Change the story.

A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia (second edition)

Our WATCh
End violence against Women And Their Children

ON AVERAGE ONE WOMAN A WEEK IS KILLED BY A PARTNER OR FORMER PARTNER

1 IN 2 WOMEN HAS EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT

1 IN 4 WOMEN HAS BEEN SEXUALLY ASSAULTED AT WORK

$323 BILLION ESTIMATED COST OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN TO THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY BY 2044–45

1 IN 3 WOMEN HAS EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

WE CAN STOP THIS VIOLENCE BEFORE IT STARTS

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS PREVENTABLE

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WE CAN CHANGE THE STORY

Acknowledgement of Country

Our Watch acknowledges and pays respect to the traditional owners of the land on which *Change the story* was largely developed, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.

As a national organisation, we also acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of country across Australia and pay our respects to them, their cultures and their respective Elders, past and present.

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Foreword

Violence against women is a problem of epidemic proportions in Australia. It is both a serious violation of women's human rights, and extremely costly to the whole of society.[1] Violence against women – which is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men – is both a symptom and a cause of gender inequality and a barrier to its achievement. However, this violence is not inevitable but rather the product of social, cultural, political and economic factors; conditions that are complex and entrenched, yet modifiable. Put simply, violence against women is preventable.[2] Australia has a choice. We can change the story of violence against women and stop it before it starts.

Indeed, over time we have already seen a degree of social change on this issue. Australians no longer consider men's violence against women to be a few isolated incidents, or a private issue. It is now acknowledged to be a serious and widespread social problem – an issue of significant public concern for which Australians expect an urgent national response. But while there have been positive shifts in attitudes towards violence against women in Australia, much more needs to be done to create an Australia where women live free from violence.

With the first edition of *Change the story* in 2015, Australia began to develop the foundations for a world-leading approach to primary prevention.

Since 2015 there have been many signs of progress in Australia. But there is much more to do. The social transformation needed to prevent men's violence against women requires systematic and coordinated investment and effort, at the largest possible scale, from all levels of government as well as non-government organisations, the private sector, civil society and communities. This second edition of *Change the story* provides an evidence-based framework to inform and guide an effective, coordinated, appropriately resourced and truly national approach to prevention. It demonstrates once again that we all have a role to play in changing the story of violence against women and their children.

A primary prevention approach works to change the underlying social conditions that produce and drive violence against women, and that excuse, justify or even promote it. It works across the whole population to address the attitudes, norms, practices, structures and power imbalances that drive violence against women.

Building on a history of Australian leadership in prevention

This second edition of *Change the story* builds on a long history of advocacy, leadership and action by feminists, women's and other community organisations, violence against women service providers and specialists, governments, and community members with a shared commitment to ending violence against women.

The first prevention framework launched in Australia was developed by VicHealth and the Victorian government in 2007 and stimulated significant prevention activity in Victoria. This was followed by the first edition of *Change the story*, the first *national* framework for primary prevention of violence against women, jointly developed by Our Watch, VicHealth and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) in 2015.

The first edition of *Change the story* was adopted as Australia's national policy framework for prevention by all Australian governments under the Third Action Plan 2016–19 of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*,[3] itself a joint, bipartisan commitment of all Australian governments.

Reflecting Australian leadership on this issue, *Change the story* has been recognised in many international contexts as a world-leading contribution to the field of prevention, and has inspired work towards similar approaches in other countries.[i] This second edition aims to continue and strengthen Australia's leadership on this issue.

i This includes, for example: a National Action Plan to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls in Fiji, by the Government of Fiji — see UN Women (2021). Fiji starts national consultations on action plan to prevent violence against women and girls; a monitoring framework for the Asia-Pacific – see The Equality Institute for UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (2021). *Respect: Making progress in prevention possible – A monitoring framework for the prevention of violence against women and girls in the Asia-Pacific region*; and a collaboration between the Peruvian government, the Prevention Collaborative and the Equality Institute to develop a framework and policy mechanisms for a whole-of-government approach to prevention suited to the Peruvian context – see Reflections on a successful learning exchange between Australia, Peru and Colombia.

Introduction

Violence against women – a serious, prevalent and preventable human rights abuse

Violence against women is a fundamental, serious and preventable violation of human rights. It is a critical obstacle to the achievement of substantive equality between women and men, and to the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.[4] As such, all jurisdictions have continuing obligations under international human rights agreements to ensure the health, safety and equality of women. Specifically, nation states are required to take positive steps to eliminate all forms of violence against women.[5]

Human rights–based frameworks are an anchor for engaging nation states in their responsibilities regarding violence against women, as enshrined in international instruments and agreements.[6] While other stakeholders also need to play a part, the need (and obligation) for the state to take primary responsibility for this work is clear.[7] These obligations are articulated in the United Nations conventions to which Australia is a signatory.

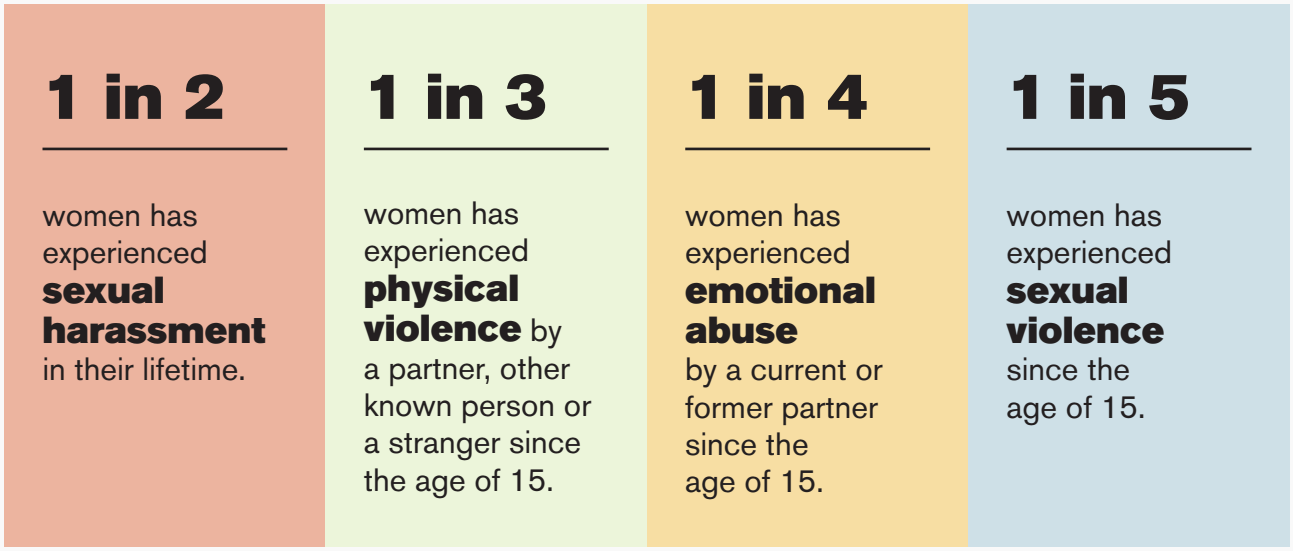
The core legal obligation that establishes this responsibility is the United Nations (1979) *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (known as CEDAW),[8] particularly the General Recommendation No. 19 (added in 1992).[9] The Convention is supported by the United Nations (1993) *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*;[10] the United Nations (1995) *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*;[11] and the United Nations (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.[12] Related human rights obligations are set out in a number of other conventions that Australia has ratified, which address particular aspects of gender inequality and/or violence against women.[13]

These international human rights frameworks point to several areas requiring further attention in Australia. In 2018, the UN Special Rapporteur paid particular attention to the situation of women and girls who encounter multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence and experience higher rates of all forms of violence, making specific recommendations for Australia to address violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disabilities, women who are incarcerated, women from refugee, asylum seeker and migrant backgrounds, and older women.[14] On gender equality more broadly, the CEDAW Committee observed in 2018 that the lack of a 'comprehensive gender equality policy and … [a] targeted action plan, with indicators, that addresses the structural factors perpetuating gender inequalities' was seriously hampering efforts towards gender equality in Australia.[15]

'Violence against women constitutes a violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women and impairs or nullifies their enjoyment of those rights and freedoms.'[16]

Figure 1
Prevalence of various forms of violence against women in Australia

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017.



Violence against women in Australia is staggeringly common and has widespread and significant effects, for women across all communities.

One in four Australian women has experienced violence inflicted by an intimate partner since the age of 15 and at least one in two women has experienced sexual harassment during their lifetime.[17] An average of one woman a week is killed by a current or former partner[18] while others are killed by men who are not intimate partners.[19] The killing of children is also strongly correlated with a history of domestic/family violence.[20] These data reflect global patterns, with upwards of 850 million women experiencing some form of sexual or physical violence in their lifetime, with significant impacts on their physical and mental health and wellbeing.[21] In addition to these direct impacts, the threat of violence limits all women's quality of life and reduces their participation in social, civic and economic life.[22]

The cost of violence against women in Australia is high and increasing: in 2015–16, the cost was estimated at $22 billion a year. Victim–survivors bear the primary burden of this cost; however, Commonwealth, state and territory governments bear the second biggest cost burden, estimated at $7.8 billion a year in health, administration and social welfare costs. If adequate action is not taken to prevent violence against women, these costs will rise to $323.4 billion by 2044–45.[23] The economic, social and health costs of violence against women affects all Australians; for this reason, we all have a responsibility to play our part in addressing this national crisis.

See Appendix 1 for more detailed information about the prevalence, dynamics and impacts of violence against women.

The need for an ongoing and strengthened national approach to prevention

Through the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children 2010–2022* (the National Plan), all Australian governments made a long-term commitment to ensure that women and their children live free from violence. The first edition of *Change the story* was developed as a priority action under the National Plan's Second Action Plan 2013–16, and was adopted as Australia's national policy framework for prevention by all Australian governments under the Third Action Plan 2016–19.

The aim of this framework (in both its first and second editions) is the **primary prevention** of violence against women – that is, to change the underlying social conditions that produce and drive this violence, and that excuse, justify or even promote it, to prevent it from occurring in the first place. More detail about primary prevention can be found on page 55.

The joint Commonwealth/state and territory approach, and the long term bipartisan support that underpins the National Plan are as necessary now as they were when it was established in 2010, and this has been recognised through the commitment to the development of a second National Plan. This sustained commitment from all Australian governments acknowledges that ending violence against women will not be easy, will not be quick, and will not be possible unless we all work together.

Throughout the life of the first National Plan, promising progress has been made with the development of significant 'prevention infrastructure',[ii] which includes:

- establishment of two key independent organisations: Our Watch – with an explicit mandate to develop and lead a national approach to prevention – and ANROWS –

ii Prevention infrastructure refers to the systems, structures and human capacities that are being built and developed to support long-term primary prevention efforts. See Our Watch. (2020). *Tracking progress in prevention: A national monitoring report on progress towards the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia* for more on the development of this infrastructure.

to produce and disseminate evidence on violence against women and their children

- policy reform across the country, which has seen the federal government and most state/territory governments identifying primary prevention as a priority in policies related to violence against women, domestic and family violence, and/or sexual violence
- increased prevention programming, with proven and promising techniques implemented across a range of settings
- an emerging multidisciplinary primary prevention workforce, who implement prevention initiatives and build the capability of others to contribute to a shared, national approach
- positive ongoing commitments to national data collection, monitoring, management and dissemination, and efforts to strengthen whole-of-population data, such as the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey and the Personal Safety Survey
- development of a national monitoring framework, *Counting on change*,[24] and publication of Australia's first national monitoring report, *Tracking progress in prevention*.[25]

These signs of progress are encouraging; Australia is starting to build the foundations for future success, with evidence to show that we are heading in the right direction, but there is still much to do. High-level commitments to prevention have not yet translated into the actions that are needed across all levels of society.

To support and sustain progress made under the first National Plan, governments at all levels have a critical role to play over the long term in leading and coordinating prevention activity in their jurisdictions, across sectors and settings, and using the legislative and policy levers available to them to advance prevention goals (see Element 7 — Stakeholder roles and responsibilities for more on the role of governments). A national approach requires the active involvement of many other stakeholders – those who can lead prevention work in schools, workplaces, unions, businesses, leisure venues, sports clubs and the media, and those who can work effectively with different age groups, as well as those who can work in and with the wide range of population groups and communities who make up the Australian population.

Australia still has a long way to go to prevent violence against women. A sustained reduction in the prevalence of violence against women will not be achieved without an ongoing, genuinely national, evidence-based and shared approach. *Change the story* provides the framework to guide and support continued development and strengthening of prevention approaches in Australia. It explains what drives violence against women, and, most importantly, it outlines what is needed to prevent this violence. It details the elements of an effective national approach to prevention, points to the overarching infrastructure and the specific actions that are required, and it outlines the unique roles that different stakeholders need to play as part of this shared national approach.

We need to stay the course, consolidate our progress, and work together to continue filling identified gaps in our shared national approach.[iii]

iii For in-depth discussion on these gaps, as well as the progress achieved to date, see Our Watch. (2020). *Tracking progress in prevention*.

The purpose of *Change the story*: Australia's national policy framework

Change the story is an interdisciplinary framework, informed by a wide range of literature, evidence from research and practice, and theoretical and conceptual contributions from diverse fields. It draws on the contributions of intersectional feminism and other anti-oppressive social and political theory and analysis, to understand the dynamics of Australian society, including both gender inequality and other systemic forms of social, political and economic oppression, discrimination and inequality. It also draws on the evidence base and principles of public health, particularly the need to investigate the underlying causes, determinants, or drivers of a problem, not just its immediate precursors or its impacts, in order to determine how best to prevent it. Finally, it is founded on international research and evidence from the field of human rights. The human rights–based imperative to end violence, and the human rights principles of collaboration, participation, and ensuring equality of outcomes for all, inform every aspect of this framework.

The purpose of *Change the story* is to drive and lead change, and guide action to achieve the ultimate goal of keeping all women free from all forms of violence. It does this by:

- making explicit the connections between gender inequality, other forms of inequality and violence against women, and the specific gendered drivers of this violence, together with several potential reinforcing factors
- providing evidence-based guidance on how to address these specific gendered drivers and reinforcing factors
- providing evidence-based guidance to government and non-government stakeholders, the private sector, civil society and communities on how to lead, coordinate, resource and support effective prevention efforts across Australia
- identifying the multifaceted actions that are necessary – from policy and legislative reform, to change to systems and structures, to organisational and institutional strategies, to social norms change, to programming and advocacy
- articulating the infrastructure that is required to enable society-wide prevention activity and ensure its effects are sustained.

The audience for this high-level framework is broad and includes policy makers, leaders, funders, planners, program designers, practitioners and advocates who seek systems-level change and support the development of a coordinated, national approach to primary prevention of violence against women in Australia. For guidance on translating this national framework into prevention work at the community level, or in particular settings and sectors,[26] see Our Watch's Prevention Handbook.

Key concepts and language

When understanding violence against women and how it can be prevented, it is important to be specific about language and conceptual framing. Appendix 2 provides definitions and explanations of key concepts used in this framework, including on how *Change the story* defines 'woman', the use of the term 'violence against women' as opposed to 'family/domestic violence', and the use and limitations of binary language. Readers are encouraged to consult this appendix, as well as the Glossary of terms at the end of the document, as these explanations and definitions are a lens through which the entire framework should be understood.

The focus of *Change the story*: the spectrum of violence against women

There are many different but interrelated forms of violence against women. The large body of evidence that informs this framework is both Australian and international, and this evidence is primarily focused on intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual assault. However, this framework also draws on emerging evidence about many other forms of violence and the unique experiences of various population subgroups, demographic cohorts and communities.

All forms of violence against women are interrelated. While specific or additional factors may be relevant to each, and an intersectional analysis is essential (see The importance of an intersectional analysis, on page 17), all forms of violence against women have a gendered element, and share some common drivers, and can therefore be conceived as a spectrum.[iv] For this reason, the overarching focus of *Change the story* is the prevention of all forms of violence against all women, including girls and young women.[v]

Because all forms of violence against women have a gendered dimension and occur in the context of gender inequality, the prevention approach outlined in this framework will, if implemented, have a positive impact across the spectrum of different forms of violence that women, young women and girls experience, including:

- intimate partner violence,[vi] including dating violence
- sexual violence (whether perpetrated by someone known or by a stranger)
- sexual harassment (whether in workplaces, public spaces or online)
- specific types of violence that are primarily experienced by particular communities of women and girls (such as dowry-related abuse, sexual and reproductive coercion, so-called 'honour crimes', sex trafficking and other slavery-like practices, female genital mutilation/cutting, and child/early and forced marriage)
- violence that occurs in institutional settings (for example, violence in prisons, in aged care facilities, disability or residential care settings, or health or education settings), which can include state-sanctioned or legalised violence.

