tolerance of violence against women (Kaestle et al. 2007).

Young people routinely engage with pornography (sometimes inadvertently, especially online) which also tends to reproduce stereotypes and misconceptions about male and female sexual behaviour (Flood 2007). Young men in particular are vulnerable to masculine youth cultures, especially some sports cultures, which may celebrate aggression and the objectification of women and deride gender identities that deviate from the ultra-masculine or, in the case of women, ultra-feminine ideal (Flood & Pease 2009; Forbes et al. 2006; Schissel 2000).

Young people are not simply passive consumers of gender-stereotypical cultural messages; however, unlike older people, they tend to have fewer alternative repertoires that they can use to counter-balance those messages. Young people's lives are very much bound by their immediate contexts of family, household, peer group, school and neighbourhood (Harris & Wyn 2009). For younger adolescents, the worlds of work (for the most part) and higher education are not yet open to them, and they are less able to access knowledge, experiences and relationships that help to forge critical literacy skills. Flood & Fergus (2008, p. 25) note in particular the importance of "the liberalising influence of late secondary school and university education" in shifting attitudes amongst young men. The National Crime Prevention survey report (2001, p. 37), based on research that found inconsistencies in young people's acceptance and explanations of violence, suggests "there are gaps in the (age appropriate) frameworks for making sense of violence that are constructed by and available to young people. Where there are gaps in knowledge, the young people are vulnerable to relying on stereotypical explanations of and excuses for violence".

4.2.3 Dependence in the family

Research shows that family is extremely important in supporting and shaping young people's outlooks (Harris & Wyn 2009; Lahelma & Gordon 2008; Prior et al. 2000; Tucci et al. 2007). There has been an understandable focus on youth cultures and especially the impact of the media on youth attitudes, but it is vital to note that young people are deeply connected to and influenced by the family. The vast majority of Australians under 20 live in the family home (Trewin 2002).

This may have particular implications for interpreting young people's views about women's capacity to leave violent homes or obligation to keep families intact. In contrast to other age groups, young people are less likely themselves to be in independent households with a partner. Thus when asked to think about violence against women, their responses are likely to be from the perspective of a dependent in a family (hypothetically) witnessing adult conflict (see also National Crime Prevention 2001).

A large number of young Australians do witness violence against women in their own homes (Flood & Fergus 2008; Tucci et al. 2008). Young people have very little power to control these situations or any other aspect of the adult relationships around them.

KEY FINDINGS

5. Knowledge of violence against women

5.1 Young people's knowledge of the definition and dynamics of violence against women

Australian national policy to prevent violence against women is based on the definition adopted by the United Nations (see glossary), which sees violence as comprising a continuum of behaviours. Non-physical forms of harassment, intimidation and control of women can often accompany or be perpetrated separately from physical violence (Stark 2009). These forms of violence can cause equal if not greater harms (Doherty & Berglund 2008; MacDonald 2012; Postmus et al. 2011), and are understood to be a dynamic commonly associated with partner violence (Stark 2009).

Young people have a good knowledge of physical forms of violence, such as slapping and pushing and forced sex (Table 1). However, they are less likely to regard non-physical forms of control (repeated criticism, control of a partner's social life, or economic abuse) and indirect forms of harassment (i.e. by phone or email) as violence against women.

Table 1: Community knowledge of violence against women by sex and sample, 2013

	Youth sample (aged 16–24 years)			Aged 35–64 years		
	Youth Males n=1,012 %	Youth Females n=911 %	Total Youth n=1,923 %	Males n=4,159 %	Females n=5,407 %	Total n=9,566 %
Certain behaviours are a form of partner violence/violence against women (% agree)						
Slaps/pushes to cause harm and fear	96	97	97	97	98**	97
Forces partner to have sex	96	98	97	96	97**	96
Tries to scare/control by threatening to hurt others	97	98	98	96	98**	97
Throws/smashed objects to frighten/threaten	96	98	97	96	97**	97
Repeatedly criticises to make partner feel bad/useless	79	86**	82	83	90**^	86#
Controls social life by preventing partner seeing family and friends	76	87**	82	82^	90**	86#
Tries to control by denying partner money	53	66**	59	66^	80**^	73#
Stalks repeatedly following/watching at home or work	84	90**	87	86	92**	89
Harasses by repeated phone calls	82	88**	85	86^	89**	88
Harasses by repeated emails/text messages	79	85**	82	84^	89**^	86

^Statistically significant between males 16–24 years and males 35–64 years or females 16–24 years and females 35–64 years, $p \leq .01$

**Statistically significant between males and females within the same age group, $p \leq .01$

#Statistically significant between total respondents 16–24 years and respondents 35–64 years, $p \leq .01$

There are no gender differences among young people in recognition of forced sex and physical behaviours as violence. However, young women are more likely than young men to recognise non-physical and indirect behaviours as a form of violence. The differences are generally small (7 percentage points or less), except for the behaviour of ‘controlling the social life of one’s partner’ and ‘trying to control one’s partner by denying them money’, which are recognised by more young women than men as violence. The percentage point difference was 11 percentage points in the case of social control and 13 percentage points for financial control.

The pattern of difference between recognition of physical and non-physical behaviours in the youth sample is similar to that of respondents aged 35–64 years. Young people are equally likely as respondents aged 35–64 years to recognise forced sex and physical behaviours as domestic violence. However, the two age groups differ in their recognition of non-physical behaviours. Generally these differences are small (4 percentage points or less), the exception being ‘controlling one’s partner by denying them money’. There was a 14 percentage point difference between people aged 16–24 years and those 35–64 years in recognition of this as a form of violence (59% of young people v. 73% of respondents aged 35–64 years).

5.1.1 Knowledge of prevalence of violence against women

Violence against women is a prevalent problem. This is recognised by three in five (60%) of all young people, although by a greater proportion of young women than young men (69% v. 50%). Young people are less likely than respondents aged 35–64 years to agree that violence against women is common (60% v. 71%) and this pattern holds when comparing young women with women in the 35–64 years age group (69% v. 79%) and men in these two age groups (50% v. 62%) (Table 2).

Studies indicate that women with disabilities face a higher risk of violence (Healey 2013). Forty-three percent of young people recognise this, with young women being more likely to do so than young men (52% v. 33%). There is no statistically significant difference between the two age groups, and this holds when young men are compared with men aged 35–64 years and young women with women aged 35–64 years (Table 2).

Table 2: Knowledge of violence against women by sex and sample, 2013

	Youth sample (aged 16–24 years)				Aged 35–64 years	
	Youth Males n=1,012 n=476–485 %	Youth Females n=911 n=453–456 %	Total Youth n=1,923 n=932–938 %	Males n=4,159 n=2,060–2,062 %	Females n=5,407 n=2,713–2,715 %	Total n=9,566 n=4,773–4,777 %
~Asked of split sample						
Prevalence of violence against women (% agree)						
Violence against women is common	50	69**	60	62^	79**^	71#
Women with disabilities are more likely than other women to experience violence	33	52**	43	32	48**	40
Women are more likely to be raped by someone they know (% agree)~	50	65**	57	62^	70**	66#
Patterns and consequences of violence (% agree)						
Men mainly or more often commit acts of domestic violence	68	74**	71	68	79**^	74
Women are more likely to suffer physical harm from domestic violence	85	89**	87	87	88	87
Level of fear is worse for women	55	46**	50	57**	48	53
Understanding of the law (% agree)						
Domestic violence is a criminal offence*	97	99	98	96	97**	97
A woman cannot be raped by someone she is in a relationship with~	8	7	8	9**	6	7
Some men being unable to manage their anger	61	53**	57	67^	68^	68#
Perceived main cause (%)						
The belief that men should be in charge of the relationship	23	35**	29	11^	19**^	15#
Some men being under financial stress	13	10	12	14**	10	12

^Statistically significant between males 16–24 years and males 35–64 years or females 16–24 years and females 35–64 years, p<.01

**Statistically significant between males and females within the same age group, p<.01

#Statistically significant between total respondents 16–24 years and respondents 35–64 years, p<.01

Gendered patterns of partner violence

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 2013)
- 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 controlling and coercive behaviours (ABS 2013; Caldwell & Swan 2012).
- In contrast, women who do use violence in intimate relationships are more likely to do so 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 away 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).

5.1.2 Patterns of the perpetration of violence against women

Although women are more than three times as likely to be sexually assaulted by a known person than by a stranger (ABS 2013), less than two-thirds (57%) of young people recognise this and young men are less likely to do so than young women (50% v. 65%). Young men are less likely than men aged 35–64 years to understand the greater risk of rape by a known person (50% v. 62%). However, there are no significant differences in this regard between young women and women aged 35–64 years (Table 2).

Studies indicate that men are more likely to commit partner violence and that women are more likely to sustain physical injuries and to experience greater fear as a consequence of this violence (see box). Most young people agree that it is men or more often by men who commit domestic violence (71%) and that women are most likely to suffer physical harm (87%). However, only half recognise that the fear is greater for women (50%) (Table 2).

Young women are more likely than young men to agree that it is men or mainly men who commit partner violence (74% v. 68%) and to agree that women are at greater risk of physical harm (89% v. 85%). Young women are less likely than young men to believe that women experience greater fear (46% v. 55%). The youth sample is comparable to respondents aged 35–64 years in relation to these questions.

5.1.3 Knowledge of the law

Young people have a strong command of the law as it pertains to partner violence and sexual assault, with the majority (98%) agreeing that ‘domestic violence is a criminal offence’² and only a small minority (8%) agreeing that a ‘woman cannot be raped by someone she is in a relationship with’. Any differences between young men and young women and between the two age groups on these two measures were either not statistically significant or were not noteworthy (Table 2).

² 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 the civil and criminal law.

5.1.4 Knowledge of the causes of violence against women

There is mounting evidence of the contribution made by social factors in violence against women, with underlying factors being practices and attitudes pertaining to gender roles, relationships and identities (see p. 21). This approach underpins strategies to address violence against women both in Australia and internationally (Council of Australian Governments 2010; UN 2006). While knowledge of the key factors contributing to violence against women is important to ensure wide community engagement in responding to and preventing the problem, prior research shows that there is a substantial gap between community perceptions and those underpinning contemporary policy (O'Neill & Morgan 2010).

Recognising that there is no single cause of violence against women, respondents were asked what they believed to be the main cause, from three possible options:

- some men being unable to manage their anger, representing an individual-level factor (anger control is only moderately associated with the perpetration of violence) (Norlander & Eckhardt 2005)
- the belief that men should be in charge of the relationship, representing beliefs, practices and norms found across studies to be associated with violence against women at both individual relationship and community levels (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009)
- some men being under financial stress, a socioeconomic stressor. Again, only a modest association has been found between stress and the perpetration of violence against women (Roberts et al. 2011), and this is primarily in relationships in which there is an existing power imbalance or in which men have a strong belief in the 'bread-winner' role (Atkinson et al. 2005; Heise 1998).

The main cause most likely to be identified by young people was 'men not being able to manage their anger' (57%) (Table 2). Young men were more likely to identify this cause than were young women (61% v. 53%).

Twenty-nine percent of young people, including more than a third of young women (35%) and more than a fifth of young men (23%), identified 'the belief that men should be in charge of the relationship' as the main cause. This is the option with a high level of empirical support, which implicates gender relations as a factor in violence against women (Table 2).

While 'anger management' was also the main cause most likely to be identified by respondents aged 35–64 years, young people were notably less likely to identify this option (68% v. 57% of young people) and notably more likely to identify a belief in male control of decision-making (15% among respondents aged 35–64 years v. 29% in the youth sample). This pattern also held when comparing young men and women with men and women aged 35–64 years; that is, young men were more likely than men aged 35–64 years to identify this as the main cause (23% v. 11%), as were young women compared with women aged 35–64 years (35% v. 19%) (Table 2). Some men being under financial stress was the option least likely to be identified by both men and women in both age groups.

KEY FINDINGS

6. Attitudes towards violence against women

6.1 Justifying or excusing violence

A principle underlying Australian government policy is that men must remain responsible for their use of violence (Council of Australian Governments 2010). This principle recognises that normative support of violence contributes to the problem. Men who use violence have strong adherence to beliefs justifying and excusing violence (Lila et al. 2008; Scott & Straus 2007; Weldon & Gilchrist 2012). The support of these by people around them can make the problem worse and undermine the goals of legal and treatment interventions.

Although a modest association has been found between some of the excuses presented in the survey (alcohol, stress, anger control and a history of child abuse), none of these is either a necessary or sufficient condition for violence to occur. That is, many men without these risk factors perpetrate violence and many with them do not.³

Six percent or less of young respondents (depending on the scenario being considered) are prepared to justify violence in any of the scenarios put to them in the survey (Table 3). Thirteen percent of young Australians are prepared to endorse at least one of the statements justifying violence included in Table 3, compared with 9% among respondents 35–64 years (data not shown). Young men are moderately more likely than young women to believe that violence is justified against a current partner if she admits to having sex with another man (8% v. 5%), and against an ex-partner to get access to the children (8% v. 5%).