The strategies in this framework are not all that is needed to prevent all forms of violence. Specific types of violence, and violence in institutional settings, require additional strategies and specialised approaches informed by specialist evidence, and led by, or developed in close collaboration with, the population groups and communities most affected and relevant community and specialist organisations. However, *Change the story* can help to inform strategies to reduce all forms of violence against women and girls, and will complement, support, and create a more enabling environment for specialised approaches.

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iv The vast majority of violence against women is perpetrated by men, although some women do perpetrate violence against other women (for example, female workers in an aged or disability care/service context, women in same sex relationships, and women who perpetrate female genital mutilation/cutting). *Change the story* recognises that all violence against women, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator, has a gendered element because it is violence that targets women, is perpetrated in a context of gender inequality and, as recognised by the United Nations, is 'rooted in gender-based factors'.

v From here this framework will predominantly use the language of 'women' rather than 'women, young women and girls' for simplicity, except where there is a specific focus on girls or young women, in which case this will be explicitly noted.

vi Where this is perpetrated by men against women.

Children and young people's experiences of violence

While the focus of this framework is on violence against women, it is important to recognise that children and young people have their own, unique experiences of violence.

While children and young people of all genders can experience or be exposed to violence, both directly and as a consequence of family or domestic violence between adults in their lives, girls and younger women can experience violence in similar gendered ways to adult women – that is, because they are girls. While this framework encompasses this gendered violence against girls and younger women, addressing and preventing violence against children more broadly requires a separate but complementary national approach, through the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Childre*n. At the same time, implementing *Change the story* will contribute to the child protection goals in this related national framework, because preventing violence against women will also help prevent children's exposure to and experience of this violence, and therefore reduce the significant associated harms.

For more information about the prevalence and dynamics of violence against young women and girls, and the impact of violence against women on children and young people, see Appendix 1.

Understanding a population-level approach

Change the story sets out a national, universal, population-level approach to primary prevention of violence against women. This approach aims to drive change by articulating the drivers of this violence as something that occurs across society and affects all women. It goes beyond addressing individual behaviours to consider the broader social, political and economic factors that drive violence.

We know that women frequently experience violence simply because they are women. Accordingly, this framework analyses why women as a population group are subject to violence, why the primary perpetrators of this violence are men,[27] and what strategies are necessary to address the common drivers of this violence.

At the same time, the framework recognises that women are not a homogenous group. Some groups of women are more likely to experience particular forms of violence, or more frequent or more severe violence. Some experience violence from a wider range of perpetrators, and some experience violence that is unique to specific contexts or settings (see Appendix 1 for data on the prevalence and varying dynamics and impacts of violence). Particular manifestations of violence, and violence against particular groups of women, can have a range of other drivers and contributing factors.

A universal, or whole-of-population, framework for prevention, while not designed to focus in depth on any one specific form of violence or on violence perpetrated against particular population subgroups, must nevertheless embed an intersectional approach, as *Change the story* makes clear. It will then provide support for and complement other frameworks and resources that set out specific strategies for the prevention of violence in particular contexts, or against particular sub-populations of women.

The importance of an intersectional analysis

An intersectional analysis of the issue of violence against women is critical to the success of prevention work. The intersections of a range of structural and systemic forms of oppression and discrimination produce particular forms and patterns of violence. These intersections can increase the prevalence or severity of violence against some women, and limit or undermine individual and systemic consequences for the use of violence. Not only do these systemic and structural intersections have an impact on women's experiences of violence (both as individuals and as groups), they also have an impact on how gender and gender inequality are constructed and experienced.

Systemic and structural forms of racism, colonialism, ableism, homo, bi- and transphobia, ageism, class discrimination – together and separately, and alongside power and privilege – intersect with the gendered drivers of violence against women and with the reinforcing factors in a range of different ways. An intersectional analysis has been embedded in the explanations of the four gendered drivers and the reinforcing factors described in Element 1, to demonstrate how other forms of systemic marginalisation, oppression and discrimination affect the operation of these drivers and influence the prevalence and dynamics of violence against women.

What's changed in this second edition?

This second edition of *Change the story* supersedes the first edition published in 2015. It has been updated to incorporate the latest evidence and knowledge about the drivers of violence against women, and what works to prevent it. Revisions have also been made to clarify, expand or improve the framework's coverage of specific topics, including:

- The focus on 'violence against women' has been sharpened, and the related issues for children better articulated, to address the confusion about whether 'violence against women and their children', includes child abuse in a broader sense. This does not change the intention of the framework, but rather clarifies the scope. It remains the case that while this is not a framework designed to address child abuse more broadly, preventing violence against women has the additional benefit of preventing associated harm to any children in their care.
- There is a deliberate inclusion in the framework's scope of girls and young women as victims[vii] of gendered violence – that is, violence perpetrated against them not because they are children but because they are female.
- There is additional explanation of the framework's definition of 'women', and commentary on the use and limitations of binary language.
- The names and descriptions of some drivers and reinforcing factors have been slightly rephrased or expanded to better reflect the most recent evidence.
- There is an increased focus on perpetration, and on men as perpetrators of violence, a more detailed explanation of the connections between masculinities, gender inequality and violence against women, and greater emphasis on the importance of addressing masculinities and engaging men in the prevention of violence against women.[28]
- An intersectional analysis is more deeply embedded throughout the framework, and the ways in which intersecting forms of oppression, discrimination, power and privilege influence the perpetration, experience and dynamics of violence have been made more explicit and prominent.
- There is an expanded focus on the change needed at structural and systemic levels and what this change entails, and the key roles that governments need to play to drive that change through laws, policies and regulation.

vii The term 'victim' in this framework means any person who is a victim or survivor of men's violence, whether that experience occurred when the person was a child, a young person or an adult.

Element 1 — Understanding violence against women: an explanatory model

Element 1 first sets out how Change the story defines and understands violence against women. It considers what is known about the perpetration of this violence, and men's violence against women in particular.viii It points to the gendered dynamics of this violence, and the necessity of locating it in the social context of gender inequality, and of examining the influence of masculinities on men's perpetration of this violence.[29]

This element then identifies the gendered drivers of violence against women, and the factors that reinforce this violence. It also includes consideration of the ways that gender inequality intersects with other forms of systemic and structural discrimination and oppression (such as racism, ableism, classism, heteronormativity, cisnormativity[30] and homo-, bi- and transphobia) as key to understanding violence against women, recognising that gender inequality can never be disentangled from these other injustices.

viii While some women may experience violence at the hands of women, either in a relationship context or an institutional setting, the vast majority of violence against women in Australia is perpetrated by men. This framework refers to 'violence against women' in some situations, and 'men's violence against women' in others, depending on the context.

What is violence against women?

The framework's definition of violence against women[ix] is aligned with the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993), which says that violence against women is defined as 'any act of gender-based violence[31] that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life'.[32] This declaration indicates that such violence is specifically 'directed against a woman because she is a woman, or violence that affects women disproportionately'.[33]

Further to the 1993 definition, *Change the story* aligns with the 2017 UN Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, which says that violence against women encompasses all forms of violence, harassment, abuse and coercive control that women (and often young women and girls) experience, violence that is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men (both known and trusted, and strangers).[34] These forms include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, social, cultural, spiritual, financial and technology-facilitated violence or abuse (including image-based abuse[35]), and stalking. This definition encompasses violence that occurs in many contexts, including in the home, in residential care and institutional settings, in workplaces, public places, online or virtual spaces. Violence can be a one-off incident, or an ongoing pattern of behaviour where a perpetrator deliberately acts in a coercive way to exert control over his victim's life. Within intimate relationships in particular, men's violence against women is often characterised by a dynamic of coercion and control, where the perpetrator uses behaviours that are specifically and deliberately designed to exert power over the victim, to cause her fear, and to control her and all aspects of her life.

Violence against women is endemic throughout all societies and countries.[36] It occurs in Australia across all socio-economic and demographic groups.[37] Women have a range of different experiences of violence, harassment and abuse throughout their lives. For many women, these experiences are influenced by the intersections between the gendered drivers of violence against women and other systemic and structural forms of social injustice, discrimination and oppression, all of which have what the CEDAW Committee calls 'an aggravating negative impact' and affect the prevalence and dynamics of violence against women.[38]

While each woman's experience of violence, abuse or harassment is unique, there are distinct patterns in the data on the prevalence and dynamics of violence against women in Australia – see Figure 1.[39] This points to an epidemic of violence against women in Australia, which, like that in the rest of the world, is gendered in nature, and overwhelmingly perpetrated by men.[40]

For detailed information and data on the prevalence, dynamics and impacts of violence against women, see Appendix 1.

Violence against young women and girls is gendered violence

Girls and young women experience gendered forms of violence in similar ways to adult women.[41] One in six (1.5 million) Australian girls and young women report having experienced physical and/or sexual abuse before the age of 15.[42] For this reason, violence against women is often referred to as 'gender-based violence', in recognition of the fact that both adult women, girls and young women experience violence that has gendered dynamics and drivers. Implementing the actions outlined in this framework will help to prevent the gendered violence that girls and young women experience in their homes, relationships, online and in public places.

ix See Appendix 2 for discussion of the use of the term 'woman' in this framework.

The relationship between violence against women and LGBTIQ people

There is significant overlap between the drivers of violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people and the drivers of violence against women that are articulated within this framework. In particular, rigid, binary and hierarchical constructions of sex, gender and sexuality, have a significant impact on the violence that women and LGBTIQ people and communities experience.[43]

Key societal drivers of violence against LGBTIQ people have been identified as rigid gender norms, heteronormativity, and cisnormativity.[44] Gender inequality is underpinned by heteronormativity and cisnormativity – attitudes, norms, and behaviours that value heterosexuality as the normal or preferred sexual orientation, and cisgender as the normal and preferred gender identity – which then have an impact on how people understand binary gender roles and gendered norms in society. *Change the story* is focused on understanding and articulating the drivers of violence against women, some of whom are members of the LGBTIQ community, but it cannot – and does not seek to – address all aspects or forms of violence experienced by LGBTIQ people. In line with an intersectional approach, it is important that work to address violence against LGBTIQ people is led by organisations and individuals within those communities, informed by specific and nuanced frameworks and gender transformative approaches, and includes actions to address the connections between relevant drivers, particularly the relationship between rigid gender roles, socially dominant forms of masculinity, heteronormativity, cisnormativity, and homophobia.

1 in 4 women in the Australian workforce said they had been **sexually harassed at work** in the last 12 months.

2 in 3 women who have experienced physical violence **didn't report the most recent incident to police**.

3 in 10 women said they have experienced **online abuse or harassment**.

Younger women (under the age of 35) are the age group most likely to have experienced recent violence from an intimate partner.

9 in 10 women who have experienced sexual assault **didn't report the most recent incident to police**.

37% of women who have experienced online abuse or harassment said the experience made them feel their **physical safety was threatened**.

LGBTIQ women can experience unique forms of violence, including threats of 'outing', shaming of LGBTIQ identity or – for those who are HIV-positive or taking hormones to affirm their gender – withholding of hormones or medication.

36% of **women with disability** reported experiencing intimate partner violence since age 15 (compared to 21% of women without disability). Women with disability also experience violence from a wider range of perpetrators.

Women with complex mental health conditions or alcohol and drug issues are more likely to experience state-sanctioned violence within the juvenile or adult justice systems through interactions with police.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience violence at more than three times the rate of violence against non-Indigenous women.

For some women, experiences of violence are complicated or compounded by racism, immigration processes, language barriers, religious beliefs or culturally specific norms about gender and relationships.

Older women are more likely to experience violence from a wider range of perpetrators including partners, adult children, other family members, neighbours and caregivers.

Women in rural and remote communities experience higher rates of intimate partner violence than those in major cities.

Migrant and refugee women can be subjected to forms of violence that relate to their uncertain citizenship, where perpetrators threaten them with deportation.

Figure 2
Types, prevalence and dynamics of violence against women in Australia: the current picture

For references see Appendix 1.

While each woman's experience of violence, abuse or harassment is unique, there are distinct gendered patterns in the data that point to an epidemic of violence against women in Australia, which, like that in the rest of the world, is gendered in nature, and overwhelmingly perpetrated by men.

Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Across the country, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women point to family violence, sexual assault and abuse as a major cause of personal harm, family and community breakdown, and social fragmentation.[45] Addressing the disproportionate rates of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (see Appendix 1) must be treated as an urgent national priority. This is acknowledged by the Closing the Gap target: 'by 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced at least by 50 per cent, as progress towards zero.'[46] But as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner points out, achieving this goal will require a significant reorientation of government policy and practice, given current investments are 'disproportionately weighted to intervention' rather than to 'addressing the underlying causes of harms' that are present in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.[47]

A holistic approach that provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with support and safety, while also working to prevent these harms by addressing their underlying causes, is critical. To achieve this, there is significant evidence pointing to the need for governments 'to direct investments into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander models of development and social reconstruction' through those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations that are best placed to respond to the immediate harms experienced by women and families, enable healing and focus on prevention and enhancing the social and cultural determinants of safety and wellbeing.[48]

Change the story is focused on understanding and addressing the drivers of violence against all women in Australia. It is designed to be of relevance across the diverse Australian population, including to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. At the same time, it cannot do justice to all the specific issues pertaining to violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. For a more detailed exploration of these, and a dedicated prevention framework, please see *Changing the picture*.

'[Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander] women and girls have emphasised that effective resolution of systemic issues will demand large-scale prevention strategies grounded in our self-determination and oriented toward healing and restoration of our social and cultural values'. [49]

Changing the picture: preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

In recognition of the urgent need to reframe and improve Australia's approach to the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, Our Watch, in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, published *Changing the picture*.[50] This two-part publication identifies the intersecting drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as:

- ongoing impacts of colonisation, including intergenerational trauma, systemic oppression, disempowerment and racism, and the disruption of traditional cultures, family and community relationships and community norms about violence
- racialised structural inequalities of power in Australian society, social norms condoning violence, and insufficient accountability for violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- gendered factors, both those that drive violence against women of all cultural backgrounds, as well as systems of 'colonial patriarchy' and the intersections of racism and sexism for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Changing the picture points to this violence as an Australian problem, perpetrated by men of all cultural backgrounds. It frames prevention as a collective responsibility. It emphasises the importance of prevention initiatives being guided by principles of self-determination, and led and implemented by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander–controlled organisations. It also points to the responsibilities of non-Indigenous organisations and people to work as allies in culturally safe ways, and to address racism and discrimination in Australian society.

The gendered dynamics of violence in Australia

There are distinct gendered dynamics to violence in Australia, including differences in prevalence and in the ways in which men and women perpetrate and experience violence.

Because the field of research and practice on violence against women has historically focused on responding to this violence, most prevalence data and other research in the field is focused on victimisation – or women's experiences of violence. This evidence (a summary of which is provided at Appendix 1) is critical to inform early intervention and response strategies, to ensure that they respond effectively to women's experiences and needs.

However, strategies to *prevent* violence against women, that is, to stop it from occurring in the first place, must focus on the perpetration of this violence; the characteristics of perpetrators, and the structures, norms and practices that drive and enable its perpetration. For this reason, although there is less available data on perpetration compared to victimisation, this section presents the evidence on perpetration first.

Figure 3
Gendered patterns in violence perpetration and victimisation

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Human Rights Commission, Australian Institute of Criminology, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

1 in 4 women has experienced **violence by an intimate partner**, compared to 1 in 13 men.	Women were sexually assaulted at a rate **seven times higher** than men in 2018.	In 2012, **95%** of men and **94%** of women who experienced violence did so at the hands of a **male perpetrator**.	Women are more likely than men to report **fearing for their lives** at the hands of a partner.
In most incidents of **sexual harassment**, the harasser was male.	Men are more likely to perpetrate extreme forms of violence that **result in serious injury or death**.	In 2017–2018, **men** committed **homicides** at five times the rate of women.	Women are more likely to be **injured so severely** by a male partner that they require hospitalisation.