³ Further discussion of the evidence relating to individual ‘excuses’ can be found in the project technical report at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/ncas

Table 3: Circumstances in which violence towards a current/former partner can be justified or excused (% agree) by sex and sample, 2013

~Asked of split sample		Youth sample (aged 16–24 years)			Aged 35–64 years		
		Youth Males n=1,012 n=476–485 %	Youth Females n=911 n=453–456 %	Total Youth n=1,923 n=932–938 %	Males n=4,159 n=2,060–2,065 %	Females n=5,407 n=2,713–2,715 %	Total n=9,566 n=4,773–4,777 %
Justify	Partner admits to sex with another man	8	5**	6	6	4**	5#
	Partner makes him look stupid or insults him in front of his friends	4	3	4	4	3	4
	Partner ends or tries to end relationship	4	5	5	4	3	3
	Against ex-partner to get access to children	8	5**	6	4^	2**^	3#
	If ex-partner is unreasonable about property settlement and financial issues	7	4	5	3^	3	3#
Excuse-	Domestic violence can be excused if people get so angry they lose control	24	23	24	19	16^	18#
	Domestic violence can be excused if the violent person regrets it	33	20**	26	21^	14**^	17#
	Domestic violence can be excused if the violent person was abused as a child	15	12	14	9^	9	9#
	Domestic violence can be excused if the violent person is under a lot of stress	13	9	11	11	8**	10
	Domestic violence can be excused if offender is heavily affected by alcohol	10	9	10	7	6	7#
	Rape results from men not able to control their need for sex	43	36	40	44	40	42
	A man is less responsible for rape of drunk/affected by drugs at the time	12	9	10	7^	7	7#

^Statistically significant between males 16–24 years and males 35–64 years or females 16–24 years and females 35–64 years, p<.01

**Statistically significant between males and females within the same age group, p<.01

#Statistically significant between total respondents 16–24 years and respondents 35–64 years, p<.01

Young women vary from women aged 35–64 years on only one measure gauging attitudinal support for violence being justified: that of violence against an ex-partner in order to get access to children. A larger proportion of young men than men aged 35–64 years agree that violence against an ex-partner is justified in order to get access to children (8% v. 4%) and if she is ‘unreasonable about property, settlement or financial issues’ (7% v. 3%) (Table 3).

In contrast to justification of violence against women, a larger percentage of young people are prepared to excuse this violence (Table 3):

- One in 10 young people (10%) agree that domestic violence can be excused if the offender is affected by alcohol, and that a man is less responsible for rape if drunk or affected by drugs.
- 11% believe that violence can be excused if the violent person is affected by stress and 14% if they were abused as a child.
- One-quarter believe that violence can be excused if it is due to a temporary loss of control (24%).
- One-quarter agree that violence can be excused if the violent person is regretful afterward (26%). Partner violence often occurs in a cyclical fashion, being followed by periods of remorse (Hale et al. 2006; Heise et al. 1999; Victorian Law Reform Commission 2006). This excuse, if held by women themselves or expressed by those around them, may undermine women’s resolve to end a violent relationship or the expectation that men who use violence remain accountable for their behaviour.
- Two in five (40%) young people agree that rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex. This is despite geographic variations in sexual assault suggesting that rape proclivity is socially determined (Jewkes et al. 2012; Sanday 1981).

The only gender differences were that young men were substantially more likely than young women to regard being genuinely regretful afterward as an excuse for domestic violence (33% v. 20%). There is a similar difference between men and women aged 35–64 years.

Young people were more likely than respondents aged 35–64 years to believe that violence could be excused in five of the seven scenarios presented to them (see Table 3). Young women were a little more likely than women aged 35–64 years to excuse domestic violence if the perpetrator was genuinely regretful afterward (20% v. 14%) or the violence was due to a loss of control (23% v. 16%). Young men were more likely than men aged 35–64 years to excuse violence in three of the seven scenarios presented to them, including if the perpetrator of domestic violence genuinely regrets it afterward (33% v. 21%), or if they were abused as a child (15% v. 9%), as well as if the perpetrator of rape is heavily affected by alcohol or drugs (12% v. 7%) (Table 3).

6.2 Attitudes trivialising violence against women

6.2.1 Notions of family privacy and unity

The notions that maintaining family privacy and ‘keeping the family together’ transcends women’s and children’s right to and need for safety were identified as common barriers to women ending a violent relationship in early expert literature (Schneider 1991). While generally understood to be declining in importance (Salazar et al. 2003), these beliefs still persist, especially in some marginalised communities (McGlade 2012; Nash 2005) and collectivist cultures (Yoshioka & Choi 2005). Collectivist cultures are those in which the preservation of the family and the community are more highly valued than the rights of the individual (Yoshioka & Choi 2005).

Table 4: Attitudes trivialising violence (% agree) by sex and sample, 2013

		Youth sample (aged 16–24 years)			Aged 35–64 years		
		Youth Males n=476–485 %	Youth Females n=453–456 %	Total Youth n=932–938 %	Males n=2,060–2,062 %	Females n=2,713–2,715 %	Total n=4,773–4,777 %
Trivialise	It's a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship to keep the family together	7	11**	9	10	6**^	8
	Domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family	27	17**	22	15^	9**^	12#
	It's hard to understand why women stay	81	78	80	79	74**	77
	Most women could leave a violent relationship if they really wanted to	66	55**	61	56^	39**^	47#
	Where one partner is violent it's reasonable for them to be made to leave the family home	89	90	89	87	92**	90
	Women who are sexually harassed should sort it out themselves	10	10	10	11	11	11

^Statistically significant between males 16–24 years and males 35–64 years or females 16–24 years and females 35–64 years, $p \leq .01$

**Statistically significant between males and females within the same age group, $p \leq .01$

#Statistically significant between total respondents 16–24 years and respondents 35–64 years, $p \leq .01$

Nine percent of young people agree that 'it's a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship in order to keep the family together' and over 1 in 5 (22%) agrees that domestic violence is a private matter (Table 4). Young men were more likely than young women to agree that violence is a private matter (27% v. 17%).

Young women are nearly twice as likely as women aged 35–64 years to agree that 'it's a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship to keep the family together' (11% v. 6%) and that 'domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family' (17% v. 9%). Similarly, young men are more likely than men aged 35–64 years to agree that domestic violence is a private matter (27% v. 15%) (Table 4).

6.2.2 Knowledge of barriers to women ending a violent relationship

There is an extensive body of literature on the barriers to women ending a violent relationship (Fanslow & Robinson 2009; Murray 2007; Myer 2012). A lack of appreciation of these not only trivialises the seriousness of violence and its consequences but risks normalising violence and abandoning women to their fate (Thapar-Björkert & Morgan 2010).

Eight in 10 young respondents agrees that 'it's hard to understand why women stay', while more than 6 in 10 believes that most women could leave if they really wanted to' (61%) (with the latter being supported by 66% of young men and 55% of young women). This is higher than for men and women aged 35–64 years (56% and 39% respectively) (Table 4).

6.2.3 Level of support for policy changes

Historically, violence against women was understood as a private matter to be managed by women themselves. Largely due to the efforts of the women's movement, it has increasingly become an issue of public policy concern (Murray & Powell 2009). This has the support of the majority of young respondents:

- Nine in 10 agree with the notion that it is the violent person and not the woman and her children who should be required to leave the family home (89%) (a key direction in contemporary policy reform).
- Only 1 in 10 believe that women who are sexually harassed should sort things out themselves (Table 4).

There were no significant differences between young men and women or between young people and respondents aged 35–64 years on these measures.

6.3 Attitudes minimising the seriousness of violence against women and blaming the victim

6.3.1 Perceptions of the seriousness of violence against women

The serious health, social and economic consequences of violence against women are outlined on page 19. These consequences are recognised by the overwhelming majority of young men and women, 95% of whom regard violence as a serious issue. This is comparable to men and women aged 35–64 years. Most young respondents also agree that the range of behaviours put to them in the survey are serious (Table 5).

As was the case when asked if various behaviours were examples of domestic violence or violence against women, young people are more likely to regard non-physical forms of harassment, intimidation and control of women, such as slapping and pushing and forced sex, as serious. They are less likely to regard as serious any non-physical forms of control (repeated criticism, control of a partner's social life, or economic abuse) and indirect forms of harassment (i.e. by phone or email).

With the exception of forced sex, threatening other family members and stalking (where there are no differences between young men and women), young women are more likely than young men to recognise behaviours as serious. The gender differences for physical behaviours are generally very small. However, those for non-physical and indirect forms of harassment are noteworthy.

Table 5: Perceptions of the seriousness of violence against women by sex and sample, 2013

	Youth sample (aged 16–24 years)			Aged 35–64 years		
	Youth Males n=1,012 %	Youth Females n=911 %	Total Youth n=1,923 %	Males n=4,159 %	Females n=5,407 %	Total n=9,566 %
Violence against women is serious (% agree)	95	96	95	94	96**	95
Certain behaviours are serious (% agree)						
Slaps/pushes to cause harm and fear	89	93**	91	91	96**^	94#
Forces partner to have sex	97	98	97	95	97**	96
Tries to scare/control by threatening to hurt others	98	98	98	96^	98**	97
Throws/smashed objects to frighten/threaten	92	95**	94	82	93**^	87#
Repeatedly criticises to make partner feel bad/useless	78	84**	81	91	95**	93
Controls social life by preventing partner seeing family and friends	79	88**	83	83^	93**^	88#
Tries to control by denying partner money	58	69**	63	70^	86**^	78#
Stalks repeatedly following/watching at home or work	92	95	94	92	97**	95
Harassment by repeated phone calls	81	90**	85	89^	94**^	92#
Harassment by repeated emails/text messages	77	86**	81	86^	92**^	89#
Serious / acceptability of tracking by electronic means						
Seriousness of tracking a female partner by electronic means without their consent (% serious)	80	87**	84	81	90**	86
Acceptability of tracking a female partner by electronic means without their consent (% agree)	52	40**	46	41^	29**^	35#

^Statistically significant between males 16–24 years and males 35–64 years or females 16–24 years and females 35–64 years, $p \leq .01$

**Statistically significant between males and females within the same age group, $p \leq .01$

#Statistically significant between total respondents 16–24 years and respondents 35–64 years, $p \leq .01$

Young people are very similar to respondents aged 35–64 years in recognising physical behaviours and direct forms of harassment as serious (and on some measures are marginally more likely to do so). However, young people are a little less likely than respondents 35–64 years to recognise as serious non-physical behaviours and indirect forms of harassment. The difference is noteworthy for controlling one's partner by denying them money: 63% of young people recognise this as serious, compared with 78% of respondents aged 35–64 years.

Both young men and young women are less likely than male and female respondents aged 35–64 years to regard controlling a partner’s social life or denying them money and indirect forms of harassment (i.e. by phone and email) as serious (Table 5).

6.3.2 Seriousness and acceptability of electronic tracking

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).

The majority of young people agree that tracking a woman by electronic means without her consent is serious behaviour (84%), although young women were more likely to do so than young men (87% v. 80%). There are no differences between young people and respondents aged 35–64 years in this regard. Nearly half of young people (46%) agree that there are circumstances in which tracking without consent would be acceptable, which is a larger proportion than among respondents aged 35–64 years (35%). Young men are more likely to agree with this than young women (52% v. 40%) and both young men and young women are more likely than men aged 35–64 years (41%) and women aged 35–64 years (29%) respectively to do so (Table 5).

6.3.3 Perceptions of claims of partner violence and sexual assault

Both partner violence and sexual assault are under-reported crimes (ABS 2013). Studies show that women who perceive that others hold violence-supportive attitudes are more likely to resist disclosing or reporting violence (Ahrens 2006; Flood & Pease 2006). In the case of violence upon separation, this belief has the potential to compromise the safety of the women and their children, it increases the risk of repeat victimisation and undermines the potential in the law to set social norms condemning violence. Given evidence that partner violence often escalates at separation (Davies et al. 2008; Dekeseredy et al. 2004), the belief that women falsify claims of this form of violence are especially problematic.

Studies indicate that false claims of domestic violence (Allen & Brinig 2011; Johnson et al. 2005; Shaffer & Bala 2003) and sexual assault (Kelly 2010; Lisak et al. 2010) are rare. However, among young respondents (Table 6):

- more than half (52%) believe that women going through custody battles often make up or exaggerate claims of domestic violence, with young men more likely to do so than young women (56% v. 47%)
- just over half (56%) agree that women rarely make false claims of being raped
- nearly 4 in 10 (39%) agree that ‘women who say they were raped led the man on and later had regrets’. Young men are more likely to believe this than young women (46% v. 33%)
- nearly 1 in 10 (9%) young people agree that ‘if a woman doesn’t physically resist, it isn’t really rape’.