Men's use of violence: what we know about perpetration

Overwhelmingly, violence against women in Australia is perpetrated by men.[x] [51] In Australia:

- The great majority of both male and female victims experience violence at the hands of a male perpetrator. Analysis of the previous (2012) Personal Safety Survey suggests that 95 per cent of men and 94 per cent of women who experienced violence since the age of 15 did so at the hands of a male perpetrator.[52]
- In most incidents of workplace sexual harassment, the harasser was male.[53]
- Men are more likely to perpetrate extreme forms of violence that result in serious injury or death.[54]
- In 2017–2018, men committed homicides at five times the rate of women.[55]

Research shows there are strong links between socially dominant forms and patterns of masculinity,[xi] men's sexist attitudes and behaviours, and men's perpetration of violence against women,[56] links that are explored further on page 31.

Not only is violence against women overwhelmingly perpetrated by men, it is men who are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of violence against people of all genders.[57] Men's experience of violence is more likely to be at the hands of other men.[58] Male perpetration is also a common feature of the violence that some members of the LGBTIQ community experience: 84 per cent of respondents in an Australian study of LGBTIQ people who had experienced sexual assault said the violence was perpetrated by a cisgender man, and while equivalent Australian data is not available, in a US study, 89 per cent of bisexual women who experienced relationship violence said the perpetrator was a man.[59]

Violence against women is committed by men from across the social and economic spectrum; men who choose to use some form of violence,[xii] abuse or harassment against a partner, former partner, a colleague or a stranger are all around us. This does not mean that most men in Australia are violent. On the contrary, most are loving, caring and respectful partners, brothers, fathers, friends and colleagues. But while men who choose to use violence against women may be in the minority, many more men hold sexist or violence-supportive attitudes. Many encourage, or do not actively challenge, other men's sexist behaviour. And many stay silent when they see other men harassing or showing disrespect towards women, or displaying aggressive or controlling forms of masculinity. In this sense, many men who are not violent themselves are complicit in maintaining the system of gender inequality, which delivers benefits to men as a group over women as a group,[60] and which sets the social context in which violence against women arises.

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x While there are women who use violence in their relationships with men, the dynamics and drivers of this violence are different from the violence that men use in their relationships with women. Women who use relationship violence often do so to assert their personal autonomy *from* a partner, rather than to exercise personal authority or coercive control *over* a partner, and often use force in self-defence or retaliation. Women are more likely to use psychological, verbal and emotional force than other kinds of violence, and when they use physical force, it is less likely to cause severe physical harm. Further, most women identified as using force are themselves victim–survivors of domestic or family violence or childhood abuse.

xi Dominant 'forms and patterns' of masculinity are the particular attitudes, norms, stereotypes, roles and practices that men are expected to support, conform to or participate in, and that operate at and across structural, systemic, organisational, community, interpersonal and individual levels of society. They are not always harmful (or 'toxic') in themselves and/or a problem in all contexts. However, they can help to maintain gender inequality and create and give legitimacy to the power and privilege that men as a group hold over women as a group, and that men hold in their personal relationships with women.

xii While men who use violence do make a conscious choice to do so (and this framing is important in encouraging individual men to take responsibility for their actions, and be accountable for them), this choice is influenced by a range of individual, familial, community, organisational, structural and societal factors that come into play over the course of a man's lifetime. For further nuanced discussion on the issue of choice and men's perpetration, see Our Watch. (2019). *Men in focus*, pp. 41–43.

Women's experiences of violence: what the data tells us about victimisation

Detailed data on the prevalence and impacts of violence against women are provided in Appendix 1. This large body of data and evidence clearly demonstrates the very high prevalence of all forms of violence against women in Australia, showing that:

- One in three Australian women (30.5 per cent) has experienced physical violence by a partner, other known person or a stranger since the age of 15.[61]
- One in five Australian women (18 per cent) has experienced sexual violence since the age of 15.[62]

The data also demonstrates that women are far more likely than men to experience violence:

- Women are far more likely to experience intimate partner violence than men.[63]
- Women are sexually assaulted at a rate much higher than men. Of the 27,505 victims of sexual assault recorded by police in 2020, 23,153 victims, or 84 per cent, were female.[64]
- Women are far more likely than men to experience sexual violence (and other forms of violence) from an intimate partner, and with more severe impacts.[65]
- Women are also more likely than men to report fearing for their lives, and more likely to be injured so severely that they require hospitalisation, or are killed, by a male intimate partner.[66]

See Figure 3 for a visual comparison of women's and men's experience of violence.

The social context in which violence against women occurs

There is a strong and consistent association between gender inequality and levels of violence against women, and significant consensus in the international evidence that examining the ways in which gender relations are structured and the social context of gender inequality is key to understanding the underlying conditions that produce violence against women. Consistent factors relating to gender inequality predict the prevalence of intimate partner violence,[67] with significantly and consistently higher rates of violence against women in countries characterised by gender inequality and poor human rights protections.[68]

Gender inequality is a social condition characterised by unequal value afforded to men and women and an unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunity between them. It is the direct result of patriarchal systems which privilege the needs, interests and behaviours of men over women, and which permeate many aspects of Australian society and institutions.[69] Gender inequality is also created by heteronormativity and cisnormativity – attitudes, norms and behaviours that suggest that heterosexuality is the normal or preferred sexual orientation and cisgender is the normal and preferred gender identity – which then have an impact on how people understand binary gender roles and gendered norms in society.

There are other aspects of the social context that are also relevant to an understanding of violence against women. Gender inequality cannot be disentangled from other social injustices because gendered inequality frequently intersects with other forms of structural and systemic discrimination, inequality and injustice. This means that the value afforded to women and men is not afforded in the same way for all women or all men, and that our society, institutions and organisations are shaped by those intersections. These intersections

Figure 4
Gender inequality and other forms of oppression play out in many ways and at many levels to create the social context for violence against women

See alternate text for Figure 4 on page 130.

also influence the prevalence, dynamics and impacts of violence against women, as explored further in the section on Intersecting forms of oppression, discrimination, power and privilege, on page 46.

While forms of gender inequality vary between countries and contexts, the kind of gender hierarchy described here, and particularly the association of men with greater power and authority, is common across most societies.[70] Australia's institutions are still marked by gender inequality. In its legal and political systems, in workplaces, in the family, in organisations and in community groups, men continue to hold the majority of power and influence, particularly white, heterosexual, cisgender, able-bodied men with higher levels of education and income.

In Australia, men hold more influence than women in both the public and private spheres. However, this gender dynamic appears particularly persistent in the private domain, where support for women's independence and decision-making and for shared roles lags behind attitudes towards gender equality in public life.[71] One in five Australians think men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household.[72] Attitudes that deny gender inequality and support rigid gender roles are the strongest predictors of attitudes that support or condone violence against women.[73] It is important to understand the social context of gender inequality in which such attitudes emerge, including the way this influences both public and private spheres of life.

'Violence against women and girls is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality.' [74]

Gender inequality results from, or has historical roots in, laws or policies formally constraining the rights and opportunities of women, and is reinforced and maintained today through more informal mechanisms. These include, for example, **social norms** such as the beliefs that underpin gender stereotyping (see Driver 3, page 41); **practices** such as differences in childrearing practices for boys and girls, or gender bias in organisational recruitment practices; and **structures** such as pay differences between men and women. Such norms, practices and structures encourage women and men, girls and boys to adopt distinct gender identities and stereotyped gender roles within a gender hierarchy that historically positions men as superior to women, and masculine roles and identities as superior to feminine ones (see Driver 3, page 41). For further discussion on gendered structures, norms and practices and the impact of these on violence against women see page 34.

Social, economic and political conditions, as well as historical and cultural factors, all influence the way gender inequality is expressed in different countries, communities, organisations or neighbourhoods. For example, some countries may be closing the gender pay gap and have more equal participation of women and men in various occupations and in public decision-making roles,[75] but may still have a media dominated by gender stereotypes, or domestic labour not equally shared between women and men. In other countries, women may hold prominent roles in public life, but simultaneously be subjected to high levels of public sexism.[76]

Explaining the language about masculinities used in this framework

In this section and in the following discussion on the gendered drivers of violence against women (see page 36), the following language is used to describe different aspects of masculinities.

- **Dominant forms and patterns**: the attitudes, norms, stereotypes, roles and practices that are socially dominant – that is, the ideas about masculinity that are most commonly known and promoted in society, and that men are generally expected to support, conform to, or participate in.
- **Ideas, attitudes and beliefs**: what people think or believe about masculinities, often informed by personal values, gender stereotypes and social norms.
- **Social norms**: the informal, mostly unwritten and unspoken collective 'rules' that define typical, acceptable or appropriate ways of being a man or performing masculinity.
- **Stereotypes**: commonly held, fixed and oversimplified ideas about what it means to be male or masculine which inform social norms about how men should act and think, or what they are good or bad at.
- **Practices**: the way in which masculinity is performed or enacted, either by individuals or by organisations/institutions.

All these aspects of masculinities have effects across the different levels of society. They influence the way individual men and groups of men behave, and their effects can be seen in the way laws and policies are structured, as well as the ways that organisations and institutions operate, and the ways in which people talk about men and masculinity.

The relationship between masculinity and men's violence against women

As noted on page 27, it is well-established that there is a direct and clear relationship between specific forms of masculinity and violence, in particular violence against women.[77] To understand this relationship, it is important to understand masculinity within the social context of gender inequality.

Understanding masculinity in a social context

Socially dominant forms and patterns of masculinity that men are expected to adhere to and participate in are central to maintaining gender inequality, which is the social context within which violence against women occurs. These forms of masculinity create and give legitimacy to the privilege and power that men as a group hold over women as a group, and that individual men hold in their personal relationships with women. At their most harmful, these norms, stereotypes and rules about masculinity help drive violence against women.[78] In particular, there is a strong correlation between violence against women and forms of masculinity that are associated with control, dominance, aggression and hypersexuality.

Multiple and hierarchical masculinities

In Australia, there are many masculinities and many different ways of being a man. Masculinity intersects with other axes of identity and social location, such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, ability, age and so forth, to produce multiple masculinities and different experiences of being a man.

This also means there is a hierarchy of masculinities and significant differences in the level of power that different men (and groups of men) hold in society. Not all men for example, enjoy the same economic, political or social privileges that men, such as white, cisgender, heterosexual middle-class men, do.[79] In particular, despite Australian society generally valorising male dominance and giving disproportionate power, resources and opportunities to men, the colonisation process has simultaneously disempowered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, destroying or undermining their traditional roles and status. And yet, contemporary Australian society also deprives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men of the power, status and opportunities that other men in Australia are afforded, making it difficult for them to meet either traditional or colonially imposed standards of manhood.[80]

Dominant forms of masculinity

While different masculinities are apparent, it is still the case that men are often expected to support and conform to particular characteristics and behaviours that are considered the 'norm' for men in Australia. These characteristics, which can be understood as the socially dominant forms of masculinity in Australia, include:

- dominance and control
- aggression
- hypersexuality
- rejection of homosexuality and femininity
- stoicism and suppression of emotion
- toughness
- independence and self-reliance
- competitiveness
- risk-taking.[81]

These socially dominant forms of masculinity are socially constructed rather than innate or biological. Men are not born tough, aggressive, controlling or stoic; these are social expectations placed on boys and men about how they should behave, and they form part of the currently accepted way of 'being a man' in Australia. These behaviours and characteristics are often seen as innate or 'natural' (for example the belief that men's desire for sex is a 'natural' masculine character trait rather than a normal human desire that both women and men have, or the idea that men's sexual desire cannot be controlled).[82] However the perceptions that such traits are 'natural' is based on limited awareness of the social processes that

continually reproduce such ideas of masculinity and pressure men to conform to them.

While some men challenge or reject these expectations and behaviours, there are many who accept and support them, or who feel pressure to live up to them. Most men recognise that earning their status as men requires that they adhere to the aforementioned characteristics, and that a continual re-enactment of these is required as ongoing 'proof' of their masculinity.[83] The efforts that men make both to earn and then continually prove their masculinity show that it is not innate or biological, but learned and performed.[84] Women can also support or reinforce dominant norms and stereotypes about masculinity, despite the fact that these norms help maintain and promote men's power and privilege over women.[85]

Not all these characteristics associated with masculinity are negative or harmful at all times or in all situations – self-reliance and competitiveness, for example, can be positive in particular contexts. However, the rigid social requirement that a man behave in these specific ways most or all of the time in order to be seen and accepted as a 'real man' is problematic. Because these are the socially accepted – almost socially *required* – ways to be male, boys and men experience pressure from their partners, peers, family, colleagues, teachers and the communities around them, as well as through messages within media and popular culture, to behave in these ways, and can experience negative consequences when they don't live up to these expectations. The problem does not lie solely in the norms themselves but in some men's rigid attachment to them, and the social requirement that men conform only to these norms and avoid other behaviours considered feminine or 'unmanly'.

Socially dominant forms of masculinity are upheld and promoted not only by individuals, but within social structures and systems. For example, gendered social norms that describe men as strong, rational and autonomous serve to legitimise the position men occupy because as a society we value these norms and encourage their practice in political, legal and professional institutions. These norms form part of what can be understood as 'hegemonic masculinity', a concept used to explain the overall gender system that upholds and legitimises patriarchy and maintains men's power and privilege over women. Hegemonic masculinity suggests that at any given time or place, there is a dominant pattern of masculinity (or way of being a male) that is promoted, both culturally, and within the structures and institutions that play a central role in maintaining and reinforcing unequal power relations and gendered hierarchies. While not all men practice all of the aforementioned characteristics of masculinity all the time, many do participate – explicitly or implicitly – in sustaining the notion that these are the 'right' ways to be a man, and many do nothing to challenge the current gender system, which delivers benefits to them and negatively impacts women.

Socially dominant forms of masculinity also contribute create a hierarchy of men.[86] Men whose masculinities are marginalised or seen as lesser (for example, gay men) and/or who experience discrimination or disadvantage due to racism, homo-, bi- and transphobia, classism or ableism are more likely to be excluded from the dominant male power structures, hold less power within them, or receive fewer benefits from them.[87]

Socially dominant forms of masculinity are not only harmful to women (see page 33) but can have negative effects on men's own health and wellbeing. Australian and international research shows strong links between dominant forms of masculinity and negative health outcomes for men, including depression, suicidal ideation and experiences of violence from other men.[88] These negative effects on health and wellbeing are magnified for men who experience discrimination or marginalisation on the basis of their race, cultural background, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability.[89]

The interaction between norms and stereotypes of masculinity and femininity

Just as rigid gender norms about and expressions of masculinity affect men, there are also harmful norms about femininity that affect women. For example, the expectation that women are naturally passive or submissive, or need to be sexually attractive and sexually available to men, can cast women as targets for exploitation.[90] Another example is the way in which the portrayal of women as inherently deceitful and unfaithful promotes the idea that men need to 'control' women.[91]

Rigid norms about both masculinity and femininity have an impact not only on the ways in which individual women and men act, but on the ways in which they relate to each other, both within relationships and in other aspects of their lives. Understanding the impact that both norms of femininity and norms of masculinity have on the way in which our society is structured is an important part of understanding how cultures of violence operate.

However, a dedicated focus on those particular, socially dominant forms of masculinity that are associated with violence against women – as well as on masculinity in the context of peer relationships, organisations and institutions – is critical, because of the strong evidence that connects these social, cultural and structural aspects of harmful masculinities to violence against women.