Young people were less likely than respondents aged 35–64 years to agree that false accusations of rape are rare (56% v. 61%) and more likely to agree that ‘women who say they were raped led the man on and later had regrets’ (39% v. 34%) (Table 6).

Table 6: Attitudes minimising and blaming the victim for violence by sex and sample, 2013

~Asked of split sample		Youth sample (aged 16–24 years)			Aged 35–64 years		
		Youth Males n=476–485 %	Youth Females n=453–456 %	Total Youth n=932–938 %	Males n=2,060–2,062 %	Females n=2,713–2,715 %	Total n=4,773–4,777 %
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	56	47**	52	58	44**	51
	Women rarely make false claims of rape	54	58	56	56	66**^	61#
	A lot of times women who say they were raped led the man on and later had regrets	46	33**	39	38^	30**	34#
	If a women doesn't physically resist – even if protesting verbally – then it isn't really rape	8	9	9	9	9	9
Attitudes shifting blame from perpetrator to victim (% agree)~	If a women is raped while drunk/affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible	21	15	18	14^	16	15
	Women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes'	22	17	20	13^	13	13#
	If a women goes to a room alone with a man at a party, it is her fault if she is raped	9	8	9	7	9	8
	Domestic violence can be excused if the victim is heavily affected by alcohol	10	9	9	11	8**	9

^Statistically significant between males 16–24 years and males 35–64 years or females 16–24 years and females 35–64 years, $p \leq .01$

**Statistically significant between males and females within the same age group, $p \leq .01$

#Statistically significant between total respondents 16–24 years and respondents 35–64 years, $p \leq .01$

6.4 Attitudes shifting blame to the victim

In recent years there has been reform to laws relating to sexual assault and the procedures involved in their implementation in most Australian jurisdictions to reflect the principle that consent to sexual relations cannot be assumed, but rather must be freely given (Flynn & Henry 2012; Larcombe 2011). This contrasts with 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 to mirror a more respectful

and mutually negotiated approach to sexual relations (Flynn & Henry 2012). In some jurisdictions extreme intoxication is specifically identified as a circumstance in which a person is incapable of giving consent to sexual relations.

Fewer than 1 in 10 young respondents hold the view that 'if a woman goes alone into a room at a party, then it is her fault if she is raped' (9%) and that 'domestic violence can be excused if the victim is affected by alcohol' (also 9%). However, 1 in 5 (20%) agree that women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes', while almost the same percentage (18%) agree that if a woman is raped while affected by alcohol or drugs she is at least partly responsible. There are no differences between young men and women in preparedness to blame the victim of violence (Table 6).

There are no differences among women in the two age groups on these measures. However, young men are more likely than men aged 35–64 years to agree that 'if a woman is raped while drunk or affected by drugs, she is partly responsible' (21% v. 14%) and that women say 'no' when they mean 'yes' (22% v. 13%) (Table 6). When the two age groups are compared, young people are more likely than people aged 35–64 years to agree that women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes' (20% v. 13%).

KEY FINDINGS

7. Attitudes towards gender equality

The NCAS explores three dimensions of gender equality and gender relations that have been identified as being associated with violence against women, either directly or via their influence on attitudes towards the problem:

- measures of attitudes towards appropriate roles for men and women, adapted from an existing index developed by Inglehart and Norris (2003)
- a single question, adapted from an existing survey, that seeks to measure views that support the goal of egalitarianism but deny the existence of inequality (Tougas et al. 1995). This is often referred to as subtle sexism or ‘modern sexism’ (Swim et al. 1995)
- two questions that assess attitudinal support for male dominance of decision-making in relationships (National Crime Prevention 2001).

With the possible exception of the ‘modern sexism’ question, the questions all measure explicit, as opposed to implicit, beliefs.

Figure 2 shows that only a small proportion of young people support inequality in roles between men and women. The only exception to this is the question concerning political leadership. Nearly one on four young Australians (24%) agrees that ‘on the whole men make better political leaders than women’.

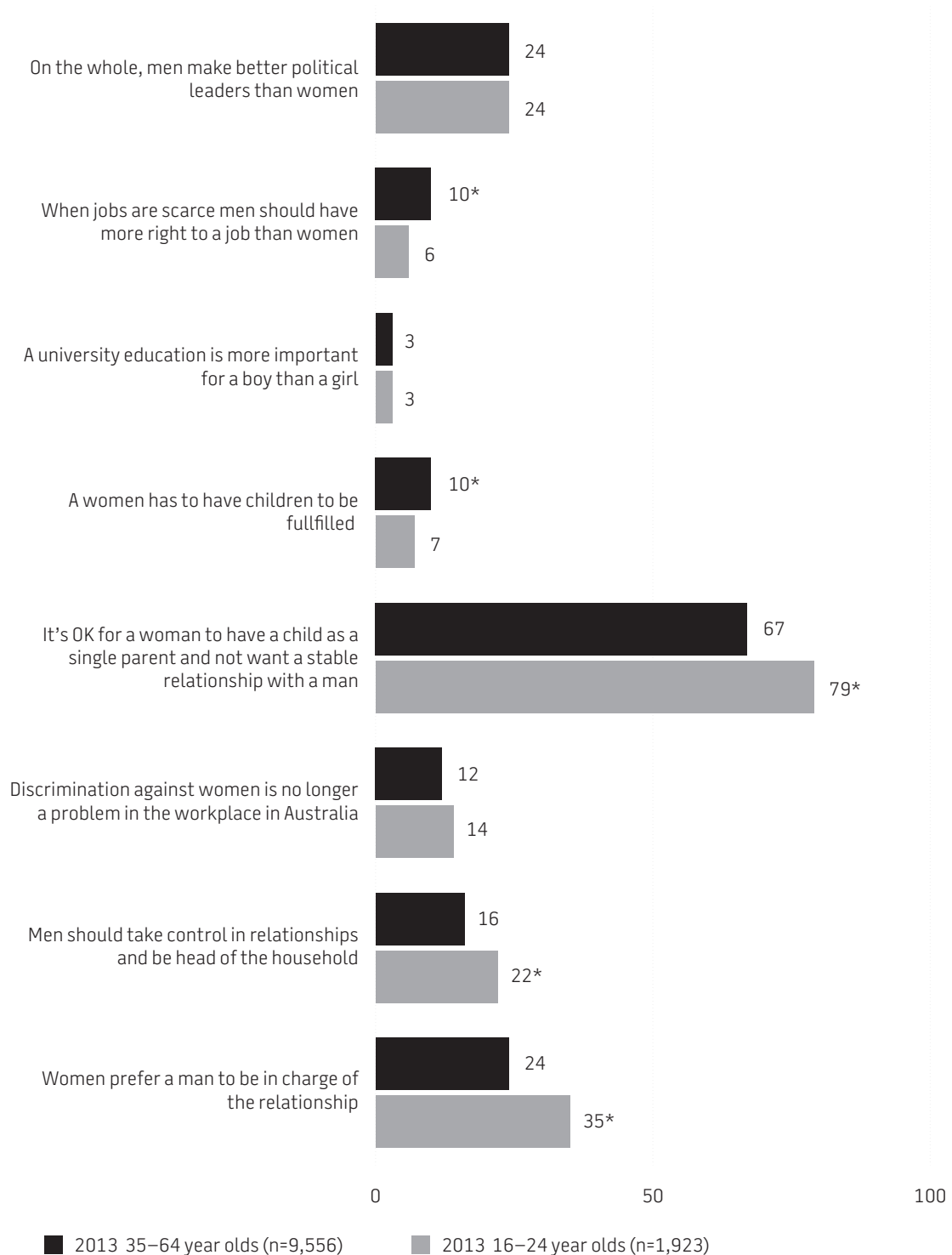
However, substantial percentages support gender inequality in the distribution of decision-making power in relationships. More than 1 in 5 young people believe that ‘men should take control in relationships’ (22%) while over a third (35%) agree that ‘women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship’.

There is no statistically significant difference between young people and respondents aged 35–64 years on the single measure of modern sexism: ‘Discrimination is no longer a problem in the workplace in Australia’.

Although young people are equally or less likely than respondents aged 35–64 years to support gender role inequality, they are more likely to support inequality in decision-making power in relationships. Sixteen percent of respondents aged 35–64 years agree that men should take control in relationships, and 24% agree that women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship (compared with 22% and 35% among young people, respectively). The differences between the age groups on these two measures are also apparent when young men and men aged 35–64 years and young women and women aged 35–64 years are compared (Figure 3).

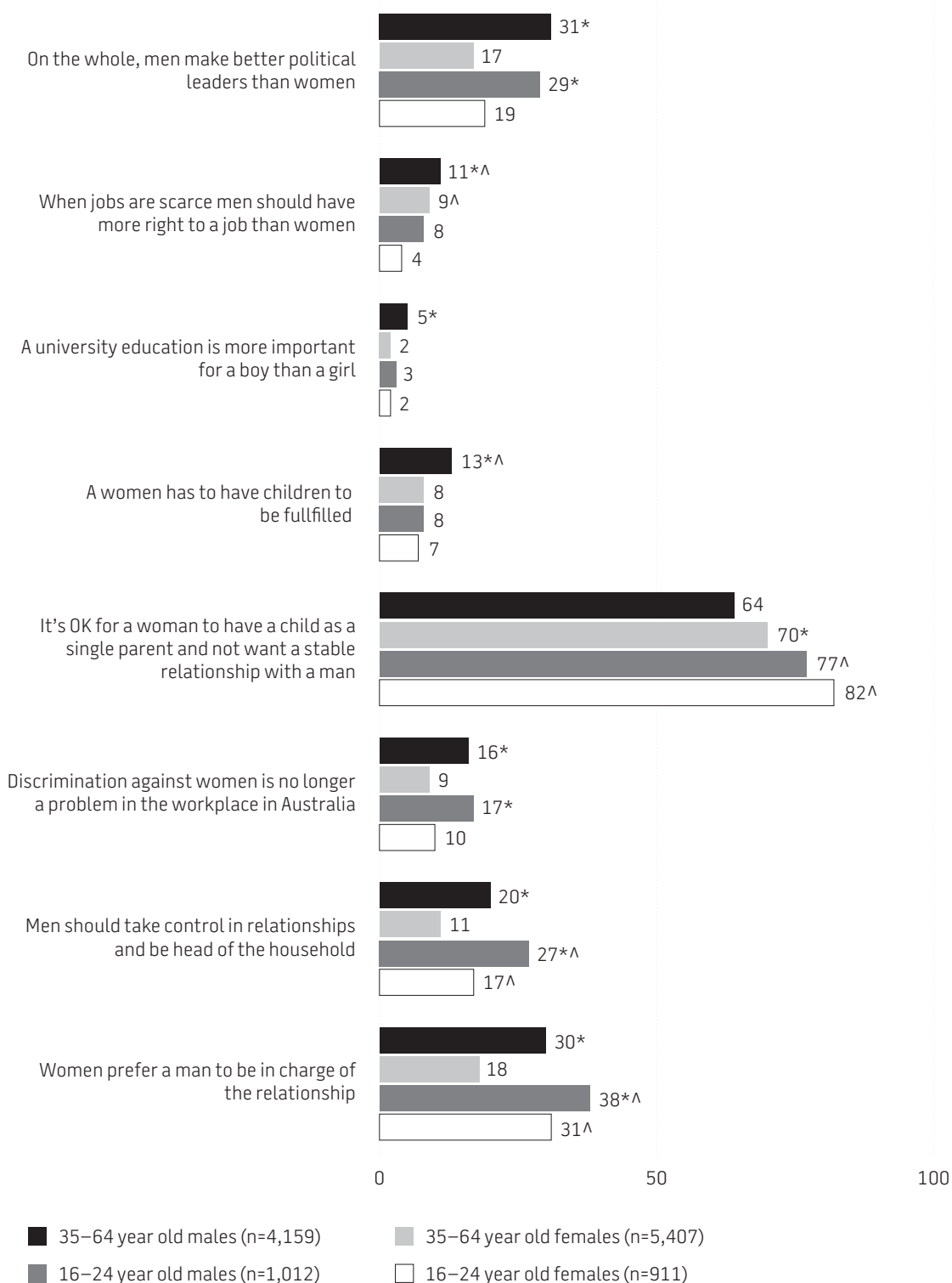
There are no gender differences within the youth sample on attitudes concerned with gender roles in the public sphere, except on the statement ‘on the whole men make better political leaders than women’ (29% of young men agree v. 19% of young women) and the subtle sexism measure, ‘discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the workplace in Australia’ (17% of young men v. 10% of young women agree) (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Attitudes to gender equality by sample, 2013



*Statistically significant between total respondents 16–24 years and respondents 35–64 years, $p < .01$

Figure 3: Attitudes to gender equality by sex and sample, 2013



^Statistically significant between males 16-24 years and males 35-64 years or females 16-24 years and females 35-64 years, p<.01
 *Statistically significant between males and females within the same age group, p<.01

KEY FINDINGS

8. Responses to violence against women

8.1 Intended responses to violence against women

The overwhelming majority of young people indicate that they would be prepared to intervene to assist a woman being assaulted by her partner, although they are slightly more likely to do so if the woman is a family member or friend (98%) than if she is a stranger (90%). There are no differences between young men and women in intentions to intervene, although respondents aged 35–64 years are more likely than young people to say that they would intervene to help a stranger.