Forms of masculinity that are linked to violence against women

Socially dominant forms of masculinity are not only part of the social context in which violence against women occurs. At their most harmful, these norms, stereotypes and rules about masculinity help drive this violence.[92] In particular, there is a strong correlation between violence against women and forms of masculinity that are associated with control, dominance, aggression and entitlement to sex. Evidence shows that men who rigidly adhere to these specific norms and ideas about masculinity are more likely than other men to:

- commit violence against women,[93] including sexual violence
- demonstrate sexist and violence-supportive attitudes and behaviours[94]
- perpetrate violence against women when their masculinity is challenged, or when they find it difficult to live up to these norms[95]
- make the choice to use violence as a means of achieving control in their intimate relationships.[96]

Evidence also points to several factors that, in addition to the gendered drivers described later in this element, are specifically associated with men's use of *sexual* violence. These are:

- adherence to forms of masculinity that commonly emphasise control and dominance[97]
- performances of strength and toughness through violence outside the home[98]
- peer pressure and social expectations that men should never say no to sex and should have many sexual partners[99]
- peer pressure to pursue sex with women in coercive and aggressive ways, and talk about women as sexual objects[100]
- prior exposure to violence against a parent, or emotional, physical and sexual abuse during childhood[101]
- current exposure to violent pornography.[102]

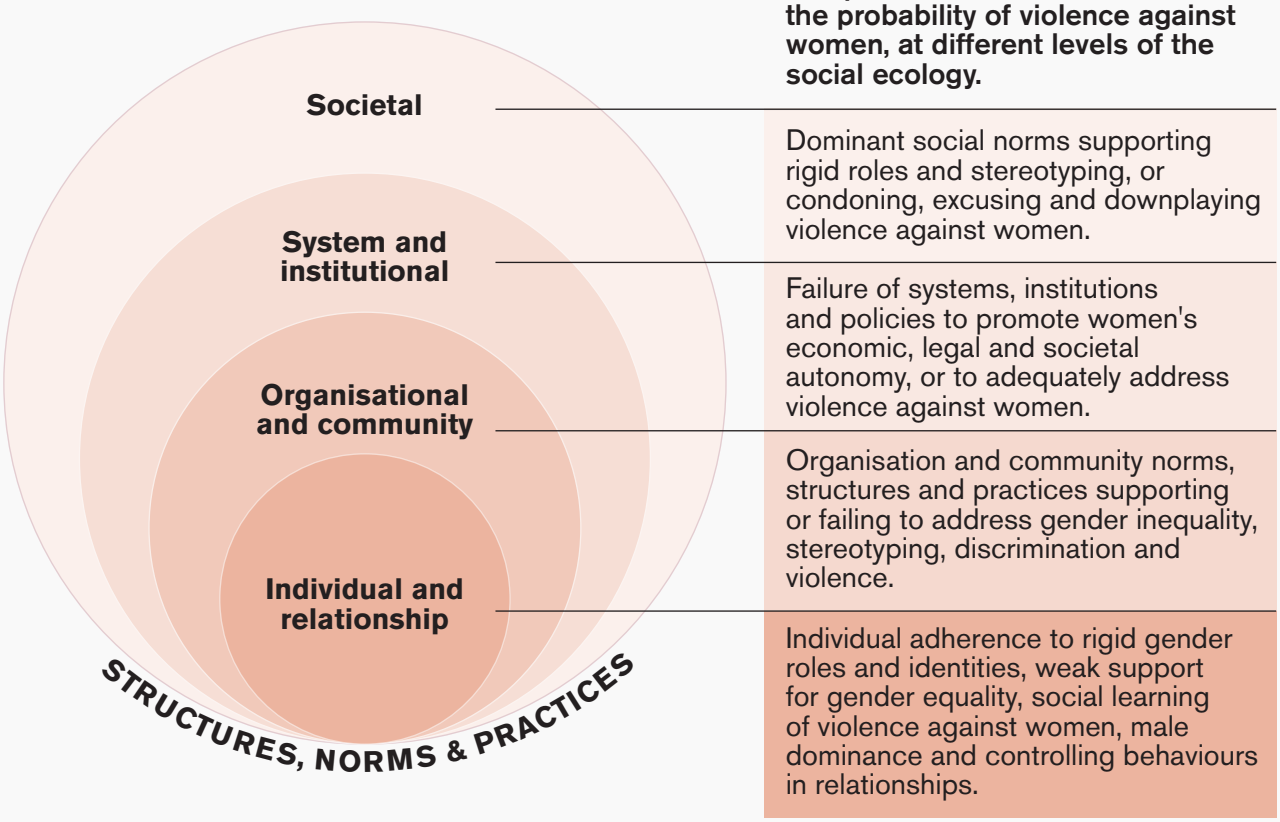
A socio-ecological model for understanding violence against women

Historically, many attempts to understand violence against women have sought simplistic or single-factor causes for individual men's violence. Such individualistic explanations point to the psychology or mental health of the perpetrator, his life experiences (such as childhood exposure to violence), behaviour (such as alcohol use) or personal circumstances (such as unemployment) as explanations. While these factors may be present in a given incident of violence, they do not explain the pattern of men's violence, because most men to whom they apply are not violent (and because these factors also apply to many women). To properly explain men's violence against women as a widespread social problem, an explicit social analysis is necessary.

The analysis adopted here uses the notion of a '**social ecology**', represented by the concentric circles of the socio-ecological model depicted in Figure 5. A socio-ecological approach is a response to the evidence that 'no single factor can explain why some women or groups of women experience higher rates of violence than others, while others are more protected from it.'[103] This model views violence against women as the outcome of interactions among many factors at different levels – the individual and relationship level, the organisational and community level, the system and institutional level, and the societal level.[104] The socio-ecological model treats the interaction between factors at the different levels as being of equal importance to the influence of factors within a single level.

Figure 5
The socio-ecological model of violence against women

See alternate text for Figure 5 on page 130.



Factors associated with higher levels of violence against women are situated at each level of the social ecology, encompassing **social norms**, **structures** and **practices**, as described below and illustrated in Figure 5.

Social norms are the ideas, values or beliefs that are common or dominant in a society or community. They are the informal rules and shared social expectations that shape individual attitudes and behaviour. Gender norms are social norms that relate specifically to gender differences.[105] People tend to hold beliefs about what is expected from them, because of these socially constructed (and often binary) rules of behaviour or 'norms' that are assigned to them as men or women, and which are often different depending on the context, setting or situation. Gendered social norms work by ensuring that, overall, men have more material resources, authority and entitlements than women, who are subjected to customs, traditions and rules of behaviour that are intended to create inequality through the reproduction of gendered power relations (see Driver 2).[106]

Social structures are the patterns of social relationships in society. They are maintained both through formal means, such as legislation, and through informal means, such as social norms. The operation of various systems of power and privilege, oppression and discrimination mean that social structures are hierarchical and unequal. The location of women and men in relation to these social systems and structures affect the relative influence of the gendered drivers of violence (and the reinforcing factors) in any given context. While women as a group face disadvantage and discrimination due to their gender, some women experience greater privilege and benefits than other women (and some men) on the basis of race (being white) or class (being educated and wealthy) or sexuality, or age, or ability. The interaction between gender and systems, institutions and other social structures results in multiple and intersecting forms of oppression and privilege that shape the lives of all people. In these ways, social structures privilege men over women (as well as privileging particular groups of women over other women, and particular men over both women and other men), and these gendered power imbalances play a role in driving violence against women.

As individuals, organisations and institutions adhere to and enforce gendered social norms, they contribute to embedding them in **social practices**.[107] These include, for example, the unequal adoption of parenting responsibilities in many female/male couples, underpinned by the belief that women are better suited to care for children; parents and teachers treating boys and girls differently; and employers classifying and paying roles seen as 'men's work' and 'women's work' differently.

Gendered norms, structures and practices encourage people to adopt distinct gender identities and stereotyped gender roles within a gender hierarchy. Norms, structures and practices based on gendered hierarchies manifest in various ways in community groups, organisations and institutions, and are supported and maintained by policy and legal frameworks.

Social structures and norms and the practices that flow from them are not fixed. They are specific to a context, social group or place, and change over time. While one goal of prevention may be to shift harmful and gendered social norms, this cannot be achieved without also paying attention to the structural level, because these norms are produced, reproduced and reflected in our social, political and economic systems. The influence of deeply embedded gender norms is one reason for uneven progress towards women's rights, gender equality and freedom from violence at the global level.[108] In Australia, progress towards (some aspects of) gender equality in the public sphere has not been matched in the private sphere, where women still perform the vast majority of unpaid domestic labour and care, and there is little evidence of any substantial change in the rate of men taking up caring roles in the home or workforce.[109]

The gendered drivers of violence against women

The gendered drivers of men's violence against women are the factors that most consistently predict this violence at a population level, and explain its gendered patterns.[110] Violence against women is not caused or determined by any single factor. But as the number of relevant factors and their degree of influence increases, so does the probability of violence against women.

These factors are termed 'gendered drivers' because they arise from gender-discriminatory institutional, social and economic structures, social and cultural norms, and organisational, community, family and relationship practices that together create environments in which women and men are not considered equal, and violence against women is both more likely, and more likely to be tolerated and even condoned. Within this context, the following expressions of gender inequality have been shown in the international evidence to be most consistently associated with higher levels of men's violence against women:

- **Driver 1**: Condoning of violence against women.
- **Driver 2**: Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life.
- **Driver 3**: Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity.
- **Driver 4**: Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.

Understanding these gendered drivers is critical to understanding men's violence against women, because they explain the prevalence and persistence of gendered violence across the population. However, they should not be considered in isolation from contextual factors, nor should they be considered sufficient to fully explain any specific instance of violence. In particular, while the gendered drivers of violence arise from the broader social context of gender inequality, they also intersect with other forms of oppression, discrimination and disadvantage, making an intersectional approach to prevention essential.

Driver 1.

Condoning of violence against women

Driver 2.

Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life

Driver 3.

Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity

Driver 4.

Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control

The drivers of men's violence against women are both simple and complex. They are simple, because there is consensus in the evidence that violence against women is inextricably bound to gender inequalities in public and private life. However, these drivers are also complex because:

- Gender inequalities operate in a multitude of ways, with some more influential than others.
- There are a number of other 'reinforcing factors' that interact with the gendered drivers and wider gender inequality to exacerbate, reinforce or influence the dynamics of violence against women.
- Other forms of oppression, discrimination and disadvantage (as well as power and privilege) intersect with and affect the relative influence of these drivers and reinforcing factors in any one context. While gender is always relevant in explaining violence against women, it may not be the most significant factor in every context.

A model to predict or explain the prevalence of this violence must respond to this complexity and consider the whole range of social factors that increase the probability of men using violence against women. A shared framework for the primary prevention of this violence needs to address these drivers in a holistic way that recognises how they interact with and reinforce one another, and how they intersect with other factors, and it needs to do this at all levels, from the individual to the societal.

Driver 1.
Condoning of violence against women

When societies, institutions, communities or individuals support or condone violence against women, levels of such violence are higher.[111] Men who hold these beliefs are more likely to perpetrate violence against women, and both women and men who hold these beliefs are less likely to take action to support victims and hold perpetrators to account.[112]

Violence against women is condoned both through widely held beliefs, attitudes and social norms about gender (which intersect with those about race, ethnicity, age, class, disability and sexuality). It is also condoned through the various legal, institutional and organisational structures and practices that reflect and reinforce these beliefs, attitudes and social norms. This driver includes social norms, structures and practices that:

- **Justify violence against women, based on the view that it is acceptable for men to use violence**. Justifications are often made for a man using violence against a woman with whom he is in an intimate relationship in certain circumstances, particularly if she is perceived to have 'provoked' him, for example through infidelity or by terminating the relationship.[113] Interpretations of various religious or sacred texts and teachings are sometimes used by faith leaders to justify male control over and violence against women,[114] and by individual men to justify their own violent behaviour towards women.[115]
- **Excuse violence by attributing it to external factors or proposing that men cannot be held fully responsible for violent behaviour**. Australian data shows that 33 per cent[xiii] of Australians believe that 'rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex' and 12 per cent[xiv] believe that 'domestic violence can be excused if people get so angry they lose control'.[116] Men's mental health status, use of alcohol, or stress are often given

xiii The National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey 2017 (hence referred to as NCAS 2017) shows that this number has dropped from 43% in 2013: see Webster, K., Diemer, K., Honey, N., Mannix, S., Mickle, J., Morgan, J., Parkes, A., Politoff, V., Powell, A., Stubbs, J., & Ward, A. (2018). *Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality. Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)* (Research report, 03/2018). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS.

xiv A reduction from 22% in 2013. See Webster et al. 2018.

as, or implied to be, excuses for their use of violence against women.[117] Excuses for violence can also intersect with other social norms and expressions of discrimination, marginalisation and oppression. For example, violence against women with disabilities is sometimes excused by focusing on the 'pressure' the perpetrator was under as his partner's carer.[118] Media reports of violence against women often portray violence as random acts perpetrated or experienced by individuals 'with problems', rather than reflecting well-established knowledge about the prevalence and patterns of gendered violence across society, and its common drivers.[119]

- **Trivialise the impact of violence**, based on the view that the impacts of violence are not sufficiently serious to warrant action. Although just 12 per cent of Australians[xv] believe that domestic violence is a private matter to be handled by the family, and 7 per cent[xvi] believe that 'women who are sexually harassed should sort it out themselves rather than report it',[120] only 45 per cent would act if a male friend told a sexist joke about women.[121] For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women or women of colour, experiences of violence can be trivialised as a result of both sexism and racism, sometimes resulting in responses from police that can be characterised as 'nonchalance, minimization, and victim-blaming'.[122]
- **Dismiss or downplay violence** by discrediting victims, denying that violence occurs, or denying that certain behaviours are violence at all. Research shows 43 per cent[xvii] of Australians believe that women in child custody cases often make up or exaggerate claims of domestic violence, while 7 per cent[xviii] believe that 'it's only rape if the woman physically resisted', and 19 per cent[xix] don't believe or don't know that trying to control your partner by denying her money is a form of violence.[123] Violence against women who breach socially accepted roles or identities, such as sex workers or trans women, is also more likely to be denied or downplayed in both community attitudes and system responses.[124] Services, institutions and organisations responsible for responding to violence against women (including police, justice and support systems) can also play a role in dismissing or downplaying violence. For example, when a response or complaints system fails to take reports of violence seriously, or when family court judgements ignore or minimise women's experiences of intimate partner violence or pass them off as mutual relationship violence.[125] This also occurs when police misidentify women – particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women – as the perpetrator rather than the victim of violence.[126]

  There is a particular tendency for violence against women with disabilities to be denied or downplayed, particularly where it occurs in institutional and service settings and is reclassified using euphemisms such as 'abuse', 'service incident', 'neglect', 'maltreatment' or 'misconduct'.[127] A similar effect can be seen in aged care settings when providers classify sexual assaults against older women as having 'no impact', or where an assault is not reportable because the alleged perpetrator is a fellow resident.[128]
- **Shift blame for the violence from the perpetrator to the victim**. Women who experience violence while intoxicated are often implicitly or explicitly blamed for the violence perpetrated against them; 13 per cent[xx] of Australians believe that if a woman is raped while drunk or affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible.[129] Blame-shifting occurs not only through individual attitudes, but also in institutional ways, including through legislation or judicial practice that allows a woman's sexual history to be presented in rape trials, sending a message that a woman's behaviour is relevant to the

xv A reduction from 17% in 2013. See Webster et al. 2018.
xvi A reduction from 12% in 2013. See Webster et al. 2018.
xvii A reduction from 53% in 2013. See Webster et al. 2018.
xviii A reduction from 10% in 2013. See Webster et al. 2018.
xix A reduction from 30% in 2013. See Webster et al. 2018.
xx A reduction from 19% in 2013. See Webster et al. 2018.

act of violence perpetrated against her. Child protection or family law practices that put the onus on women to protect children from family violence, instead of on the perpetrator not to use violence, can similarly contribute to the notion that women carry responsibility for men's violence, or for managing its impacts.

Stereotypes associated with race and class intersect with notions of gender to shape the ways in which violence against some women is understood and reported in the media.[130] For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women of colour[xxi] or women who are represented as 'foreign' are more likely to be implicitly blamed for the violence, and violence against these women is less likely to receive media coverage in the first place.[131]

Further, it is common for discussion and reporting of violence against women to focus only on the victim, rather than the perpetrator, which tends to make the perpetrator invisible, and detract from a focus on what drives men to use violence against women. An Australian study found that 59.8 per cent of incident-based media reporting on violence against women included no information about the perpetrator.[132]

Driver 2.
Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life

Limits, barriers and constraints on women's independence and access to decision-making occur in both the public and private spheres. In the public sphere in Australia, this is evidenced by the low numbers of women in political life,[133] and in leadership and decision-making roles in institutions, organisations and civic society. Among the women who do occupy such roles, there is a significant lack of cultural diversity.[134]

Gender bias in recruitment and selection processes and decisions about women's promotion and career development; workplace cultures that value what is seen as a 'male' leadership style;[135] and entrenched beliefs and social norms that men make better leaders are all widespread, and underpin the underrepresentation of women in positions of power and decision-making roles.[136] Even though Australian women and girls have equal access to education, their workforce participation levels, access to secure employment, and pay rates are all well behind those of men. These structural inequalities mean not only do individual women have lower levels of economic security than men,[137] but also that there are insufficient numbers of women in the kinds of economic and social positions that would enable them to collectively challenge men's control of decision-making. The relatively large (and widening) gaps between women and men in Australia on measures such as labour force participation, wage equality, income levels and representation in professional, technical, managerial and decision-making roles[138] are structural barriers to lifting women's social and economic status.