8.2 Knowledge of resources and systems supporting responses

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).

Only just over half of young people would know where to go for outside support for a domestic violence issue (54%), with no significant differences between young men and young women. Young women are less likely than women aged 35–64 years to know where to go for outside support (55% v. 64%); however, there were no differences between young men and men in the older age group.

Just over half of young people agree that police response times have improved (54%) and they are more likely than people 35–64 years to agree with this (54% v. 40%). This is also the case when young men are compared with men aged 35–64 years (52% v. 39%) and young women are compared with women aged 35–64 years (56% v. 42%) (Table 7).

Studies show that women with disabilities are less likely to be believed when reporting sexual assault (Clark & Fileborn 2011). One in five young people (41%) understand this. There are no differences between young men and women on this measure. The results for young people are comparable with those for respondents aged 35–64 years (Table 7).

Table 7: Responses to violence against women by sex and sample, 2013

		Youth sample (aged 16–24 years)			Aged 35–64 years		
		Youth Males n=1,012 n=476–485	Youth Females n=911 n=453–456	Total Youth n=1,923 n=932–938	Males n=4,159 n=2,060–2,062	Females n=5,407 n=2,713–2,715	Total n=9,566 n=4,773–4,777
~Asked of split sample							
Knowledge of sources of assistance and responses (% agree)	Would know where to get help regarding a domestic violence problem	53	55	54	54	64 [^]	59 [#]
	Police response times have improved~	52	56	54	39 [^]	42 [^]	40 [#]
	Women with disabilities are less likely to be believed when reporting sexual assault~	39	43	41	38	46 ^{**}	42
Preparedness to intervene (% agree)	If a known woman is being assaulted by her partner	99	98	98	98	98	98
	If an unknown woman is being assaulted	90	90	90	94 [^]	94 [^]	94 [#]

[^]Statistically significant between males 16–24 years and males 35–64 years or females 16–24 years and females 35–64 years, p<.01

^{**}Statistically significant between males and females within the same age group, p<.01

[#]Statistically significant between total respondents 16–24 years and respondents 35–64 years, p<.01

KEY FINDINGS

9. Gender and age group differences

So far in this report, results for individual questions have been considered. These questions have been amalgamated into four composite measures:

- the Understanding Violence against Women Scale
- the violence-supportive attitudes construct
- the Gender Equality Scale
- the Gender Equality in Relationships Scale.

In each case, respondents are categorised as having low, medium, or high levels of understanding of violence women, of attitudinal support for violence or of attitudinal support for gender equality. These composite measures were used to assess overall differences between young men and women and between young people and those aged 35–64 years.

Table 8: Understanding Violence against Women Scale, Violence Against Women Construct and Gender Equality Scale scores by sex and sample, 2013

		Youth sample (aged 16–24 years)			Aged 35–64 years		
		Youth Males n=1,012 %	Youth Females n=911 %	Total Youth n=1,923 %	Males n=4,159 %	Females n=5,407 %	Total n=9,566 %
Understanding of violence (understanding of violence against women scale)	Low	46	37**	42	32 [^]	20** [^]	26#
	Moderate	47	52	49	49	51	50
	High	7	12**	9	19 [^]	29** [^]	24#
Attitudinal support for violence against women (violence-supportive attitudes construct)	Low	9	18**	14	20 [^]	35** [^]	28#
	Moderate	53	58	55	53	48** [^]	51#
	High	38	24**	31	27 [^]	17* [^]	22#
Attitudinal support for gender equality (gender equality scale)	Low	27**	14**	21	30	15**	22
	Medium	48	45	46	47	41**	44
	High	25	41**	33	22	45**	34
Gender equality in relationships	Low	50	38**	44	40 [^]	23** [^]	31#
	Medium	32	32	32	35	28**	31
	High	18	30	24	24 [^]	49** [^]	37#

[^]Statistically significant between males 16–24 years and males 35–64 years or females 16–24 years and females 35–64 years, $p \leq .01$

**Statistically significant between males and females within the same age group, $p \leq .01$

#Statistically significant between total respondents 16–24 years and respondents 35–64 years, $p \leq .01$

9.1 Gender differences

Young women are more likely than are young men to be classified as having a high level of understanding of violence against women and as having a low level of support for violence. They are less likely to be classified as having a low level of support for gender equality (as measured by both scales).

9.2 Age group differences

Young people are notably more likely than respondents aged 35–64 years to score low on the Understanding Violence Against Women Scale (i.e. as having a low level of understanding of violence against women) (42% of young people v. 26% of respondents aged 35–64 years) and high on the violence-supportive attitudes construct (i.e. as having a high level of attitudinal support for violence against women) (31% of young people v. 22% of respondents aged 35–64 years).

There are no statistically significant differences between the two age groups on the full gender equality scale in the proportions having low, medium, or high scores. However, young people are more likely than people aged 35–64 years to have a low level of support for gender equality in relationships (44% v. 31%), whereas people aged 35–64 years are more likely than young people to have a high score (37% v. 24%).

The patterns described prevail when comparing young men and men aged 35–64 years and young women and women aged 35–64 years.

KEY FINDINGS

10. The relationship between understanding and attitudes towards gender equality and attitudes towards violence

Young people who agreed that roles between men and women should be equal (as measured by the Gender Equality Scale) were more likely to be classified as having a more nuanced understanding of violence as measured by the Understanding Violence against Women Scale. This is illustrated in Table 9, which shows that more than half (58%) of those with a low level of support for gender equality also have a low level of understanding of violence against women. In contrast, less than a third (29%) of those with a high level of support for gender equality have a low level of understanding.

Table 9: Relationship between attitudes to gender equality and understanding of violence against women, people aged 16–24 years, 2013

		Attitudinal support for gender equality (gender equality scale)		
		Low n=417 A %	Moderate n=873 B %	High n=630 C %
Understanding of violence (understanding of violence against women scale)	Low	58 ^{BC}	43 ^C	29
	Medium	38	49 ^A	57 ^{AB}
	High	4	8 ^A	15 ^{AB}

Difference between A, B, C is statistically significant across Gender Equality Scale, $p \leq .01$

Similarly, with regard to attitudes, Table 10 shows that among those with a high level of attitudinal support for violence against women, only 7% are classified as having a high level of understanding of violence, whereas 43% with a low level of attitudinal support for violence do so.

Table 10: Influence of understanding on attitudes to violence against women among people aged 16–24 years, 2013

		Level of attitudinal support for violence against women (violence-supportive attitudes construct)		
		Low n=826 A %	Moderate n=922 B %	High n=175 C %
Understanding of violence (understanding of violence against women scale)	Low	4	16 ^A	43 ^{AB}
	Medium	47	63 ^{AC}	50
	High	48 ^{BC}	21 ^C	7

Difference between A, B, C is statistically significant across violence-supportive attitudes construct, $p \leq .01$

Table 11 shows that among people with a low level of support for gender equality, 66% have a high level of attitudinal support for violence against women. Only 11% of those with a high level support for gender equality do so.

Table 11: Relationship between attitudes to gender equality and violence-supportive attitudes, people aged 16–24 years, 2013

		Attitudinal support for gender equality (gender equality scale)		
		Low n=417 A %	Moderate n=873 B %	High n=630 C %
Level of attitudinal support for violence against women (violence-supportive attitudes construct)	Low	4	8 ^A	27 ^{AB}
	Medium	30	62 ^A	62 ^A
	High	66 ^{BC}	30 ^C	11

Difference between A, B, C is statistically significant across Gender Equality Scale, $p \leq .01$

KEY FINDINGS

11. Influences on understanding and attitudes among young people

In previous chapters, differences between groups have been explored by directly comparing percentages of respondents providing a particular response, or in the case of the scales and construct, having a high, medium, or low classification. This is especially useful for identifying groups that need to be targeted. Although this approach does tell us something about the relationship between the factors being compared (e.g. between understanding and attitudes toward violence), a limitation is that it does not account for other factors that may also contribute to this relationship (e.g. a gender difference may be because men are more likely to be in occupations with violence-supportive cultures, rather than gender per se). Further, it does not tell us how strongly one factor (e.g. gender) influences the other (e.g. violence-supportive attitudes).

Accordingly a statistical technique called linear regression analysis was used. This approach enables the influence of each of the factors measured in the survey to be gauged after controlling for the influence of all other factors. It also enables each of the factors to be ranked according to their degree of influence. The linear regression analysis involved the demographic factors included in the survey (e.g. age, gender), as well as understanding (as measured by the UVAW scale) and attitudes (as measured by the violence-supportive attitudes construct and the gender equality scale).

This analysis shows that:

- the strongest influence on understanding of violence against women among young people is attitudes to gender equality. This accounts for more than half of the variance due to factors measured in the study (Appendix B, Figure B1)
- the strongest influences on attitudes to violence against women are understanding (measured using the Understanding Violence against Women Scale) and attitudes to gender equality (using the Gender Equality Scale; see Figure A1). Understanding accounts for 41% of the variance explained by measures included in the survey and attitudes to gender equality account for 37%.

11.1 Influence of demographic factors

Relative to understanding and attitudes to gender equality, demographic factors have only a small influence on understanding of and attitudes towards violence. The two most influential factors contributing to understanding among young people in order of influence are employment status and area remoteness. Gender and respondent's birthplace and/or that of their mother or father rank equally as the third most influential factors.

The three demographic factors influencing the tendency to hold violence-supportive attitudes are birthplace, gender and employment status. The direction of the relationships between these factors and understanding of and attitudes towards violence against women were discussed in the previous chapter.

Logistic regression analysis showed that the factors included in the survey explain only some of the influences on understanding and attitudes. This supports prior research demonstrating that attitudes to both gender equality and violence against women cannot be reduced to a single factor, but rather are influenced by multiple factors, only some of which are measured in the survey (Worden & Carlson 2005).

KEY FINDINGS

12. Understanding and attitudes among particular groups of young people

As discussed in the previous chapter, demographic factors such as gender and place of birth have only a modest impact on attitudes after understanding and attitudes to gender equality are taken into account (see also Appendix B). However, there are some differences between groups. Understanding of these differences can help to determine whether there are benefits in targeting prevention to particular groups.

As indicated (see Table 8), there are noteworthy differences on all three composite measures between young men and women. The other group found to have a lower level of understanding of violence against women (see Appendix C, Tables C1–3), a lower level of attitudinal support for gender equality and a higher level of attitudinal support for violence against women is young people born in a country in which the main language spoken is not English.

Young people living alone or in ‘other’ housing, compared with those living with a parent or parents, a partner, or in shared housing, are more likely to have a lower level of support for gender equality and a higher level of support for violence. However, this group did not vary from all young people on understanding of violence. Unemployed young people were more likely to be classified as having a lower level of understanding and a higher level of attitudinal support for violence against women (see Appendix C).

While there were no differences in understanding by area remoteness, young people in remote and very remote areas were more likely to be classified as having a high level of support for violence (51%). However, this is likely to be an artefact of the small number of young respondents in this category (n=48). In the analysis of the sample as a whole (see VicHealth 2014; Webster et al. 2014), respondents in remote areas did not vary from the whole sample on the three composite measures. Similarly, relative to other factors, area remoteness made only a very small contribution to variance on all three measures.

Young people in inner regional areas are less likely than all young people to have a low support for gender equality. This pattern was also evident in the sample as whole (VicHealth 2014; Webster et al. 2014).

KEY FINDINGS

13. Understanding and attitudes of young people of different ages

Researchers have hypothesised that understanding and attitudes improve as young people become older (see p. 29). These studies have shown gender differences, with women's understanding and attitudes improving at a younger age than men's.

To gauge this with certainty a longitudinal study would be needed. That is, one that follows the same group of people each time the survey is taken. However, some insight can be gained by exploring whether there are changes with age in the NCAS sample. To gauge this, the youth sample was divided into two groups, those aged 16–17 years and those aged 18–24 years. Results for these two groups were compared with each other and with a third group, people aged 25–34 years (Tables D1–3).

With regard to attitudes to gender equality, there is no notable variation between the youth sample (aged 16–24 years) and the older sample (aged 35–64 years) on measures concerned with gender roles (see p. 46). However, respondents in the youth sample are more likely to endorse attitudes supportive of male dominance of decision-making in relationships. Accordingly, the additional subscale using the two measures designed to gauge attitudinal support for male dominance of decision-making in relationships was also used in this analysis (see Appendix A for a description of this scale).