The result of these structural and normative factors is that men have much greater control in public life, not only over power, resources and decisions generally, but specifically over the kinds of policies and laws that directly affect women. Men control the majority of government, institutional and organisational decision-making, with the potential to either advance or undermine progress towards women's rights and gender equality. This is a barrier to advancing prevention goals, because women in positions of power are more likely than men to act to secure women's rights and freedoms.[139]

Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence also occurs in the private sphere; in fact, these inequalities are often more deeply entrenched in private contexts than they are in the public sphere.

xxi 'Women of colour' is used here not as a biological designation, but rather as a term of feminist solidarity, in recognition of the oppression and minoritisation experienced by women of colour.

For example, norms about men and masculinity assume that being the 'breadwinner' and the 'head of the household' and being in control of household finances are integral parts of the 'male role'.[140] These ideas about men, masculinity and control (particularly in private or interpersonal contexts) are persistent in Australia. One in three Australians believe 'it is natural for a man to want to appear in control of his partner in front of his male friends';[141] 25 per cent think 'women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship';[xxii] and 16 per cent[xxiii] believe 'men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household'.[142] Male control and dominance are frequently represented as a normal or inevitable part of heterosexual sexual and romantic relationships, and widely normalised in popular culture, as well as learned in peer groups and the family.

Violence is more common in families and relationships in which men control decision-making, and less so in relationships in which women have a greater level of independence – this has been shown both internationally and in Australia.[143] When men limit or control women's financial or social independence and autonomy, they are also more likely to use violence against them.[144] Isolating women from support networks of family and friends is a well-known form of coercive and controlling behaviour and psychological abuse. When women are economically dependent on men, those men may believe they can perpetrate violence with social or legal impunity, and women, especially those with responsibility for children, may find it difficult to leave a violent relationship.[145] Social structures and environments that limit opportunities for women to form strong relationships with other women can isolate them from the emotional and practical supports that would strengthen their autonomy and help them recognise the early signs of violence.

Women's financial dependence on men is driven and reinforced by persistent norms about a man's right to control and monitor a woman's earnings, and therefore her access to money and independence. While men are empowered by women's lower financial, social and economic status, women are disempowered by this dynamic.[146] Where violence or abuse is present, a lack of financial freedom also binds women to their abuser, making it difficult to leave.[147]

Men who use violence report a greater sense of ownership of, or entitlement to, female partners, and more rigid ideas on acceptable female behaviour in relationships.[148] Men who adhere to or support expressions of, or ideas about, masculinity that are focused on control and dominance are also more likely than other men to sexually assault women outside the family and relationship context.[149] Across both the public and private spheres, male dominance, control of decision-making and limits to women's autonomy or independence collectively contribute to men's violence against women, by sending the message that women have a lower social value, less power, are less worthy of respect, and are therefore more legitimate targets of violence. The impacts of this are magnified for women whose access to economic, cultural or social power is further reduced by the way other forms of oppression intersect with sexism and gender inequality to reinforce this message in deeply racist, classist, ableist or ageist ways.[150] For example, the intersection of sexism with ableism and ageism often results in the presumption, in both public and private contexts, that older women and women with disabilities have limited or no capacity for decision-making and independence.

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xxii NCAS 2017 shows that this number has dropped from 28% in 2013. See Webster et al. 2018.

xxiii A reduction from 19% in 2013. See Webster et al. 2018.

Driver 3.
Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity

Rigid gender stereotyping

Gender stereotyping, and particularly the socially dominant forms of masculinity that are promoted in this process, play a direct role in driving men's violence against women.

Gender stereotypes are beliefs and assumptions about the attributes or characteristics that are innate or appropriate for women and men.[151] Gender stereotyping is the practice of applying, promoting and reinforcing these assumptions. Gender stereotypes not only influence how individuals act, raise their children and relate to others, they also inform wider social norms and can result in punishment for women, men and children when they don't conform to expected gender roles.[152] For example, stereotypes about women as naturally nurturing and men as naturally rational underpin norms about women's caring responsibilities, and men's leadership. These social norms translate into gendered social structures and practices, that see men overrepresented in positions of power that are highly paid and valued, and women performing the bulk of unpaid domestic labour and concentrated in poorly paid caring professions that are less valued because they are associated with 'feminine' characteristics.

Gender stereotyping is intimately connected to structures, norms and practices based on rigid ideas and hierarchies of sex, gender and sexuality that are seen as the only or 'normal' way to understand bodies, identities and relationships. These hierarchical structures, norms and practices are underpinned by heteronormativity and cisnormativity, which assume and naturalise a binary understanding of sex and gender that sees only two genders – men and women – who are expected to think and act according to innate gender norms. This privileges heterosexual identities and binary bodies and experiences within social structures and institutions.

While stereotypes are both harmful and limiting, this is not to say that being 'rational' or 'nurturing' are negative character traits – for anyone. Rather, it is the practice of promoting and enforcing gender stereotypes that is harmful, because it falsely promotes rigid distinctions between the skills, attributes and characteristics of women and men, in a way that positions 'masculine' traits as having higher social value than 'feminine' traits. This influences how people act and interact, and creates gendered power relationships and sexist organisational and institutional cultures. In these ways, gender stereotyping reproduces the social conditions of gender inequality that creates the conditions in which violence against women arises.

Global evidence consistently demonstrates that levels of men's violence against women are significantly and consistently higher in societies, communities and relationships where there are more rigid distinctions between the roles of men and women, and between more stereotypical notions of the 'ideal' man or woman, and where dominant forms of masculinities are rigidly adhered to.[153]

Stereotypes about gender do not have to be negative to be correlated with violence. For example, where ideal femininity is associated with 'moral' standards of behaviour, rape of women who are seen to transgress such standards is more likely to be condoned.[154] Stereotypes about women that dictate norms about female sexuality, attractiveness or physical appearance can cast women as targets for objectification and exploitation, hostility and denigration, which increases the acceptability of violence.[155] Where ideal masculinity is associated with physical prowess, rough physical activity and 'tough' contact sports, this can lead to the assumption that boys and men are naturally aggressive or even violent, and phrases like 'boys will be boys' will be used to downplay or legitimise boy's and men's aggression or violence towards women.[156]

Dominant forms of masculinity

The socially dominant forms of masculinity that are promoted in the process of gender stereotyping are particularly problematic, because they play a direct role in driving men's violence against women, as described on page 31. Men who hold hierarchical views about gender roles and relationships, or who form a rigid attachment to these socially dominant norms and practices of masculinity (in particular, aggression, dominance, control and hypersexuality), are more likely to demonstrate sexist attitudes and behaviours, hold violence-supportive attitudes, and perpetrate violence against women – especially when their masculinity or male privilege/power is challenged, or when they find it difficult to live up to these norms.[157]

These socially dominant forms of masculinity are practiced and experienced by individuals but also operate within organisations, institutions and across society in a range of ways, including:

- **Adhering or conforming** to dominant norms about masculinity – where individual men act or feel they must act in particular ways to be seen as 'appropriately' or 'sufficiently' male. This can be a dynamic in groups of men (in particular) because of a fear of social sanctions or punishment for non-conformity, either from other men or the wider society.
- **Reinforcing or maintaining** dominant forms of masculinity – by supporting and seeking to strengthen the structures, norms and practices that uphold socially dominant forms of masculinity. Examples include organisational and social responses to workplace sexual harassment that suggest harassment is based on men's inability to control their sexual desires or that women should be flattered by male attention.
- **Promoting** dominant forms of masculinity – actively encouraging and rewarding men who engage in behaviours that are seen as the socially appropriate and accepted ways of being male (even if they make sexist comments or use violence). For example:
  - Appointing and promoting men who enact dominant stereotypes of masculinity to positions of power within organisations and institutions.
  - In men's sporting contexts, aggression and dominance being seen as player strengths and rewarded, while other character traits that are as important to winning are overlooked or undervalued.
- **Sanctioning** behaviours and attitudes that are associated with dominant forms of masculinity. Both individual men and groups of men can have their behaviours and attitudes sanctioned when they accord with these dominant forms of masculinity and the gendered social norms that uphold them. Sanctioning can be explicit or implicit and occurs in organisations and institutions when there are limited or no consequences for, or inadequate legal penalties for, behaviours that are based on masculine power, dominance and control, including abuse, harassment and violence.

The rigid requirement that men behave in these ways most or all of the time in order to be seen and accepted as a 'real man' is what is problematic.

The influence of pornography[xxiv]

Pornography[158] is a powerful medium for conveying messages or ideas about sex, sexuality and relationships, men's and women's roles and identities, and masculinity and femininity.

The influence of pornography is of concern to those working to prevent violence against women because the evidence identifies:

- frequent depictions of violence against women in pornography[159]
- stereotypical representations of men and women in pornography, where women are portrayed as submissive and men as dominant or aggressive.[160]

Further, research suggests greater pornography use is associated with less progressive attitudes about gender roles,[161] a belief that women are sex objects,[162] rape myth acceptance,[163] men's use of sexually aggressive behaviour[164] and strong attachment to traditional male ideology and roles.[165]

The gendered drivers of violence against women – in particular the condoning of violence against women (Driver 1), men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence (Driver 2), and gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity (Driver 3) – are frequently depicted, and therefore potentially normalised in pornography.

The consumption of pornography is common, usually occurs in private, and often – particularly for children and young people – is not accompanied by access to critique or education about its potential impacts.[166]

Like other forms of media, advertising and popular culture, pornography both reproduces and helps shape broader social norms about violence against women. Pornography also plays a significant role in shaping expectations and understandings about gender roles, sex and consent – particularly for young people who are still forming their ideas and attitudes about these issues and are accessing pornography often years before they start having sexual relationships.[167]

xxiv For more information about the relationship between pornography and the gendered drivers, see Our Watch's background paper *Pornography, young people, and preventing violence against women*.

Driver 4.
Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control

Male peer relationships can be important sources of social connection for men and boys. However, where personal or professional relationships between men and the cultures they live and work within are characterised by attitudes, behaviours or norms about masculinity which are inherently harmful (in particular aggression, dominance, control or hypersexuality), or which use sexism or homophobia to build social connection, they become more strongly associated with violence against women.[168]

Australian research demonstrates that male-dominated organisations and groups more strongly reinforce masculine norms and behaviours that emphasise sexism, homophobia, disrespect and violence against women.[169]

Male peer relations are a feature of any context where men engage with other men (both men they know and men they don't know), whether that be an interaction between two men, within a group of men or between separate groups of men. There are also particular settings where men are more likely to come together in groups, or where men's participation outnumbers women's, such as corporate boardrooms and other leadership and decision-making forums, and male-dominated spaces and professions, such as building sites, men's sporting clubs or police or military institutions. Structural factors – such as poor organisational cultures, a lack of effective policies, a lack of cultural leadership and inadequate penalties – can reinforce, support or excuse violence-supportive, homophobic or sexist attitudes and behaviour in these contexts.[170]

Socially dominant forms of masculinity are often central to male peer relationships and can influence how men relate to each other. Research on men and masculinities consistently demonstrates that men seek approval from other men and position themselves in relation to other men.[171] This means men may feel they have to embody dominant norms and stereotypes about masculinity to 'prove' themselves to other men. This can be seen in the way some men and boys use sexist, homophobic or aggressive behaviours to assert their masculinity and gain approval from male peers, and the way that men often bond through the sexual objectification of women.[172] Adherence to these dominant forms of masculinity is likely to increase men's reluctance to take a stand against sexism, homophobia or violence-supportive attitudes, and can increase the use of violence itself – because they prioritise being seen as masculine, privilege relationships with their male peers over their relationships with women (including female partners) and fear rejection by their male peers.[173] For this reason, an emphasis on aggression and sexual conquest in male peer relationships of any kind may lead to a greater tendency for some men to use or support violence.

Men can often feel they have to embody dominant stereotypes of masculinity and/or use sexist or aggressive behaviours as a way to bond with and 'prove themselves' to other men.

Hypersexuality is also a common feature of both male peer relations and masculine organisational or institutional cultures. Hypersexuality interacts closely with other dominant forms of masculinity – aggression,

dominance and control – that are associated with men's violence against women. Research shows that men bond with their male peers through the sexual objectification of women, feel pressure to pursue sex with women in coercive and aggressive ways and are more likely to exhibit these sorts of attitudes and behaviours if their peers or the organisational/institutional cultures around them explicitly support sexist and hostile attitudes towards women.[174]

Male peer relations can be based on both an implicit and explicit rejection of women; for example, men often interact in ways that mark out the differences between women and men by engaging in activities and frequenting settings that segregate them from women.[175] When men are encouraged to privilege their relationships with other men over those with women, they may be more likely to excuse other men's violent, abusive or disrespectful behaviour towards women.

Masculine peer, organisational and institutional cultures often promote men's control of decision-making, which is itself a driver of violence against women. Institutions or organisations that are dominated by men, particularly at a leadership or governance level, are more likely to be influenced by negative masculine peer cultures. These two drivers can interact to create contexts within which violence against women is more likely to occur. However, while male-dominated groups and settings can create a context where violence against women is more likely, there are some organisations that have more equal numbers of male and female employees, but which still retain and value cultures that are based on and promote harmful, socially dominant forms of masculinity. These can be evident, for example, through workplace hiring practices, leadership structures, operations, policies and procedures. In these contexts, it is both the male peer group cultures and the overarching organisational or institutional culture that are problematic.

A culture of alcohol consumption is often encouraged and embedded in spaces that are male-dominated, and can interact in problematic ways with pressures on men to embody dominant forms of masculinity, and for them to be aggressive or competitive with other men. As alcohol can weaken prosocial behaviours and make violence against women more common (see Reinforcing Factor 3, page 50), the interaction between alcohol, masculine peer cultures and dominant forms of masculinity tends to create cultures where men's violence against women is more likely to occur.[176]

Some organisations and institutions implicitly or explicitly value and promote male peer cultures that are based on harmful forms of masculinity, and that emphasise sexism, homophobia and disrespect toward women.

Intersecting forms of oppression, discrimination, power and privilege

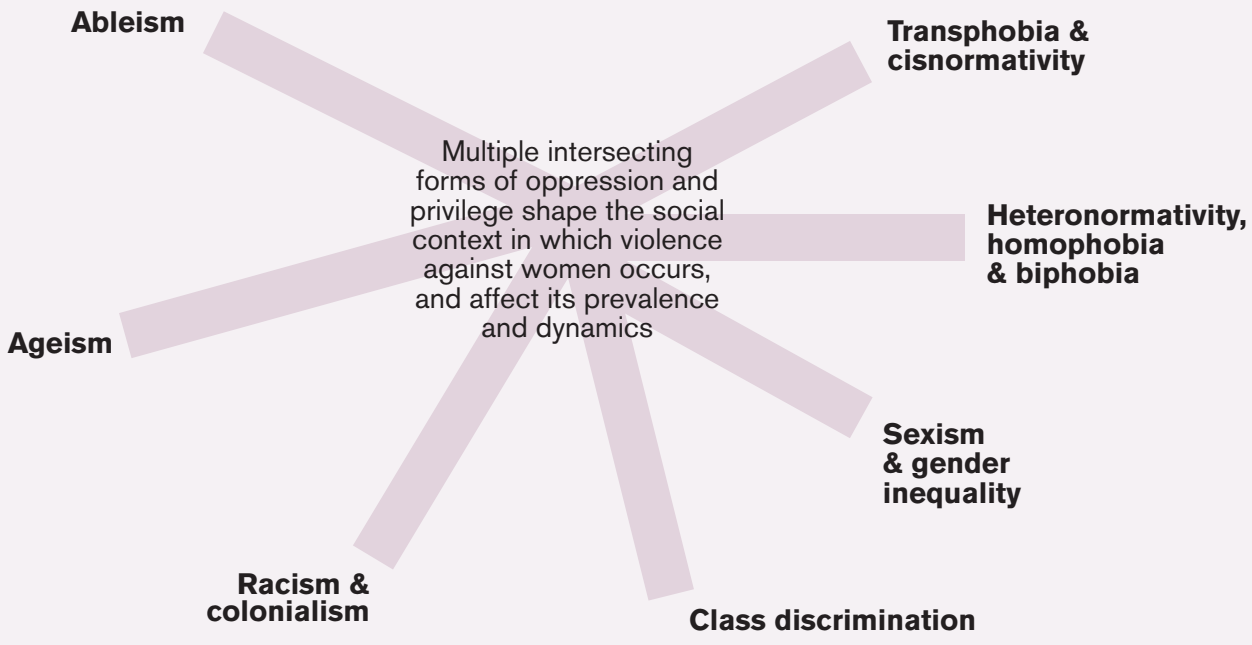
Women are not a homogenous group, but one comprising many and varied personal identities and social positions. The intersectional approach embedded throughout *Change the story* is one that recognises that violence and gender inequality exist in relation to multiple and intersecting systems of sexism; racism; colonialism; classism; heteronormativity; cisnormativity; homo-, bi- and transphobia; ableism and ageism; and their corresponding systems of power and privilege. These intersections create systems of structured inequality, characterised by the unequal distribution of power, wealth, income and social status.