The above analysis shows that among males (Table D2):

- there is no significant change in attitudes towards equality in relationships across the three age groups
- there is no significant change in understanding of violence across the three age groups
- the proportion of people with a low level of attitudinal support for violence against women increases with age. Men aged 25–34 years are three times more likely to have a low level of support than young men aged 16–17 years (14% v. 5%). There are no statistically significant changes in the percentages having a high level of endorsement.

Among females (Table D3):

- there is an increase between the 18–24 and 25–34 years age groups in the percentage with a low level of support for gender equality (measured using the full scale). In contrast, the percentage with a high level of support for gender equality in relationships improves across the three age groups, from 21% among those 16–17 years to 31% among those 18–24 years and 37% among those 25–34 years
- understanding of violence against women improves with age, with 12% of those 16–17 years and 18–24 years having a high level of understanding compared with 18% of those aged 25–34 years
- attitudes towards violence strengthen with age, with those with a low level of endorsement of violence-supportive attitudes increasing from 10% of women 16–17 years to 19% of those 18–24 years and 26% of those 25–34 years.

In summary, there is a modest improvement in understanding of violence against women and attitudes to gender equality in relationships and violence among young women as they become older. The only change in a positive direction among young men is in the percentage having a low level of attitudinal endorsement for violence against women. The percentage change is sizeable. However, only a small proportion of men are classified as having a low level of attitudinal support for violence in each of the age groups, relative to the proportion with a high level of support. This means that the improvement is among a small number of young men. There are no statistically significant differences in the proportion with a high level of support for violence across the three groups. The attitudes of both young men and young women weaken slightly with age on their attitudes to gender equality, as measured by the full scale.

KEY FINDINGS

14. Changes in understanding and attitudes between 2009 and 2013

14.1 Change at the composite level

Table 12 shows that while there has been no change between 2009 and 2013 among young people in attitudes towards gender equality and understanding of violence against women, there has been a reduction in the proportion of young people classified as having a high level of attitudinal support for violence against women, from 38% in 2009 to 31% in 2013 (Table 12). This is in contrast to the sample as a whole in which understanding and attitudes remained stable between 2009 and 2013 (VicHealth 2014; Webster et al. 2014). This improvement was largely due to a change among young men, from 48% having a high level of attitudinal support for violence in 2009 to 38% in 2013. Among young women 27% were classified as having a high level of attitudinal support for violence in 2009 compared with 24% in 2013. However, this difference was not statistically significant.

Table 12: Understanding and attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality, people aged 16–24 years, 2009 and 2013

		Males		Females		Total Youth	
		2009 n=400 %	2013 n=1,012 %	2009 n=482 %	2013 n=911 %	2009 n=882 %	2013 n=1,923 %
Understanding of violence (understanding of violence against women scale)	Low	49	46	31	37	40	42
	Medium	48	47	57	52	52	49
	High	3	7	12	12	8	9
Attitudinal support for violence against women (violence-supportive attitudes construct)	Low	7	9	16	18	11	14
	Medium	46	53	57	58	51	55
	High	48**	38	27	24	38**	31
Attitudinal support for gender equality (gender equality scale)	Low	31	27	8	14**	20	21
	Medium	43	48	47	45	45	46
	High	25	25	45	41	35	33

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

14.2 Patterns of change⁴

14.2.1 Knowledge

The percentage of young people agreeing that ‘a woman cannot be raped by someone she is in a relationship with’ increased from 3% in 2009 to 8% in 2013. Young people were slightly less likely to recognise forced sex in a relationship as a form of partner violence in 2013 than in 2009 (99% to 97%).

They were less likely in 2013 than in 2009 to recognise repeatedly criticising one’s partner to make them feel bad and useless as a form of domestic violence (86% v. 82% in 2013).

⁴ Differences between 2009 and 2013 are significant at the 95% level.

As is the case in the sample as a whole there was a decrease in the percentage of young people agreeing that partner violence was perpetrated mainly by men (37% in 2009 v. 32% in 2013) and an increase in those agreeing that violence was perpetrated equally by both men and women (21% v. 26%). Fewer young people agreed that women were more likely than men to suffer physical harm as a result of partner violence in 2013 (87%) than 2009 (90%), while a larger percentage agreed that the fear associated with such violence was equally bad for both men and women (49% in 2013 compared with 45% in 2009).

14.2.2 Attitudes

Fewer young people in 2013, compared with 2009, agreed that violence is justified if:

- a woman is perceived to make her partner look stupid in front of his friends (6% v. 4% respectively)
- she admits to having sex with another man (9% v. 6% respectively).

However, there was a small increase in the proportion agreeing that violence was justified against an ex-partner in order to get access to children (3% v. 5% respectively).

Fewer young people in 2013 (80%) agreed that it was hard to understand why women stay in violent relationships than in 2009 (85%), suggesting a greater understanding of the barriers to women seeking safety. However, there was an increase in the proportion agreeing that women often make false allegations of partner violence, from 43% in 2009 to 52% in 2013. This was in contrast to the sample as whole in which there was no significant change on this measure (VicHealth 2014; Webster et al. 2014).

There was a small overall decline in the percentage of young people agreeing that forced sex is serious (99% v. 97%), and a 7 percentage point drop in young people agreeing that this behaviour was 'very-serious' (89% to 82%), as opposed to 'quite serious'. However, in 2013 young people were less likely to suggest that controlling a partner's social life was not a serious behaviour (16%) than was the case in 2009 (20%).

Of concern is the increase in the percentage of young people agreeing that women say 'no' when they mean 'yes' (14% v. 20%) and that men rape because they cannot control their sexual urges (33% v. 40%).

14.2.3 Responses

The percentage of young people agreeing that police response times have improved declined among young people, from 60% in 2009 to 54% in 2013. Likewise, there was a decline in the percentage agreeing that they would know where to get outside help, from 58% in 2009 to 54% in 2013.

As was the case in the sample as a whole, there was a marked increase in the percentage of young people recognising that women with disabilities reporting sexual assault are less likely to be believed than other women (29% v. 41%).

15. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

15.1 Summary of key findings

15.1.1 Many strengths, some areas of concern

The findings of this study show that young people have a sound knowledge of violence against women, support gender equality and do not endorse attitudes supportive of violence, as they are measured in the NCAS survey. However, as is the case in the NCAS sample as a whole, there are several concerning results warranting focus in future work to prevent violence against women. This supports the findings of other research with Australian young people (The Body Shop Australia 2006; National Crime Prevention 2001; VicHealth 2010).

15.1.2 Gender and age: Many similarities, some differences

The patterning of responses among young people is broadly similar to respondents 35–64 years, and on a number of questions there are no differences between the two groups. However, there are important differences on a number of individual questions. Furthermore, when the composite measures of understanding and attitudinal support for gender equality and violence against women are considered (i.e. measures formed by combining responses to a number of questions), the differences between the two age groups are more substantial.

Overall, young people are more likely than are those aged 35–64 years to be classified as having a lower level of understanding of violence and a high level of endorsement of violence-supportive attitudes. Although they are equally likely to have a high level of endorsement of gender equality overall, they are substantially less likely to have a high level of support for gender equality in relationships. This apparent contradiction is also apparent among respondents 35–64 years, suggesting that people, regardless of their age, can hold contradictory views about gender: they may support equality in roles in public life, but eschew it in their intimate relationships, without necessarily seeing this as contradictory. Nevertheless, the differences are more marked for young people, especially young men.

On the four composite measures and many individual questions, young women were more likely to demonstrate a higher level of understanding and support for gender equality and a lower level of attitudinal support for violence than young men.

15.1.3 Key influences on attitudes and understanding

The strongest influences on attitudes were understanding and attitudes towards gender equality. That is, young people who had a high level of understanding that violence against women involved more than physical violence and forced sex and who had a high level of attitudinal support for gender equality were less likely to have a high level of attitudinal support for violence. This is similar to the sample as a whole (see VicHealth 2014; Webster et al. 2014).

While the influence of demographic factors was weak relative to understanding and attitudes to gender equality, age was among the top three demographic influences on understanding and attitudes in the analysis of the sample as a whole (see VicHealth 2014; Webster et al. 2014). Among young people, gender emerges among the top three demographic factors influencing understanding and attitudes, again similar to the pattern in the sample as a whole (see VicHealth 2014; Webster et al. 2014).

15.1.4 Change in attitudes and understanding with age

Analysis of data by age for the three youngest age cohorts within the 2013 sample (i.e. between respondents 16–17; 18–24 and 25–34 years) suggests that while young women's understanding and attitudes towards violence and gender equality in relationships strengthen as they grow older, there is only modest improvement among young men as they reach adulthood. This is in the form of a minor increase in the proportion classified as having a low level of attitudinal support for violence. There is no strengthening among men across the three age groups in understanding or attitudes towards gender equality.

15.1.5 Change in attitudes over time

Encouragingly, between 2009 and 2013 there has been a reduction in young men classified as having a high level of support for violence against women. Young people, in particular young men, have been a focus of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 (Council of Australian Governments 2010). While the reason for this change cannot be determined from the survey, this finding suggests the possibility that activity implemented as part of the plan may be having a positive effect. Nevertheless, there has been no positive change between 2009 and 2013 among young women on any of the composite measures. Among men there have been no changes in understanding and attitudes to gender equality.

15.2 Understanding the findings

15.2.1 Possible methodological factors

As is the case with any survey research, it is possible that some of the patterns found were an artefact of the research methodology, rather than reflecting actual patterns of understanding and attitudes. Response bias, the potential distortion of results due to a particular profile of people choosing to partake in the survey, may have affected the findings. Because information about the people refusing to participate is unavailable, the impact of response bias cannot be quantified. The response rates for this survey were low; however, the rate is comparable to other similar surveys (Kohut et al. 2012).

Researchers and participants have very different contexts and life experiences, and survey findings may be an artefact of these differences. Attitudes surveys may be subject to social desirability bias – respondents giving answers they believe to be socially acceptable, rather than what they actually believe. Such a bias requires a relatively nuanced understanding of the cultural and institutional context in which the research is being undertaken. Accordingly, it is less likely to be exercised by respondents who do not share the context of the researcher. This may apply to young people who by virtue of their age may have had less exposure to public discourse about violence and gender relations. It is not possible to quantify the extent to which this may have influenced findings for the youth sample or differences between the youth sample and respondents aged 35–64 years.

Nevertheless the numbers in both age-groups in the survey were sufficiently large to be robust statistically at the sample level (although some caution needs to be exercised in interpreting findings for some analyses, such as by employment status or birthplace). Both samples represented a broad cross-section of the respective age groups and this was strengthened by the use of the dual frame methodology (see Chapter 1).

15.2.2 Other possible explanations suggested in the literature

Data from the survey cannot explain the differences found between young men and women, and between respondents of different ages. This is because the survey measures attitudes of people but does not ask why they hold them. Some possible explanations can be considered, drawing on existing research (Chapter 4) suggesting that young people's attitudes may be affected by:

- age-related factors, including developmental stage, limited personal experience and dependence in the family
- factors associated with the contemporary social context, including an increasing support of individualisation and post-feminism, changing gender relations, the emergence of 'raunch culture' and 'bro culture' and the rising significance of new media forms, especially social media.

The themes on which there are differences between young people and respondents aged 35–64 years are instructive because they highlight areas in which there are likely to be particular influences prevailing for young people. Seeking to understand these in light of the relevant research can help to more effectively tailor

efforts to strengthen knowledge and attitudes among young people. Accordingly these are highlighted in the discussion below. However, it is important to note that where response patterns between the age groups are the same or similar, this does not necessarily mean that there are no differences in the factors underlying these patterns.

It is not proposed that all of the factors discussed in this chapter affect only young people, but rather that particular contextual and developmental factors make them especially influential in young people's lives.

The substantial gender differences between young men and young women in attitudes are similar to those found in many other studies and suggest that factors particularly pertaining to young men are also likely to be relevant. Among those identified in the literature (see Chapter 4) are:

- the tendency for young men to mature somewhat later than young women
- challenges for young men associated with women's increasing social and economic power
- male peer cultures emphasising the denigration of women (e.g. some male sporting cultures, 'bro culture')
- new media influences, in particular increasing access to violent and gender-stereotyped pornographic imagery.

15.2.3 The influence of age and stage of development

A number of the findings suggest the possibility that young people's attitudes may be at least partly explained by their age and stage of development. For example, young people are less likely to recognise the prevalence of violence and non-physical forms of abuse and control, in particular financial control. This may reflect the fact that many are yet to have experiences of adult relationships. Similarly, young people's slightly greater preparedness to endorse justifications for violence (albeit that the percentage prepared to justify violence in any age groups is small) may be because some have yet to develop mature psychological qualities such as empathy, sensitivity and moral awareness (Flood & Fergus 2008). Further, in the absence of other repertoires to call upon, younger people may be more likely to fall back onto explanations based in stereotypes of men, women and relationships. This may similarly contribute to young people's lower levels of attitudinal support for gender equality in relationships.