These intersecting forms of oppression and privilege also affect the prevalence and dynamics of violence against women. This means addressing them is critical. As the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) states: 'the discrimination of women based on sex and gender is inextricably linked with other factors that affect women, such as race, ethnicity, religion or belief, health, status, age, class, caste and sexual orientation and gender identity. Discrimination on the basis of sex or gender may affect women belonging to such groups to a different degree or in different ways to men. [Governments] must legally recognize such intersecting forms of discrimination and their compounded negative impact on the women concerned and prohibit them.'[177]

The gendered drivers outlined in this framework are the most consistent predictors

Figure 6
Violence against women occurs in the context of multiple intersecting forms of oppression, discrimination, power and privilege

See alternate text for Figure 6 on page 131.



of men's violence against women, and explain the gendered patterns of this violence, but they should not be considered in isolation from the range of other influences on this violence, that are associated with other systems of oppression, discrimination, power and privilege. These are embedded in social and economic structures, social and cultural norms, and organisational, community, family and relationship practices.

While gender inequality and the gendered drivers are always relevant in explaining violence against women, they may not be the most significant factor in every context. People's lives and experiences are multidimensional and complex.[178] The location of women and men in relation to different and multiple systems of power and privilege, oppression and discrimination, affects the relative influence of the gendered drivers and reinforcing factors in any given context. Systems of privilege and oppression are not separate but interdependent; social inequities result not from single distinct factors, but from intersections of different social positions, power relations and experiences.[179] Intersectionality also recognises that a person can experience both power and oppression simultaneously, because there are many forms of each,[180] and that people can experience power and privilege in some contexts and oppression in others.

Data about the prevalence of violence against women demonstrates that the probability of experiencing violence (or particular forms of violence) is higher for some women. This is not because some women are inherently 'vulnerable'. Rather, it is the intersections between the social, political and economic processes of gender inequality and other forms of systemic and structural inequality that explain this.

Any factor that, in addition to the gendered drivers outlined on page 36, limits women's access to resources, independence, or social and economic power, or reduces their perceived worth or social status, increases the probability of violence against them. For example:

- The drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women arise and need to be understood in the context of both the racialised and patriarchal systems and relationships that colonisation introduced and that colonialism has sustained over time.[181]
- Racism, sexism and the particular forms of oppression and discrimination faced by refugees and migrants, particularly people of colour, intersect to drive increased levels of violence against women from these groups – violence that is both gendered and racialised.
- Sexism and ableism intersect and compound to drive high levels of violence, and particular forms of violence, against women and girls with disabilities.[182]
- Rigid gender norms, together with cisnormativity, and heteronormativity, produce norms and stereotypes that devalue the bodies, identities and relationships of lesbian, bisexual and trans women, generate homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, and drive and normalise violence against these women.[183]
- Ageism, ableism, and discrimination against women with disabilities and older women intersect with the gendered drivers to drive the forms of violence that older women experience.

An effective national approach to the prevention of gendered violence must address both its gendered drivers and the multiple intersecting systems of oppression and discrimination, power and privilege that shape the social context in which this violence occurs, and influence men's perpetration and women's experiences of violence.

Factors that reinforce violence against women

Another group of factors, termed reinforcing factors, become significant in the context of the gendered drivers. While none of these predict or drive men's violence against women on their own, they each play a role in influencing the occurrence or dynamics of violence against women.[184]

There are four reinforcing factors:

- **Reinforcing Factor 1:** Condoning of violence in general.
- **Reinforcing Factor 2:** Experience of, and exposure to, violence.
- **Reinforcing Factor 3:** Factors that weaken prosocial behaviour.
- **Reinforcing Factor 4:** Backlash and resistance to prevention and gender equality.

These reinforcing factors each operate in different ways and need to be considered as factors that can both intersect with the gendered drivers and/or have their own influence on the prevalence and patterns of violence against women.[xxv]

A reinforcing factor may:

- magnify or increase the influence of one or more of the gendered drivers in particular contexts or circumstances
- increase the overall prevalence of violence across the population, or the likelihood or frequency of violence in particular circumstances or contexts
- influence the nature, severity and dynamics of violence in particular contexts or circumstances
- affect the relative influence of gender inequality, and other forms of systemic and structural oppression and discrimination, on the prevalence and patterns of violence against women.

While the gendered drivers are a constant underlying presence in society, the reinforcing factors are more context-specific; they have an influence in particular circumstances and at particular levels of the socio-ecological model. Careful analysis of how these factors manifest in gendered ways is necessary both to explain the prevalence and patterns of violence against women and to inform prevention efforts.

REINFORCING
Factor 1.

Condoning of violence in general

REINFORCING
Factor 2.

Experience of, and exposure to, violence

REINFORCING
Factor 3.

Factors that weaken prosocial behaviour

REINFORCING
Factor 4.

Resistance and backlash to prevention and gender equality efforts

xxv Some reinforcing factors may have a stronger relationship to particular forms of violence against women (e.g. intimate partner violence) and may play less of a role in contributing to other forms of violence against women (such as workplace sexual harassment).

REINFORCING FACTOR 1.
Condoning of violence in general

The condoning of violence in general (including tolerating or normalising violence) is generated through similar social norms, practices and structures as the condoning of violence against women in particular. Violence can be condoned either informally, as in the reactions of families and communities, or formally, such as through weak laws. This can lead to a 'normalisation' of violence, with violence taken for granted as a part of everyday life. However, the condoning of violence in general does not explain the prevalence and dynamics of violence against women in particular; it becomes a reinforcing factor only in conjunction with gendered social norms – particularly those concerning masculinity.

Studies show that people learn about the social meaning of violence not in isolation, but in the context of learning about and experiencing social norms about gender and gender (in)equality, particularly those relating to masculinity that suggest men's anger is an acceptable emotion in response to stress.[185] The violence that our society normalises or condones is in itself 'masculinised', in a social context in which dominance and control, and even some forms of aggression (for example, on the sporting field or in the boardroom), tend to be more socially rewarded than traits that are seen as typically feminine.[186] The vast majority of acts of violence – against people of all genders, in public or private, in reality, or in media and cultural representations – are perpetrated, or depicted as being perpetrated, by men.[187]

Men's violence is also more likely to be downplayed or excused, whereas women's violence is rarely normalised, valorised or condoned to the same degree.[188] Australian research suggests a clear link between media reporting and gendered attitudes and beliefs about violence. For example, 15 per cent of incident-based media reports of men's violence include elements of 'victim-blaming': that the victim was drinking, or that she was flirting with, or went home with, the perpetrator, or was out late at night. Just as many reports offered excuses for the male perpetrator: that he was drunk, was drug-affected, jealous, 'snapped' or 'lost control'.[189]

In the social context of racism and colonialism, violence against some groups tends to be condoned to an even higher degree than violence generally. The intersection between colonial and racist social norms and narratives, and norms and attitudes that condone violence against women generally, means that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is more likely to be implicitly condoned,[190] with perpetrators of this violence not always held accountable, especially if they are white. Racist, provocative, stereotyped or sensationalist media coverage may also create a climate which enables racist violence, contributes to victim-blaming and/or which trivialises violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people[191] and people of colour.

REINFORCING FACTOR 2.
Experience of, and exposure to, violence

Direct experience of violence or maltreatment as a child, as well as children's exposure to violence perpetrated against their mothers or other female caregivers, can have profound and lifelong impacts, and compounding effects at every level of the socio-ecological model.[192] These experiences are also significantly and positively correlated with adult experiences of intimate partner violence.

Living in a climate of constant tension and fear affects children's feelings of safety, and consequently their development.[193] Early exposure to violence can potentially lead to developmental issues[194] that predispose a child to later behavioural problems, such as poor school performance, bullying or anti-social behaviour, which can become entrenched in adolescence, manifesting in aggressive or high-risk behaviour.[195]

Without intervention, this developmental pathway can lead to a higher risk of perpetration of partner violence for boys and potentially victimisation for girls. People who, as children, witnessed partner

violence against their parents are two to four times more likely than others to later experience partner violence themselves.[196] However, this pathway between childhood and adulthood experiences of violence is by no means inevitable: while exposure of children to violence against women can shape later attitudes to violence and gender relationships, making some more accepting of violence against women, it conversely makes others 'highly intolerant of such violence, having experienced its damaging effects'.[197]

The effects of violence in childhood are both predictable and preventable. The negative and traumatic experiences of children can be mitigated by other social, educational and psychological factors, including positive relationship models, and exposure to gender-equitable and non-violent norms, meaning children or adolescents who have been exposed to, or experienced, violence should not be considered as at inevitably higher risk of perpetration or victimisation.

Long-term exposure to violence against women (and to other forms of violence such as racist violence, lateral or community violence, armed conflict and war) can also contribute to the normalisation of violence, particularly in the absence of positive alternatives and support to recover from its impacts. Experience of, or long-term exposure to, any type of violence – particularly in early life, but also for adults – can establish and reinforce a belief that violence is an appropriate form of discipline or punishment, or way of solving disputes.[198] This normalisation effect can in turn reinforce the condoning of violence in general discussed on page 49.

However, none of these effects are gender neutral; as noted earlier, social learning about the meaning of violence does not occur in isolation from learning about gendered power and roles. For example, childhood exposure to violence against mothers or stepmothers by fathers or other male partners normalises violence as an expression of masculinity in relationships: children witnessing violence against their mothers learn specifically that it is acceptable for men to control and denigrate women.[199] The different impacts of exposure to, or experience of, violence reflect existing gendered socialisation and patterns of violence. This demonstrates the need for interventions to address gender norms and power relations, and not just the experience of violence itself, or violence as a gender-neutral phenomenon.

REINFORCING FACTOR 3.
Factors that weaken prosocial behaviour

Prosocial behaviours are those intended to help or benefit others or society as a whole, and are characterised by a concern for the rights, welfare, and feelings of another person. In the context of preventing violence against women, prosocial behaviours are those that demonstrate empathy, respect, care and concern for women. Factors that weaken or erode prosocial behaviours are those that heighten individualistic tendencies, and reduce concern for others or for the effects of one's actions on others.

Social norms play a key role in either strengthening or weakening prosocial behaviour. Positive social norms can encourage prosocial behaviour, while harmful social norms can weaken or undermine prosocial behaviours and the values and beliefs that underpin them.

In the context of gendered socialisation and gendered power imbalances, a weakening of prosocial behaviour reduces empathy, care, concern and respect for women, and reduces men's concern for the consequences of their actions on women. In this context positive social norms are those that support prosocial behaviour towards women, and encourage people to behave in ways that challenge harmful forms of masculinity, sexism, disrespect, aggression and violence, and uphold gender equality.

There are a range of stress factors and environmental conditions that can have a negative impact on social norms, which in turn can reduce the likelihood that people will adopt (and promote) prosocial behaviours. Although the relationship is often indirect and context-dependent, these factors can increase the likelihood of violence against

women because their effects on social norms are often gendered, and because they compromise the ways in which people might otherwise or normally act to demonstrate empathy and respect for women and uphold gender equality and non-violence.

These factors include neighbourhood-level poverty, disadvantage and isolation; environments dominated by male peer relations; natural disasters and crises; alcohol; and gambling.

- Prosocial behaviours are more likely to be present in **neighbourhoods and communities** when there are high levels of social support and connectedness and a strong community identity – these are norms that have been shown to help protect women from violence.[200] On the other hand, poverty and disadvantage at the neighbourhood level is associated with increased social isolation and reduced collective efficacy.[201] Such conditions can weaken formal and informal sanctions against the use of violence generally, and violence against women in particular, and therefore weaken or discourage prosocial norms and behaviours.[202]
- There can be a lack of respect for women and their rights in **male-dominated settings and contexts where male peer relations predominate** and work to protect men's power and privilege (see also Driver 4, page 44).[203] These environments and cultures can weaken and often seriously undermine prosocial behaviour towards women and undermine attempts to prevent gendered violence and uphold gender inequality.
- Weakening of prosocial norms has been shown to occur during **natural disasters and crises**. There is a growing body of research linking natural disasters to increased levels of violence against women. Such situations produce a series of social stressors, including disrupted social networks, social isolation and limited or no access to support services, all of which can weaken prosocial behaviours and increase the likelihood and prevalence of violence against women.[204] National and international literature finds increased rates of violence and abusive behaviour towards women during disasters, crises and emergencies – including the COVID pandemic – particularly for women with disabilities and women living in disadvantaged circumstances.[205]
- Prosocial behaviours towards women can be weakened by **heavy alcohol consumption**.[xxvi] The consumption of alcohol by men who hold sexist attitudes is associated with the likelihood of increased perpetration of intimate partner violence.[206] Alcohol features in a disproportionate number of police call-outs to family violence incidents and is correlated with a high number of, and more severe, incidences of violence against women. **Alcohol itself does not drive violence against women; not all people who drink are violent, and many people who are violent do not drink**. However, the contribution of alcohol to increased perpetration is significant in the context of gendered social norms and practices that condone or support violence against women, in particular those relating to masculinity and masculine peer group behaviour.[207]

  Factors that weaken prosocial behaviour often occur simultaneously, and compound and reinforce each other. When a culture of men's drinking is encouraged and embedded in spaces that are male-dominated, such as a workplace or a sporting club, there can be pressure to embody aggressive or competitive male peer relations – and gendered drinking cultures that emphasise male conquest and aggression can affect the ways individual men behave under the influence of alcohol. These dynamics can result in a particularly significant weakening of prosocial behaviour. This suggests that it is the interaction between social norms relating to alcohol and social norms relating to gender that increases the likelihood, frequency or severity of violence against women, not just the consumption of alcohol in and of itself.
- **Heavy gambling** can also weaken prosocial behaviours. Like alcohol, gambling does not cause violence. But in tandem with social

xxvi Research is limited on the impact of drugs other than alcohol on violence against women, but a relationship might be expected where drug use weakens prosocial behaviour in similar ways to alcohol, and where there are drugs are consumed in the context of gendered power differentials and harmful gendered social norms.

norms relating to gender, the social stress caused by loss of income from gambling can intensify the frequency and severity of intimate partner violence against women.[208]

Other relevant social stressors that both weaken prosocial behaviour and intersect with beliefs about gender are discussed in the following section on resistance and backlash.

REINFORCING FACTOR 4.
Resistance and backlash to prevention and gender equality efforts

Resistance and backlash to violence prevention and gender equality efforts is an inevitable part of the social change process.[209] In the context of work to prevent violence against women, backlash and resistance can be understood as any active or passive action, behaviour or attitude which seeks to block change, uphold the status quo of gender relations, or re-establish male privilege and power. There is a range of different types of resistance, from denial that gender inequality exists, or that violence is gendered, to co-option of rights-based discourses in ways that attempt to make the gendered patterns in both victimisation and perpetration invisible (the 'what about men?' refrain in men's rights narratives). Backlash is a more aggressive form of resistance, which can involve verbal or online attacks, or actual physical violence.

All forms of resistance and backlash create challenges for prevention work and make the goal of gender transformational change to end violence against women more difficult to achieve. Backlash or resistance are in and of themselves reinforcing factors for violence against women, because they can create an environment which heightens the risk of violence. Resistance to gender equality and prevention work also intersects with resistance to other forms of equality and rights-based social change – such as diversity and inclusion initiatives, anti-racist strategies or efforts to uphold the rights of First Nations people, refugees or migrants. This can create particularly heightened risks of violence against women who experience intersecting forms of oppression.

Individual resistance and backlash can be displayed by anyone who seeks to maintain the status quo of gender relations, holds sexist attitudes, or helps create or maintain settings or contexts characterised by sexism, gender segregation and male dominance.[210] When their masculinity, privilege or status is challenged, men who hold such attitudes may respond by using harassing, sexist, homophobic or sexually objectifying behaviours, or with increased anger and physical aggression towards women.[211] Individual backlash can also present as cyberstalking, digital/image-based abuse, malicious impersonation, threats of rape or violence, or 'doxing'.[212]

Individual backlash or resistance to gender equality can also be part of the dynamics of intimate partner violence. Recent Australian research based on more than a decade of population-level surveys shows an increased probability of men using violence against their partner when her income exceeds his and the relationship therefore violates the gender norm that men should be the primary breadwinner and earn more than women.[213] In such relationships, there was a 35 per cent higher likelihood of intimate partner violence against women and a 20 per cent higher likelihood of emotional abuse against women.[214] This finding was consistent across all ages, incomes, education levels and cultural backgrounds.[215] Individual men who perpetrate such violence are more likely to be those who already hold attitudes that are sexist or hostile towards women, and who therefore perceive gender equality to be a threat to their power and privilege, or a diminution of their social status or identity.[216] This shows that it is not couples' income levels in and of themselves that are relevant, but rather the violation of a gender norm combined with an existing power imbalance in relationships where men believe they should be the primary breadwinner and head of the household. The strength of the relationship between the violation of this gender norm and violence against women is significant.[217]

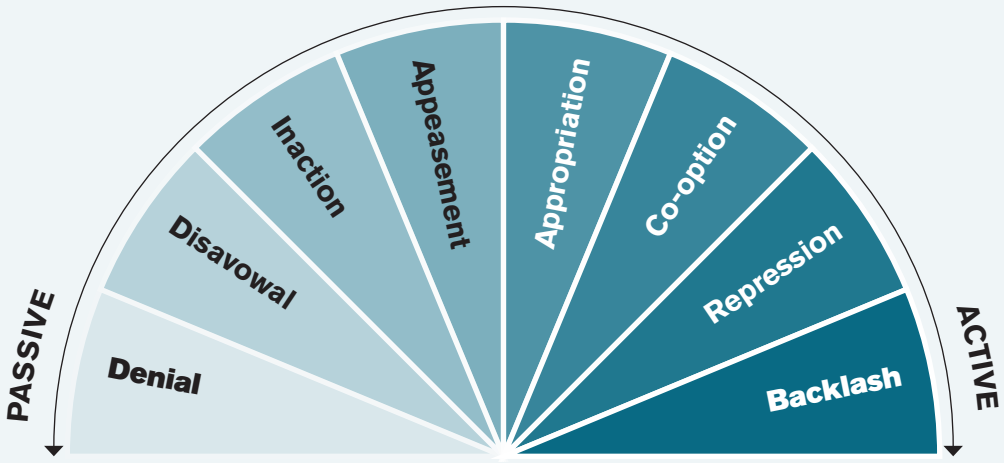
Community or collective backlash and resistance often occurs in response to specific incidents or situations, and includes coordinated resistance by informal groups or communities, including men's rights activist groups (see page 54). For example, there has been significant and coordinated political resistance, including aggressive anti-feminist backlash, in response to aspects of family law that men's rights and fathers' rights groups perceive to be 'unfair to men'. This has sought to discredit female victims of violence, wind back the legal protections available to victims and the penalties imposed on perpetrators, and undermine services for the victims of men's violence.[218]

Another common example is the coordinated resistance and backlash to news reporting about violence against women that involves people posting repeated comments on media articles or bombarding social media threads with aggressive or abusive comments, and using podcasts or vlogs to spread misinformation.[219] This kind of resistance often seeks to deny, justify or excuse violence against women, question or shed doubt on established data and evidence, shift the focus to a discussion about men's experiences of violence or 'false accusations' of violence, and blame the victim for the violence she has experienced. While this kind of resistance is ostensibly in response to a particular issue or incident, it is often an expression of more generalised resistance to work that seeks to advance gender equality and address the drivers of violence against women. When gender relations are based on a hierarchical model that places women in a subordinate role, violence may be used and accepted as a mechanism for maintaining these power relations, especially when they are being challenged.[220]

Figure 7
Forms of resistance and backlash to work that aims to prevent violence against women and promote gender equality

Image created by Our Watch. Content based on VicHealth's representation of Forms of resistance.

See alternate text for Figure 7 on page 131.



Organisational and setting-specific resistance and backlash takes a range of forms. It includes, for example, resistance to gender equality measures, or to women's career advancement, especially in male-dominated workplaces. This can manifest as hostility towards, and harassment of, women; negative judgements about women's competence, based on gender norms and stereotypes; intimidation; sabotage; or excessive scrutiny of women's work. Research suggests these forms of resistance sometimes occur simply because of women's presence, which is seen to be an encroachment into a previously all-male space.[221]

Institutional resistance is best understood as an ongoing pattern.[222] It can be explicit or implicit and is characterised by patterns of individual and collective action or inaction. It can include watering down or removing institutional measures to address the drivers of violence against women, or the 'filtering out' of transformative gender equality goals. Institutional resistance may include, for example, political, economic, bureaucratic and legislative efforts to remove or block a policy, legislative reform or framework intended to promote gender equality or prevent violence, such as a gender impact statement for a policy proposal, or financial or human resourcing for prevention work.

Structural and systemic backlash and resistance occurs in response to changes (or perceived changes) to the social status of women and increased public and political focus on issues related to women's safety, empowerment and equality. Violence against women tends to increase in societies undergoing rapid economic, political and social change, where women as a group are perceived to have breached socially defined feminine roles and gained independence and prominence in paid work, politics and civic society, or when women's education and material resources increase relative to men's.[223] This suggests that resistance and backlash are used in such contexts to re-establish a perceived 'natural' or 'traditional' gender order.

Organised backlash and resistance from men's rights activists

Men's rights activists (or MRAs) are groups of men who come together online and in real life contexts to deliberately undermine feminist efforts, in the belief that men are losing their power and status in society, or that their experiences are being erased because of women's rights activism and gender equality movements.[224]

Research on fathers' rights groups and men's rights groups (which often overlap in membership) demonstrates that these groups use deliberate, organised strategies to shift the focus away from violence against women and women's safety and to undermine progress made on gender equality to date.[225]

MRA groups often organise online and are increasingly and falsely positioning themselves as a formal and professional collective of people with expertise in gender equality, violence against women and parenting that is equal to that of specialist gender and violence academics, policy makers and practitioners. As an organised anti-feminist movement, MRAs are increasingly engaging in formal political advocacy (unsupported by credible evidence) to resist moves for gender equality, women's rights and women's safety, through a range of mechanisms, including calling for legislation and policy that addresses these issues to be wound back.[226]

Element 2 — A primary prevention approach

This element considers how violence against women can be prevented. It explains the concept of primary prevention as a social change strategy, one that works to shift the underlying drivers of this violence, to stop it from occurring in the first place. It details the multiple kinds of activities that are needed to make up an effective, holistic national approach to prevention, which works across the socio-ecological model to address the structures, norms and practices that drive violence against women at a population level.

What is primary prevention?

Change the story outlines a primary prevention[xxvii] approach to addressing violence against women. Primary prevention means stopping violence against women from occurring in the first place by addressing its underlying drivers. This requires changing the social conditions that give rise to this violence; reforming the institutions and systems that excuse, justify or even promote such violence; and shifting the power imbalances and social norms, structures and practices that drive and normalise it.

Individual behavioural change (to stop people using violence) may be the ultimate aim of prevention activity, but behavioural change cannot be achieved prior to, or in isolation from, broader and deeper change in these underlying drivers of violence, which are embedded within relationships, families, communities, organisations, institutions and society as a whole. Social structures, norms and practices are interrelated, and each plays a role in supporting the others. This means that a comprehensive approach to prevention needs to address each of these aspects, across all levels of the socio-ecological model. It is critical that those leading prevention activity understand the gendered dynamics and impacts of these structures, norms and practices.

xxvii From here, this framework will predominantly use the language of 'prevention' to refer to 'primary prevention', for simplicity.

Comprehensive primary prevention aims to influence laws, policies, and the practices and behaviours of organisations, groups and individuals. It seeks to engage and reach people of all ages in all the places they live, work, learn, socialise and play. Through this whole-of-society approach, primary prevention addresses the systems, structures, norms, attitudes, practices and power imbalances that drive violence against women.[227]

Given its ambitious social change agenda, primary prevention necessarily encompasses a very broad range of activities at different levels of society, within organisations and institutions as well as within communities, families and relationships. Examples of primary prevention activities include employer-led workplace initiatives to embed respect and gender equality in organisational structures, policies and cultures; efforts to encourage more respectful and informed reporting on violence against women in the media; respectful relationships education in schools; and gender-responsive policy analysis and development processes to identify ways to address the gendered drivers of violence in a given area of public policy.

Primary prevention aims to shift the underlying drivers of violence against women - the systems, structures, norms, attitudes, practices and power imbalances that drive this violence.

Changing gendered social norms

Changing social norms is a key goal of prevention. Prevention strategies to change gendered social norms need to be based on conceptual and contextual clarity about which elements are the focus for change, and need to directly address the reasons for the persistence of a norm. This requires attention to:

- **underlying values** – such as ideologies of male superiority, or men's right to women's bodies, or the belief that 'woman's place is in the home'
- **behaviours** – such as when men leer, wolf whistle, make sexually explicit remarks or touch women without their consent, and the way these behaviours are seen (in some contexts) as socially acceptable
- **practices or regular patterns of behaviour** which are manifestations of gendered social norms, such as the social acceptance of men's drinking cultures that weaken prosocial behaviours towards women.[228]

When working on changing social norms, it is important to recognise that:

- Norms and attitudes are different – changing some people's attitudes does not mean that social norms are changing.
- Social norms can have both direct and indirect influence on values, beliefs and behaviours.
- Social norms can have either a positive or a negative effect.
- Social norms vary between different contexts and change over time.
- Work to change individual values and beliefs must be supported by work to address how social norms are embedded in organisations and institutions.

The relationship between violence prevention and broader gender equality work

Primary prevention activities across all levels of the socio-ecological model (see Figure 5) can be supported or enabled by broader gender equality activities, but the two are not interchangeable.

Formal gender equality efforts – for example, equal pay legislation, or policy and regulations designed to promote equal workforce participation – are an important foundation for prevention because they help address the underlying social context of gender inequality that gives rise to violence against women and enables it to thrive. However, gender equality efforts – particularly if they provide only formal rather than substantive equality[xxviii] – will not in and of themselves achieve a world where violence against women no longer occurs.

Global evidence shows that while gender equality activity is an important foundation for, and can facilitate the progress of violence prevention activity, significant and sustained changes to the prevalence of violence against women will only be achieved through a specific focus on the gendered drivers of this violence: the factors that most consistently predict violence against women at a population level, and explain its gendered patterns.[229]

How prevention complements other strategies

Primary prevention is a distinct approach – broader than, and different from, other work that responds to violence against women. A comprehensive and holistic approach to violence against women must involve a continuum of interdependent and interlinked strategies, with efforts across the spectrum illustrated in Figure 8. While it has different goals, primary prevention complements and enhances early intervention, response and recovery activity by helping reduce recurrent perpetration of violence, and by shifting attitudes and practices within the justice and support service systems that may inadvertently tolerate, justify or excuse violence against women, as well as addressing the inequalities within other settings that may create additional hurdles and disadvantages for women on their recovery journey.

The limitations of awareness-raising

Awareness-raising is often confused with prevention, or misunderstood as a prevention strategy. Awareness-raising aims to educate the broader public about the drivers, dynamics, prevalence and impacts of violence. However, awareness-raising on its own will not produce the social, cultural and behavioural change that is needed to reduce the prevalence of violence against women and create a more equitable, safe and inclusive society. Nevertheless, it is an important first step in the overall task of addressing violence against women, and can help provide an enabling environment for more change-oriented strategies.

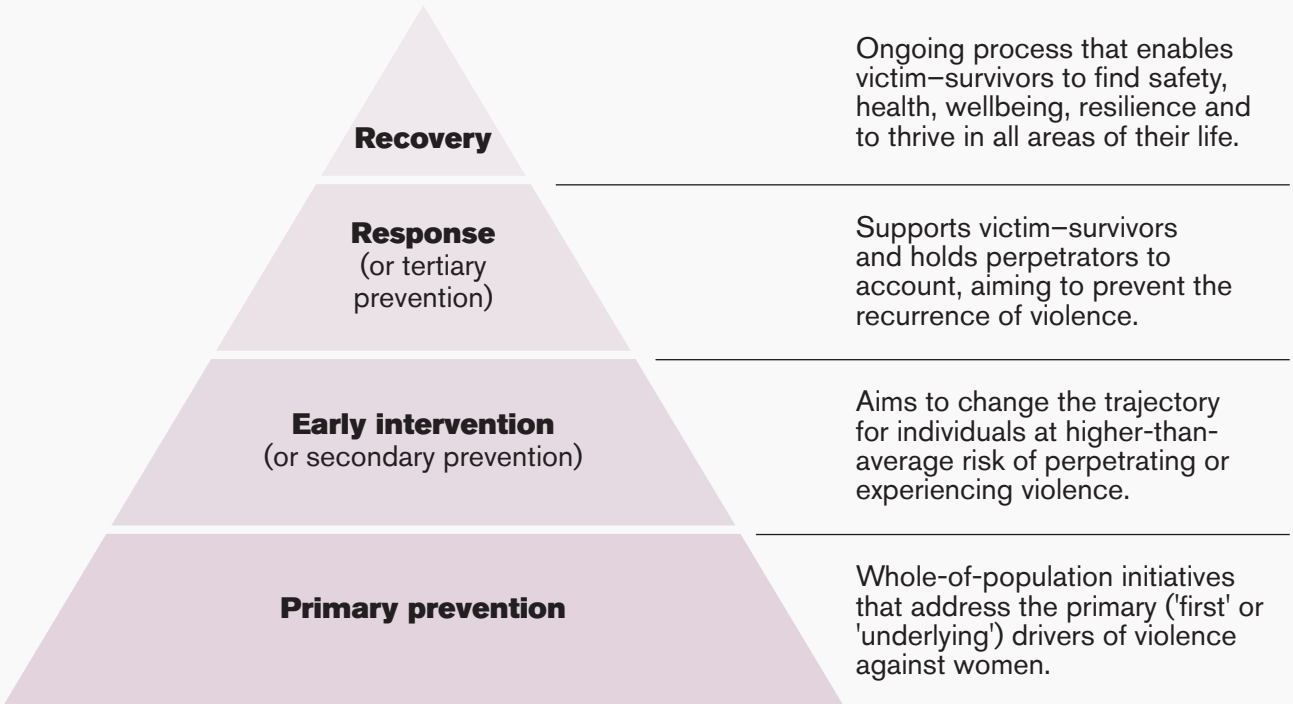
xxviii Substantive gender equality is a 'combination of formal gender equality with equality of outcome, meaning that equality in law, equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men are complemented by equality in impact, outcome or result' (eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1401)

Primary prevention approaches are distinct from responses to violence, such as refuges, helplines, and other crisis and legal support services; police and justice system responses; or men's behaviour-change activities to prevent a recurrence of violence. Prevention is also distinct from early intervention activities that intervene in more targeted contexts, working with individuals or groups identified as being at a higher-than-average risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence, and trying to stop early signs of violence from escalating.

However, the preventive effects of early intervention, response and recovery work are also important, stopping early signs of violence from escalating, or preventing a recurrence of violence – which is why early intervention and response are sometimes referred to as 'secondary prevention' and 'tertiary prevention'. These strategies also help increase perpetrator accountability which is fundamental to creating a social context in which people understand that there are serious consequences for men who use violence against women. All these approaches to prevent and respond to violence against women are essential, and must be adequately funded and supported, as well as effectively linked, to create a comprehensive and holistic strategy for addressing violence against women.