The influences of age and stage may also partly explain young people's responses to questions in the theme of trivialising violence. Both young men and young women are more likely than men and women aged 35–64 years to agree that domestic violence is a private matter, while young women are more likely than women aged 34–64 years to agree that 'a woman could leave a violent relationship if she really wanted to'. The proportion in both age groups agreeing that 'it's a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship to keep the family together' is small. However, young people are more likely than people aged 35–64 years to do so. With most young people under 20 living at home (Trewin 2002), most are likely to have answered these questions from the perspective of a dependent in a family hypothetically witnessing adult conflict. Prior research suggests that a substantial proportion of young people will have witnessed violence against women in their own families (ABS 2013). There is the possibility that in answering questions about women's capacity to leave violent relationships, young survey respondents might overestimate the power of adult women (who by virtue of being adults usually have more power than young people). From this perspective, it is not unreasonable that some young people would express a desire for adult women to keep families intact, as well as imagine that they could in fact have the power to leave.

The gender differences in attitudes and understanding may in part reflect the fact that boys mature somewhat later than girls. However, if development is a primary factor it would be expected that attitudes and knowledge would strengthen as young people get older. A longitudinal study would be needed to assess this with greater certainty (i.e. a survey that followed the same people over time). This caveat needs to be borne in mind when

interpreting the findings summarised above and documented in greater detail in Chapter 9. These findings suggest that young women's attitudes and understanding do improve across the three age groups. However, there was only a very marginal improvement in attitudes towards violence across the three youngest groups of men in the NCAS sample, and no improvement in understanding or attitudes towards gender equality. This suggests that for young men, it is probable that developmental factors provide only a partial explanation for attitudes and understanding. Importantly, young men are unlikely to simply 'grow out of' negative dispositions until somewhat later in their adulthood.

15.2.4 The influences of contemporary social context

There is a strong body of existing research showing a link between attitudes toward gender equality and attitudes toward violence against women. Socially constructed gender norms (manifest, among other ways, in the form of collectively held attitudes) are identified as having a strong influence on both attitudes toward violence against women and its perpetration (Flood & Pease 2006). This is supported in this study with attitudes to gender equality being the second strongest influence on young people's attitudes toward violence against women (a pattern also found in the sample as a whole).

As outlined above and discussed in Chapter 4, social factors influencing attitudes toward both gender equality and violence are understood to have a particular impact on young men's attitudes. This may also contribute to the gender differences in attitudes and understanding found between young men and women in this study.

Since the 1960s there have been substantial improvements in the status of women and in this context it might be expected that young people would hold more egalitarian attitudes toward gender relations than people aged 35–64 years. However, as indicated above, there were no overall differences between the two age groups in attitudes toward gender equality in the public sphere and young people were less likely than those aged 35–64 years to support equality of decision-making in relationships. A possible explanation proposed by researchers is that there has been a stagnation, if not a conservatising, of attitudes towards gender equality (Cotter et al. 2011; Van Egmond et al. 2010). These attitudes gradually improved between the 1960s and the mid-1990s, an improvement widely understood to have occurred in response to the influences of second-wave feminism (Cotter et al. 2011; Van Egmond et al. 2010). The halting of this trend in more recent times has been explained in terms of a new cultural frame that supports traditional gender roles through contemporary notions of egalitarianism and personal choice that ostensibly take feminism into account (see, for example, Cotter et al. 2011). The fact that attitudes to gender equality (as measured by the full scale) do not strengthen between the youngest and oldest of the three youngest age groups in the NCAS sample, and improve only for young women when measured by the gender equality in relationships scale, provides some tentative support for this hypothesis. However, more definitive conclusions would require a different survey methodology (i.e. a longitudinal study) and/or additional statistical analysis.

As discussed in Chapter 4, some researchers have suggested that in a 'post-feminist' world, many believe that equality for women, including the resolution of the problem of violence, has been achieved, with women being seen as equally powerful as men (Bulbeck 2008; Rich 2005). In this context, young people may be less attuned to the possibility of violence occurring and may struggle to see how, in the supposed absence of structural forms of gender equality, women could be subject to control by men in relationships. This may result in an overestimation of women's agency and power, an under-rating of the consequences of remaining in a violent relationship and an overestimation of the accomplishments of the women's movement in terms of improved institutional responses to violence against women.

This may partly explain young people's more positive assessments of police responses to domestic violence relative to those of respondents aged 35–64 years, as well as young women's lower level of recognition of the barriers to women ending a violent relationship.

The finding that young people, especially young women, are more likely than respondents aged 35–64 years to identify ‘the belief that men should be in charge of the relationship’ as a primary cause of violence against women appears paradoxical in light of young people’s lower level of understanding of violence against women, and the fact that they are less likely to support gender equality in decision-making in relationships. Of the three options offered to respondents, the ‘belief that men should be in charge of the relationship’ is the ‘cause’ most closely aligned with the evidence that gender inequality is a key underlying factor in violence against women. It is also the ‘cause’ most linked to structural factors (Webster et al. 2014). These patterns may reflect an awareness of this among young people. Alternatively, they may reflect a particular awareness, especially among young women, of the challenges that shifting gender power dynamics present for some young men documented in prior research (Keith 2013; Phipps & Young 2014; Robinson 2005).

There is a noteworthy difference between the age groups in agreement that there are circumstances in which electronic tracking of a partner without their consent is acceptable. The prevalence of new communications technology in young people’s everyday lives and the ‘broadcast and connect’ nature of contemporary youth culture may explain why young people tend to over-rate the acceptability of electronic tracking. Other research shows that these technologies may be used by young people to produce and circulate images of themselves and others and that these practices often involve damaging gender stereotyping and denigration of women (Lippman & Campbell 2014). This lived experience may be reflected in young women’s greater likelihood of understanding the potential for information technologies to be misused.

Other researchers have noted that an increasing tendency towards individualisation may lead to young people being more likely to reject social and structural explanations for social problems and to attribute blame to victims. In the survey, however, only young men were more likely than men aged 35–64 years to blame the victim, and this was for only two of the four scenarios presented to them: ‘Women say ‘no’ when they mean ‘yes’ and ‘If a woman is raped while affected by alcohol or drugs, she is partly responsible’.

These patterns may possibly be explained by some of the gender-related factors identified in other research (see Chapter 4), in particular the increasing sexualisation of women and the rise of raunch culture and gonzo porn, the latter characterised by extreme, violent treatment of women and female actors’ apparent enjoyment of this. Further evidence that this may be the case is declining recognition among young people between 2009 and 2013 that forced sex in a relationship is assault, that it is a form of partner violence, and that it is serious. Similarly there has been an increase in the percentage of young people agreeing that women say ‘no’ when they mean ‘yes’, and that men rape because they cannot control their need for sex.

In summary, existing research suggests that young people’s understanding of violence against women and their attitudes toward gender equality and violence are unlikely to be explained by a singular factor, but rather by multiple factors. These fall into two broad clusters – those associated with young people’s age and stage of development and factors associated with the social context in which young people live their lives. Other research suggests that these influences are best understood as they interact or intersect with one another (Flood & Pease 2006; Flood & Fergus 2008). That is, young people, like people of all ages, are influenced by a world in which roles, relationships and identities are gendered, and in which there are persistent inequalities between men and women. These conditions are widely understood to be implicated in attitudes towards violence against women and its perpetration. At the same time young people’s age and stage of development impacts on the ways in which they experience this context and in turn their understanding of violence and their attitudes towards the problem. As discussed in the next chapter, understanding both clusters of factors is especially important for tailoring interventions for young people. That said, the survey provides only modest evidence that young men, will simply ‘grow out of’ relatively poor attitudes towards violence against women and gender relations. This, together with the fact that young age is a risk factor for both women’s victimisation and men’s perpetration of violence, suggests the importance of a continued focus on preventing violence among young people.

16. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

16.1 Prioritising young people and their environments in the context of whole-of-population change

Although young people's attitudes are likely to be determined to some extent by their age and stage of development, the broader social context appears to be particularly influential. While this is the case for people throughout their lives, it is particularly so for young people given the significance of influential others (e.g. parents and teachers) and particular environments (e.g. leisure settings and popular culture) in their lives. This suggests that key to strengthening young people's responses to violence against women will be addressing the attitudes we all hold towards violence against women, including the broader community and organisational cultures and structures responsible for shaping them.

Attending to the wider environment will also be important to ensure that prevention activities among young people are not contradicted by, but are reinforced, across the key environments they encounter (e.g. the family, school, leisure settings).

At the same time, the findings of the survey, alongside the wider research introduced earlier, indicate that there are likely to be benefits in identifying young people, in particular young men, as a group for focus by:

- prioritising them and the settings found to have a particular influence on their lives (e.g. social media, schools) in prevention efforts
- developing activities that are tailored to their particular needs.

This is currently the case in the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 (Council of Australian Governments 2010) and is indicated by evidence showing:

- that women face the highest risk of gendered violence when aged 18–24 years (ABS 2013)
- the particular impacts of adversity on young people, impacts that may influence their health and wellbeing throughout the remainder of their lives
- the particular prospects for prevention during a life stage when values and relationship practices are being shaped. In this regard, early adolescence represents a particularly important life stage for intervention. It is also a stage at which young people can be more readily reached through their participation in education settings.

The findings for young men, along with other factors identified in the literature, in particular the young age at which many men who have perpetrated sexual assault were first sexually aggressive, suggest that a focus on young men is warranted. However, strengthening young women's attitudes and knowledge is also important given the evidence that the attitudes they hold influence how they respond to violence and disrespect perpetrated against themselves and others (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009). Further, young women have an important role to play in action to prevent violence (see below).

The survey findings that young people born in non-main English-speaking countries are more likely to be classified as having a low level of understanding of violence against women, a low level of support for gender equality and a high level of attitudinal support for violence against women indicates that prevention strategies are likely to be particularly valuable in culturally diverse environments. It will also be important to ensure that approaches are both culturally and linguistically responsive. However, it should be kept in mind that these differences are modest, suggesting the continued importance of approaches that reach all young people.

The value of school-based strategies for reaching young people is noted below. However, a sizeable proportion of young people disengage from formal education prior to completing secondary school (Access Economics 2012), suggesting the need to explore strategies to reach this group. This is especially the case given the

finding of the survey that young people living alone and in 'other housing' are more likely to have a high level of attitudinal support for violence and a low level of support for gender equality, while unemployed young people are more likely to be classified as having a low level of understanding of and a high level of attitudinal support for violence against women.

16.2 Promising settings

In the literature on which this report draws (see Chapter 4) it is suggested that a number of settings hold promise for prevention activity among young people because they:

- are amenable to reaching young people
- exert a relatively greater influence on the knowledge and attitudes of young people
- have some demonstrable potential as sites for violence-prevention programming.

Among these are:

- sports and active recreation settings, reflecting the significance of leisure in the lives of young people, their high rates of participation in sports and active recreation and evidence indicating that some sporting environments may be particularly 'violence-supportive' (Flood & Pease 2006, 2009). At the same time, evidence suggests that the influence of sports cultures and organisations in the lives of young people can be used constructively to address a range of health and human rights issues, among them violence against women (Dyson & Flood 2007)
- media and popular culture, again reflecting the significance of this setting in the lives of young people and evidence of its potential to negatively impact on attitudes. At the same time, the media and popular culture are important settings for some of the promising strategies discussed further below
- social media, given growing evidence of its use as a setting for the perpetration of violence against women, its significance in the lives of young people and its potential as a platform for prevention (American Psychological Association 2010; Crabbe & Corlett 2010; Papadopoulos 2010)
- education settings, with schools in particular being good sites for accessing very young people. Schools are a primary source of young people's day-to-day experience and socialisation. There is also evidence suggesting the positive potential in school settings (Flood et al. 2009)
- the family: although peer influences are especially potent among young people, adults in their lives, in particular parents, are not without influence. Several expert bodies suggest the importance of reaching significant adults in the lives of young people with prevention messages (e.g. through parenting programs, whole-of-organisation approaches in schools or sports and recreation settings). This is based on positive evaluation of the impact of such approaches in related areas (American Psychological Association 2010; Papadopoulos 2010).

16.3 Implications for strategies

16.3.1 Awareness-raising

Understanding was the strongest influence on attitudes among the factors measured in the survey, supporting prior research demonstrating that understanding of an issue in turn influences one's attitudes towards it. This suggests the importance of awareness-raising among young people as a key strategy in violence prevention. However, evidence from practice suggests that programs that focus on awareness raising and attitudinal change alone are unlikely to be effective. Rather they need to be implemented as part of a broader program of activity (Ellsberg et al. 2014).

16.3.2 Strengthening capacity to engage critically with popular culture

Young people are clearly not simply passive consumers of gender-stereotypical cultural messages. Further, people of all ages are influenced by their social worlds. However, young people tend to have fewer spheres of life, such as work or the liberalising influence of tertiary education (Flood & Fergus 2008) from which they can draw on alternative repertoires to counter-balance the information they receive via the media and popular culture. For these reasons, researchers and key expert bodies indicate that there is promise in prevention activities that support young people to engage critically with popular culture and new media, especially social media, or to develop what is often referred to as ‘critical literacy’. Critical literacy approaches have met with some success in addressing other behaviours particularly affecting young people (e.g. alcohol use and body image) (American Psychological Association 2010; Crabbe & Corlett 2010; Flood & Fergus 2008; Papadopoulos 2010).

Research with young people into the related area of improving safety online suggests that this needs to be done carefully. Such research finds that many young people find existing programs to improve safety irrelevant, adult-centric and unable to get at the real issues for youth in navigating the virtual world (see Valentine 2004). Tucci et al. (2008, p. 29) cite research finding that while young people do want help with dealing with problems they encounter, for example in chat rooms, they would prefer to get advice from younger tech-savvy professionals than from school counsellors or other adults who do not understand youth culture and competencies. Much could be learned from this in relation to tailoring education strategies regarding violence against women to young people’s specific concerns, contexts and preferred modes of learning.

16.3.3 Peer approaches

Research in education for young people to address other complex social issues indicates that young people prefer, and respond better to, strategies that are less ‘top-down passive learning’ and more action-based, interactive and peer-to-peer (Wyn & White 2013). In relation to gender violence, teachers, parents and counsellors may be less effective than peers (Noonan & Charles 2009). Peer relationships are critical to young people, making them an important resource in the development of priority strategies.

In their review of 52 highly regarded peer-based dating violence prevention programs in the US, Weisz and Black (2010, p. 641) identify peer approaches as promising, concluding that these are successful because “adolescents are often in tune with ‘adolescent culture’, can reach other adolescents successfully, and lend meaningful direction and leadership to programs that address their own communities”. Young people tend to rely on and seek out peers for help with problems, and given that they report low levels of knowledge about where to find formal help, peer-based education is even more critical. Young people’s own shared experience, rather than cross-generational, hierarchical approaches, can also be a valuable basis for learning.

Community interventions that identify young men in highly masculinised cultures who are open to gender equality, and then draw on their knowledge for peer education, have been noted for their promise (Barker 2001). Such an approach builds on research that shows how masculinity is fluid and contextual for young men, and indicates how its more egalitarian variations can be usefully engaged for improving attitudes to gender-based violence (Sathiparsa 2008).

Peer approaches hold particular promise owing to the strong body of evidence demonstrating the influence of peer culture on behaviour. The Australian Temperament Project (Prior et al. 2000, p. 1) found that “the strongest single predictor of whether...teenagers engaged in socially responsible behaviours was whether their friends did so”. Similarly, international research on attitudes and behavioural intentions with regard to sexual assault finds that young men’s perceptions of the attitudes and behaviours of their peers are among the strongest influences (Abbey et al. 2006, 2007; Bohner et al. 2006; Brown & Messman-Moore 2010; Fabiano et al. 2003).

Such approaches are more likely to be successful if they take seriously young people's superior competency with new media and to understand these as sites for creative intervention – as sites for young people to 'read' and rewrite the gender messages in media and popular culture, and to create their own alternatives through creative practices (see Squires et al. 2006). Expert bodies have identified a number of peer approaches currently successfully operating in the online environment, such as blogs and 'zines' (online magazines) written for and by young people (American Psychological Association 2010). Such approaches have particular potential to provide a voice for young people seeking to rewrite gender-stereotyped and violence-supportive scripts as well as to facilitate peer support among young women.

16.3.4 Corporate responsibility and regulatory frameworks

Several expert groups have noted that some of the antecedents to violence-supportive attitudes identified in the literature (e.g. extreme gender stereotyping in advertising, violent pornography) can be addressed by strengthening corporate responsibility and ensuring that existing regulatory frameworks are appropriately enforced (see, for example, American Psychological Association 2010; Papadopoulos 2010).

16.3.5 Advocacy, especially social media advocacy

Experts have also pointed to the potential in advocacy undertaken by young people to address violence against women and its precursors. A notable recent example is the prominent role played by young people in the successful campaign to have the visa of a so-called 'dating coach' revoked, on the grounds that he was promoting violent and denigrating messages about women (Davey 2014). Similarly, examples are cited in the literature of parent groups taking successful action to strengthen corporate responsibility in regard to precursors to violence against women (e.g. social media campaigns to highlight products marketed to children and young people that sexualise and objectify young women (American Psychological Association 2010).

16.3.6 Whole-of-organisation and whole-of-community approaches

Experience in addressing violence against women and other complex issues in school settings suggests that 'once-off' separate programs, delivered only via curricula, meet with limited success (Flood et al. 2009; Holdsworth 2000; Wyn & White 2013). Rather, there is a need to take a whole-of-curriculum and whole-of-school approach, whereby school communities entrench gender equity and healthy relationships systemically and experientially. Such an approach recognises the influence of a wide range of aspects of the school environment to contribute to the development of violence-supportive attitudes, as well as the potential within them to achieve positive change. A similar approach is also important in sports and leisure settings.

16.4 Issues for attention in future prevention programming

The patterns found in the youth sample were similar to those for the population as a whole and are discussed in greater detail in other NCAS reports (VicHealth 2014; Webster et al. 2014). In summary, there is a need to strengthen knowledge of the:

- prevalence of violence against women
- particular dynamics of relationships and contexts in which violence occurs
- gendered nature and impacts of the problem
- greater risk of violence posed by a known person compared with a stranger
- fact that violence encompasses not only physical violence and forced sex, but also includes social, psychological and financial means to control and intimidate women, as well as indirect forms of harassment
- social factors contributing to violence
- sources of assistance in regards to violence against women.

In regards to attitudes, there is a particular need to address:

- excuses for violence, in particular the notion that rape results from men's uncontrollable sexual urges
- the serious consequences of non-physical forms of violence, including harassment by electronic means
- the barriers women face to leaving a violent relationship
- the concepts of family privacy and unity as they pertain to family violence (with young people more likely to agree that violence is a private matter to be kept in the family, and young women being more likely than women aged 35–64 to agree that women should tolerate violence in order to 'keep the family together')
- issues associated with beliefs that false allegations of domestic violence and sexual assault are commonplace
- the consequences of victim-blaming and the importance of ensuring accountability for the use of violence.

Young people have a strong intention to intervene in a critical incident of violence. The future challenge will be to engage young people in primary prevention (that is in preventing violence before it occurs) by strengthening their capacity to recognise and respond constructively to precursors to violence.

The finding that attitudes to gender equality is the second most influential factor on attitudes towards violence against women (after understanding) suggests the importance of addressing gender relations in prevention programming, both directly and underpinning messages focusing directly on violence. The fact that young people were more likely than respondents aged 35–64 years to support gender inequality in relationships suggests the importance of continuing to strengthen appreciation of the benefits of equality and respect in relationships between men and women.

The Gender Equality Index included in NCAS includes only some dimensions of gender equality found to be implicated in violence-supportive attitudes in other research. Other dimensions found in prior research include:

- 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 research is required to assess the relevance of these particular forms of attitudes to young people in Australia. However, many of the factors identified in the literature review (e.g. post-feminism, the influence of the increasing objectification of women in popular culture) suggest that these may be underlying concepts with a particular influence on young people's attitudes.

The reasons for the apparent paradox between young people's greater likelihood of supporting gender inequality in relationships, yet their greater recognition of male dominance as a 'main cause' of violence warrant further investigation. Nevertheless, together these findings suggest the salience of gender power dynamics to young people, a salience which could be used in violence prevention programming.

16.5 Contextual factors to consider in tailoring prevention among young people

There is evidence from prior research that young men in particular are struggling with changes in gender power and gender roles. Some findings of the NCAS also indicate that this may be the case (e.g. men's overall poorer scores on the composite measures and their greater preparedness to justify and excuse violence in certain scenarios). This would need to be taken into account in prevention programming. Given the significance of

social norms in the perpetration of violence and responses to it, this should be done in ways that acknowledge the adjustments faced by young men, while at the same time ensuring that normative support for equitable, respectful and non-violent gender relations is communicated.

A further two contextual factors identified in the literature to be considered in prevention activity are:

- young people's predisposition to human rights and social justice values indicated in relation to a range of social issues, including gender equality, and the high priority given by them to family relationships and health
- the influences of individualisation and post-feminism.

While these may appear paradoxical, researchers have proposed the need to think about how individualist and post-feminist repertoires might be both interrogated and drawn upon to enable young people to match up their concerns and experiences with their attitudes and behaviours towards violence against women. They suggest that ideas about choice, responsibility and agency have a strong impact and that ideas about 'self-achievement' are more compelling to young people than those to do with 'social commitment' (Bulbeck 2009; Jonsson & Flanagan 2000, p. 198). These more recent frameworks for thinking about social issues intersect with older ones, such as fairness, that young people are already well disposed towards. The challenge therefore is to bring together these different ways of interpreting the gendered nature of violence in society. This means crafting ways of engaging young people on the issue of violence against women as related to rights, justice, equality and fairness as well as control, choice, responsibility and self-invention.

This implies the need for contemporary ways of thinking about gender relations, ways that can gain traction with young people's more individualistic views of the world as well as adequately account for enduring inequities. Bulbeck (2009) suggests that it is important to think about how to "throw with the weight of choice": educators and advocates need to understand the compelling nature of these new discourses and engage with rather than simply disavow them. This is consistent with efforts that critically draw on rather than merely reject aspects of dominant gender scripts – for example, promoting control over behaviour and sexuality as positive masculine characteristics or using high-profile men to denounce violence against women – that are like to be compelling to young people.

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Appendix A: Gender Inequality in Relationships Scale

As discussed in Chapter 7, a measure was created to assess attitudinal support for male dominance of decision-making in relationships. Respondents were given two attitudinal statements relating to this. Responses to these statements were based on a Likert scale (1='strongly agree' to 5='strongly disagree'). The statements were:

- 'Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household.'
- 'Women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship.'

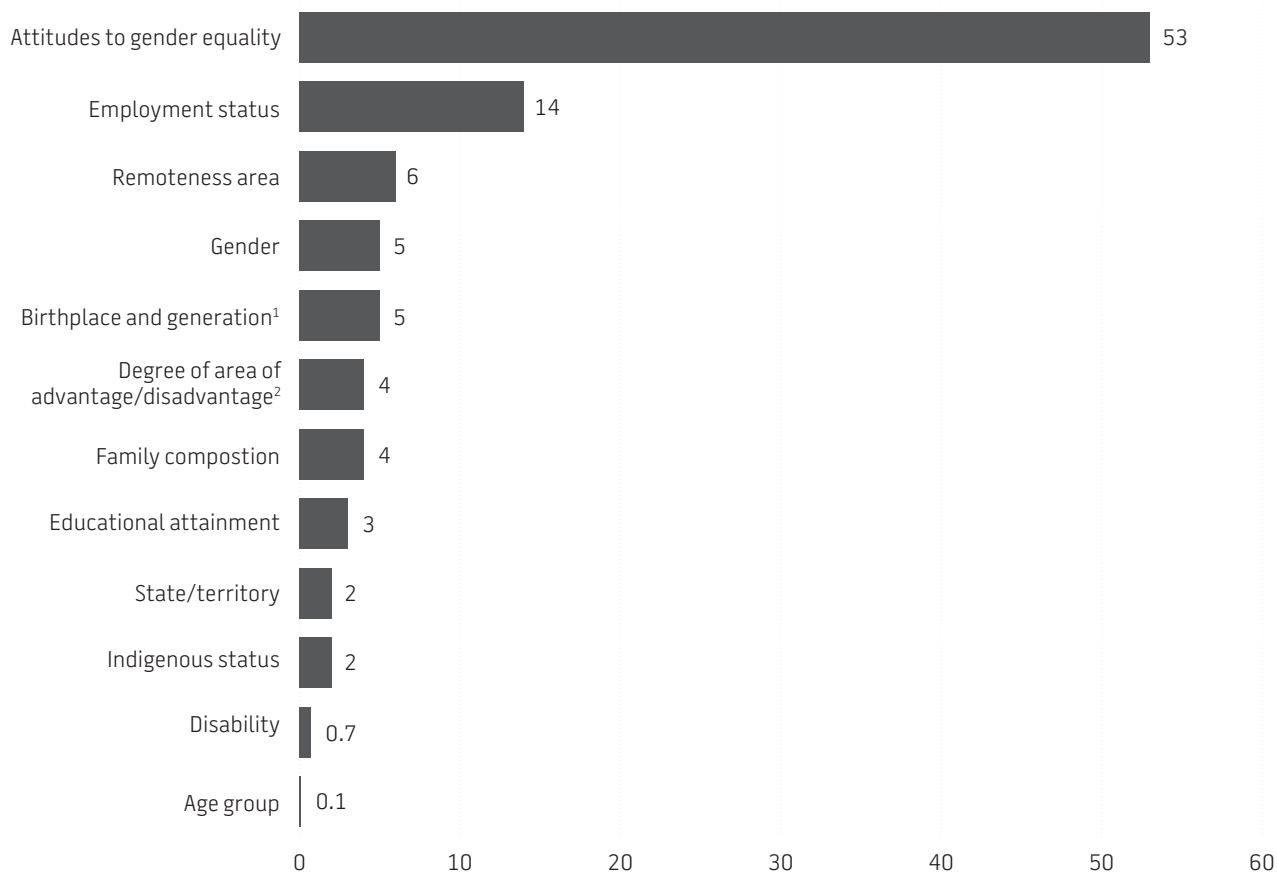
A response of 'strongly agree' was given a score of 1, 'somewhat agree' a score of 2, 'neither agree or disagree' a score of 3, 'somewhat disagree' a score of 4 and 'strongly disagree' a score of 5. Using this calculation, the highest possible score a respondent could achieve was 10. This was then multiplied by 10 to give a score for each respondent out of 100.

Where a respondent provided a 'don't know' or 'refused' response to one of the statements, their score was based on one statement, and was multiplied by 20 to ensure all respondents received a score out of 100. Where a respondent provided a 'don't know' or 'refused' response to both statements, no score for gender equality in relationships was calculated for this respondent.

The gender equality in relationships was divided into three categories, where low represents a score equal to or less than 70, medium represents a score of 80 or 90 and high represents a score of 100.

Appendix B: Linear regression analysis

Figure B1: Relative importance of selected demographic and attitudinal items in explaining variance in the Understanding Violence against Women Scale (% variance explained)



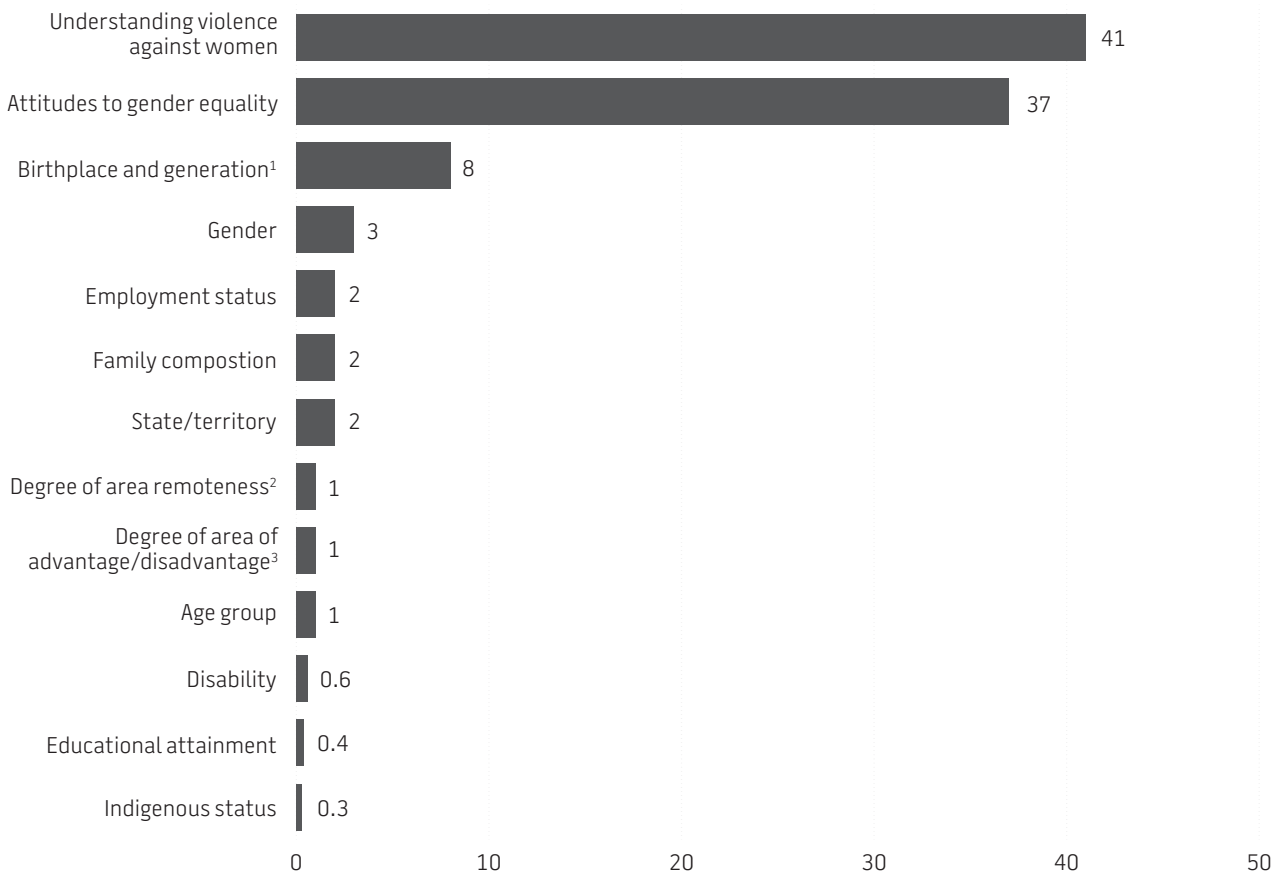
¹ Included respondent's place of birth as well as the place of birth of their parents.

² Measured with Australian Bureau of Statistics Index of relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage.

Attitudes to gender equality measured using the Gender Equality Scale.

Total variance explained by model – 12.9%

Figure B2: Relative importance of selected demographic and attitudinal items in explaining variance in the violent-supportive attitudes construct (% variance explained)



¹ Included respondent's place of birth as well as the place of birth of their parents.

² Measured with Australian Bureau of Statistics remoteness area classifications.

³ Measured with Australian Bureau of Statistics Index of relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage.

Understanding measured using the Understanding Violence Against Women Scale.

Attitudes to gender equality measured using the Gender Equality Scale.

Total variance explained by model – 48.9%

Appendix C: Attitudes and understanding by selected demographic characteristics

Table C1: Attitudinal support for violence against women by selected demographic characteristics, people aged 16–24 years, 2013

		n	Attitudinal support for violence against women (violence-supportive attitudes construct)		
			Low %	Moderate %	High %
Youth total		1,923	14	55	31
Birthplace (categorised)	Australia	1,442	16	58	26*
	Main English Speaking Countries	92	13	67*	20*
	Other countries	389	6*	42*	52*
Family composition of household	Lone person household	134	13	44*	43*
	Couple only	192	18	56	26
	Couple children at home	877	13	58	30
	Lone parent children at home	214	16	59	25
	Group household	248	15	52	34
	Other household	250	11	51	38*
Remoteness area grouped by type	Major cities of Australia	1,477	14	55	31
	Inner Regional Australia	246	13	59	28
	Outer regional Australia	145	17	50	33
	Remote & very remote Australia	48	11	37*	51*
Employment Status	Employed	1,151	15	58	27*
	Unemployed	174	14	44*	42*
	A student	533	11	54	35
	Other	60	13	48	40

*Statistically significant against the 2013 youth sample, $p \leq .05$

Remoteness area measured with Australian Bureau of Statistics remoteness area classifications.

Table C2: Understanding of violence by selected demographic characteristics, people aged 16–24 years, 2013

		Understanding of violence (understanding of violence against women scale)			
		n	Low understanding of VAW	Moderate understanding of VAW	High understanding of VAW
			%	%	%
Youth total		1,923	42	49	9
Birthplace (categorised)	Australia	1,442	38*	52	10
	Main English Speaking Countries	92	47	42	11
	Other countries	389	52*	40*	8
Family composition of household	Lone person household	134	47	46	8
	Couple only	192	35	52	13
	Couple children at home	877	42	49	9
	Lone parent children at home	214	39	51	10
	Group household	248	45	45	10
	Other household	250	41	51	8
Remoteness area grouped by type	Major cities of Australia	1,477	43	48	9
	Inner Regional Australia	246	36	55	9
	Outer regional Australia	145	39	49	12
	Remote & very remote Australia	48	31	55	14
Employment Status	Employed	1,151	39	52	9
	Unemployed	174	46*	41	13
	A student	533	46	46	8
	Other	60	30	58	12

*Statistically significant against the 2013 youth sample, $p \leq .05$

Remoteness area measured with Australian Bureau of Statistics remoteness area classifications.

Table C3: Gender equality by selected demographic characteristics, people aged 16–24 years, 2013

		Gender equality index			
		n	Low %	Moderate %	High %
Youth total		1,920	21	46	33
Birthplace (categorised)	Australia	1,439	17*	47	37*
	Main English Speaking Countries	92	13	48	38
	Other countries	389	38*	45	17*
Family composition of household	Lone person household	134	35*	38	27
	Couple only	192	20	44	37
	Couple children at home	877	18	49	32
	Lone parent children at home	214	17	46	37
	Group household	248	22	42	35
	Other household	249	27*	45	28
Remoteness area grouped by type	Major cities of Australia	1,474	21	46	33
	Inner Regional Australia	246	15*	49	36
	Outer regional Australia	145	29*	42	30
	Remote & very remote Australia	48	22	42	36
Employment Status	Employed	1,151	21	46	33
	Unemployed	172	24	44	32
	A student	533	19	48	34
	Other	60	24	42	34

*Statistically significant against the 2013 youth sample, $p \leq .05$

Remoteness area measured with Australian Bureau of Statistics remoteness area classifications.

Appendix D: Attitudes and understanding, total NCAS sample age 16–34 years, by age group

Table D1: Total sample aged 16–34 years by Gender Equality Scale, Gender Equality in Relationships Scale, Understanding Violence against Women Scale and violence-supportive attitudes construct, 2013

		All sample aged 16–34 years		
		16–17 years A	18–24 years B	25–34 years C
		n=247 %	n=1,673 %	n=2,512 %
Attitudinal support for gender equality (gender equality scale)	Low	18	21	26 ^{AB}
	Medium	51	45	44
	High	31	33	30
		n=247 %	n=1,673 %	n=2,505 %
Gender equality in relationships	Low	42	44	43
	Medium	40 ^{BC}	31	29
	High	18	25	28 ^A
		n=247 %	n=1,676 %	n=2,515 %
Understanding of violence (understanding of violence against women scale)	Low	41	42	39
	Medium	51	49	47
	High	8	9	14 ^{AB}
		n=247 %	n=1,676 %	n=2,515 %
Attitudinal support for violence against women (violence-supportive attitudes construct)	Low	8	15 ^A	20 ^{AB}
	Medium	57	55 ^C	50
	High	36	30	30

Difference between A, B, C is statistically significant by age, $p \leq .01$

Table D2: Males aged 16–34 years by Gender Equality Scale, Gender Equality in Relationships Scale, Understanding Violence against Women Scale and violence-supportive attitudes construct, 2013

		All males aged 16–34 years		
		16–17 years A	18–24 years B	25–34 years C
		n=130 %	n=879 %	n=1,202 %
Attitudinal support for gender equality (gender equality scale)	Low	23	28	33
	Medium	53	47	46
	High	23	26 ^c	20
		n=130 %	n=879 %	n=1,198 %
Gender equality in relationships	Low	46	50	53
	Medium	39	31	29
	High	15	18	18
		n=130 %	n=882 %	n=1,204 %
Understanding of violence (understanding of violence against women scale)	Low	43	47	46
	Medium	52	46	44
	High	5	7	10
		n=130 %	n=882 %	n=1,204 %
Attitudinal support for violence against women (violence-supportive attitudes construct)	Low	5	10	14 ^{AB}
	Medium	54	52	51
	High	41	37	35

Difference between A, B, C is statistically significant by age, $p \leq .01$

Table D3: Females aged 16–34 years by Gender Equality Scale, Gender Equality in Relationships Scale, Understanding Violence against Women Scale and violence-supportive attitudes construct, 2013

		All females aged 16–34 years		
		16–17 years A	18–24 years B	25–34 years C
		n=117 %	n=794 %	n=1,310 %
Attitudinal support for gender equality (gender equality scale)	Low	11	14	19 ^B
	Medium	49	44	42
	High	40	41	38
		n=117 %	n=794 %	n=1,307 %
Gender equality in relationships	Low	37	38	34
	Medium	42 ^C	30	28
	High	21	31	37 ^{AB}
		n=117 %	n=794 %	n=1,311 %
Understanding of violence (understanding of violence against women scale)	Low	38	36	32
	Medium	49	52	50
	High	12	12	18 ^B
		n=117 %	n=794 %	n=1,311 %
Attitudinal support for violence against women (violence-supportive attitudes construct)	Low	10	19 ^A	26 ^{AB}
	Medium	60	58 ^C	49
	High	30	23	25

Difference between A, B, C is statistically significant by age, $p < .01$



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