Figure 8
The relationship between primary prevention and other work to address violence against women

See alternate text for Figure 8 on page 131.



Element 3 — Twelve actions to prevent violence against women

The following eight essential actions and four supporting actions together address the factors that drive and reinforce violence against women. While all twelve actions are needed, the eight essential actions are of primary importance, as it is these that address the gendered drivers of violence against women. Implementing the supporting actions in isolation will not be effective in preventing this violence.

No one organisation, community or institution can undertake all these actions, but all stakeholders can contribute to them – in appropriate and context-specific ways, separately and in partnership – as part of a shared national approach.

The key actions can be tailored to ensure they address the range of forms of violence that women experience and are relevant for specific community groups, age groups and settings; and they can be implemented using a range of techniques that reach and engage people across the population.

The actions described on the following pages should be understood as implemented in the context of the other elements of a national approach described in subsequent chapters of this framework.

An effective national approach to prevention requires these essential actions to be taken concurrently at multiple levels and across different settings and sectors.

Eight essential actions to address the gendered drivers of violence and change the social context in which it occurs

The eight essential actions address the gendered drivers of violence against women, and the social context in which this violence occurs, as described in Element 1. They are essential because violence against women will not be reduced or prevented unless its underlying drivers are shifted, and the wider social context which enables violence against women to occur is also changed.

There are two sets, or types of essential actions:

- **Essential actions 1–4 are designed to target the four specific gendered drivers of violence.**

  Each of these four essential actions addresses a specific gendered driver.

- **Essential actions 5–8 address the broader social context – the gender inequality and other forms of structural and systemic discrimination and oppression that gives rise to violence against women.**

  While these actions are essential, they are not sufficient in themselves to shift the prevalence of violence against women, since they do not specifically focus on the gendered drivers. They must be undertaken together with actions 1–4, which target the four gendered drivers.

The essential actions are intentionally described broadly, to emphasise that there are many ways of taking these actions at different levels of policy and practice, and many ways that different stakeholders can translate them into practice in different contexts and settings/sectors. Examples are provided to illustrate some of the ways each overarching action can be implemented.

To be effective, both types of essential actions require policy, legislative, regulatory and institutional support, as well as broad, practical, 'on the ground' implementation across society, in all the diverse settings where people live, work, learn, socialise and play.

All these actions need to be implemented in a range of ways that, taken together, address social norms, structures and practices at all levels. For example, work addressing attitudes towards violence and gender at the community or organisational level needs to be accompanied by legislative, institutional and policy support that promotes gender equality and accountability for violence and discrimination.

The importance of an intersectional approach to prevention

Just as an intersectional *analysis* of violence against women is critical (see page 17), so too is an intersectional approach to *preventing* this violence. Action 6 speaks specifically to this, but to prevent violence against *all* women, an intersectional feminist lens needs to be applied to *all* prevention activity, whether focused on addressing the gendered drivers of violence or the reinforcing factors. An intersectional approach should be integrated in both policy and practice, and at all stages of prevention activity, from design through to implementation and evaluation.

This point is reinforced in the principles section (Element 4) which points to the need for an intersectional, gender transformative approach to prevention.

An effective intersectional approach to the prevention of violence against women is one that not only takes account of the diversity of people's experiences and identities, but that explicitly seeks to address the multiple intersecting systems of oppression and discrimination, power and privilege that shape the social context in which this violence occurs, and influence men's perpetration and women's experiences of violence.

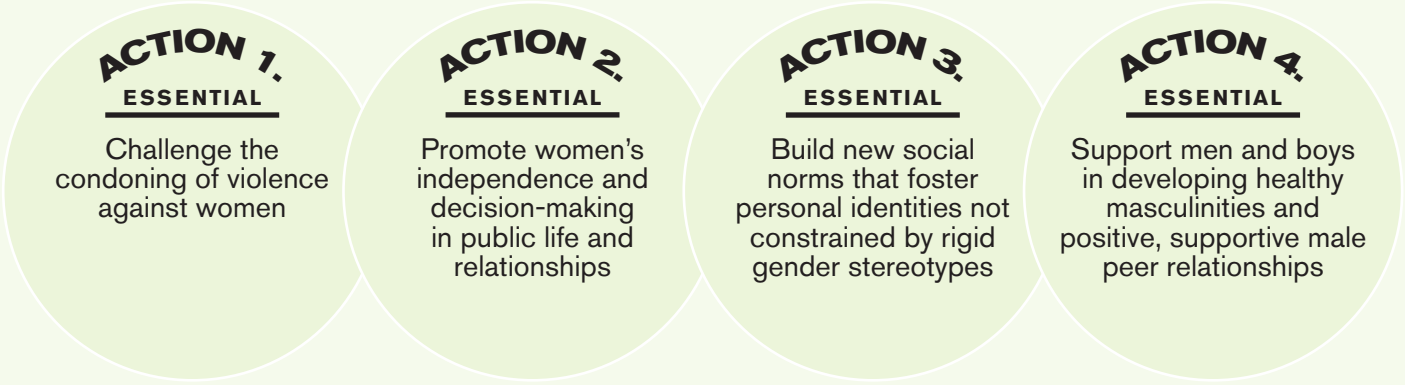
Four essential actions to address the gendered drivers of violence against women

Action 1.
Challenge the condoning of violence against women

- Reform legal, policy and institutional systems and practices that in their operation may implicitly or explicitly condone violence against women or reduce men's accountability for their violence.
- Shift community attitudes and social norms that justify, excuse, trivialise or downplay violence against women, and challenge the condoning of forms of violence based on ableism, racism and other discriminatory attitudes.
- Ensure all prevention initiatives include mechanisms to challenge social support for attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, systems and practices that justify, excuse, trivialise or downplay violence against women, or shift blame from the perpetrator to the victim.
- Challenge sensationalised or stereotyped media coverage and sexist, racist, and other types of discriminatory depictions that contribute to a culture that condones violence against women (or particular groups of women) and enables victim blaming.

Action 2.
Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships

- Strengthen women's economic security, independence and social, political and economic participation and decision-making in public life to equalise access to power and resources between women and men.
- Challenge attitudes and social norms that normalise male control and dominance, privilege masculine behaviours and character traits, and promote male control over decision-making in public life and in relationships.
- Support the rights of women to make decisions about their own lives, particularly women with disabilities, who are often denied this right.
- Promote social, community and cultural networks and connections between women to provide sources of peer support.
- Develop regulatory, policy, organisational and institutional responses to increase the representation of women (with diverse backgrounds and life experiences) in political systems and institutions and formal and informal decision-making roles at community, organisational, institutional and policy levels.
- Use policy and other levers to reduce women's economic dependence on men and increase economic support to women who face financial barriers to equality and independence.



Action 3.
Build new social norms that foster personal identities not constrained by rigid gender stereotypes

- Raise awareness of the negative impacts of gender stereotyping on children, young people and adults, and increase community support for adults and children to act in ways, or take on roles, that defy gender stereotypes.
- Encourage and support children, young people and adults to develop personal identities that are not constrained by gender stereotypes.
- Build the capacity of children, young people and adults to reject rigid gender roles, and to challenge aggressive, entitled, controlling and dominant constructions of masculinity and subordinate or sexualised constructions of femininity and girlhood.
- Increase social support for masculine norms, practices and behaviours that are healthy, safe, respectful and ethical, at an individual level and within organisations and institutions.
- Promote and support gender-equitable domestic and parenting practices, including through policy and legislation, early parenting programs and workplace initiatives.
- Develop positive ways to engage men and boys in the prevention and gender equality initiatives, encouraging them to challenge restrictive and rigid gender roles and identities for both men and women.

Action 4.
Support men and boys in developing healthy masculinities and positive, supportive male peer relationships

- Teach boys and men how to recognise, understand and challenge harmful expressions of masculinity and male privilege in their own lives, and in their peer groups.
- Counter constructions of masculinity as dominant, aggressive, controlling or hypersexual in both public and private life, and within media and popular culture.
- Challenge homophobia as an expression of masculinity at an individual, relationship, peer, organisational and institutional level.
- Develop and promote representations of men and boys modelling respectful, fair, ethical, safe, supportive, equitable behaviours within relationships, to normalise these behaviours for men.
- Ensure prevention activities include an explicit focus on addressing dominant forms of masculinity and engaging men and boys to prevent violence against women.
- Work with boys and young men specifically to challenge norms about sexual entitlement, sexual dominance, hypersexuality and the influence of pornography, and build their understanding of sexual consent, agency, mutual pleasure and power.

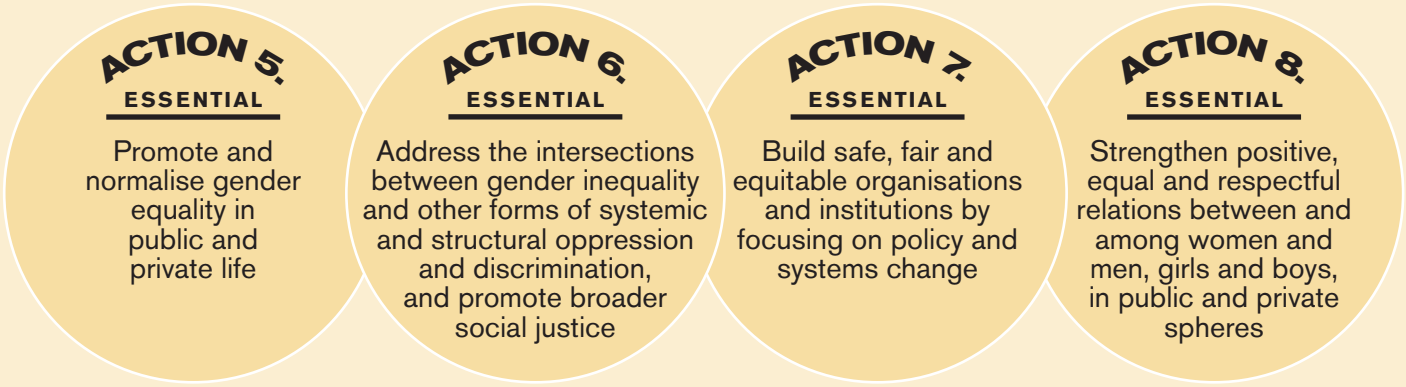
Four essential actions to address the social context that gives rise to violence against women

Action 5.
Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life

- Use policy, regulatory and legislative mechanisms to increase women's workforce participation, address the gender pay gap and superannuation gap, and promote more equitable, accessible and affordable parental leave and childcare arrangements for both women and men.
- Increase social and structural support for gender equality, in policies and in practices, and in both public and private life.
- Establish, maintain and report publicly on processes to assess all public policy for its impact on women and gender equality, including analysing differential impacts on different groups of women, and use this gender analysis to inform the development of policy that benefits women and promotes gender equality.
- Build greater connection between initiatives to ensure women's safety and broader efforts to advance women's social and political rights and economic security and empowerment, both within relationships and in public life.
- Support and resource women's collective advocacy and social movement activism to prevent violence and promote gender equality.
- Continue to build support for gender equality in both public and private contexts among adults, young people and children.

Action 6.
Address the intersections between gender inequality and other forms of systemic and structural oppression and discrimination, and promote broader social justice

- Within all prevention activity, draw attention to, and take action to address, the intersections between sexism and gender inequality and racism; colonialism; heteronormativity; cisnormativity; homo-, bi- and transphobia; ageism; ableism and class discrimination and oppression.
- Form partnerships and coalitions to address the collective challenges of gender inequality, sexism, racism, colonialism, ableism, ageism, classism, homo-, bi- and transphobia, and heteronormativity and cisnormativity in collaborative ways.
- Work to ensure a gendered analysis is embedded within work to address other forms of systemic and structural discrimination and oppression.



Action 7.
Build safe, fair and equitable organisations and institutions by focusing on policy and systems change

- Use policy, regulatory and legislative mechanisms and processes to equalise access to power and decision-making between women and men within organisations and institutions.
- Develop and encourage or mandate adherence to national standards for organisations, sectors and institutions on a range of issues related to preventing and responding to violence against women.
- Enable long-term and sustainable whole-of-organisation approaches to the prevention of violence against women, in line with the Workplace Equality and Respect[230] standards.
- Address masculine organisational cultures through prevention work targeted at settings where groups of men gather and interact, such as specific social venues and sports clubs, as well as through male-dominated organisations and institutions.

Action 8.
Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys, in public and private spheres

- Provide systemic support for initiatives (including, but not limited to, respectful relationships education in all education and care settings) that promote positive, equal, respectful relationships between people of all genders, in all contexts.
- Build organisational and institutional cultures that promote and demonstrate the importance of equality, respect, safety and fairness in professional contexts.
- Challenge peer relations between men and between boys that involve hostility or disrespect towards women, or that objectify or sexualise women and girls.
- Increase critical media literacy among children, young people and adults, including building skills to engage respectfully in an online environment.
- Build people's confidence to act as prosocial bystanders to challenge sexism, harassment, inequality, disrespect and hostility towards women and violence-supportive attitudes in their personal and professional lives.
- Build skills among young people and adults to critique the influence of pornography on ideas about sex, consent and gender roles.

To be effective in driving structural, systemic change, the twelve actions require policy, legislative, regulatory and institutional support, as well as broad, practical, 'on the ground' implementation.

Four supporting actions to address the reinforcing factors

The four supporting actions address the reinforcing factors described in Element 1. While they do not drive violence in and of themselves, reinforcing factors can contribute to, or exacerbate, violence against women when combined with the gendered drivers.

Addressing the reinforcing factors alone is not sufficient – a national approach to prevention must be based primarily on the eight essential actions, as it is these that directly address the drivers of violence against women. However, strategies that address the four reinforcing factors can make an important contribution to overall national prevention goals – hence the framing of these actions as 'supporting actions'.

While a particular actor, agency or organisation may wish to focus only on a single reinforcing factor – and this can be a legitimate strategy – such work should not be developed in isolation from prevention work more broadly. Rather, supporting actions should be based on, and informed by, an understanding of the gendered drivers of violence against women and the gendered social context within which this violence occurs.

The four supporting actions will be most effective when developed in collaboration with women's organisations, gender equality experts or specialist family, domestic or sexual violence services, because their experience and expertise is attentive to gendered power dynamics and to the social norms, structures and practices that give rise to violence against women. Collaboration with experts and specialists will ensure that these supporting actions not only address the various reinforcing factors, but do so in gender transformative ways.

Action 9.
Challenge the normalisation of violence and aggression as an expression of masculinity

- Counter the construction of masculinity as 'naturally' violent, and the learning of violence in gendered ways.
- Challenge the normalisation, valorisation and glorification of male violence through strategies that focus on the socialisation of boys and young men, and that challenge the construction and expression of masculinity as aggressive or violent, both in public and private life, and through media and popular culture.
- Work to change the specific social norms and attitudes that result in men's violence (against people of any gender) being seen as normal or appropriate in particular contexts or situations.

Action 10.
Reduce the long-term impacts of exposure to violence and prevent further exposure

- Strengthen early intervention mechanisms for children and young people that aim to address the gendered impacts of exposure to violence against women and promote alternative models of healthy, equitable and non-violent relationships, characterised by respect and equality, and not limited by gender norms and stereotypes.
- Support and advocate for healing strategies and other efforts to mediate the impacts of past and ongoing occurrences of violence such as child abuse, colonial violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, racist violence, violence against women with disabilities, war-related trauma and torture experienced by refugees and asylum seekers, or violence occurring in prisons and detention centres.
- Work with local and state-wide organisations to strengthen the promotion of non-violent parenting, which in turn contributes to preventing child abuse.
- Encourage, support and raise the profile of individuals who have experienced violence and are, or wish to be, anti-violence advocates in public or in their own communities.
- Strengthen efforts in policy and strategy to prevent all other forms of violence (such as racist, community, public or lateral violence and child abuse), especially through the provision of specialist expertise on the gendered dynamics of these forms of violence.

Action 11.
Strengthen prosocial behaviour

- Dismantle norms and practices within organisations, institutions and systems that protect men's power and privilege at the expense of women's health, safety or wellbeing, focusing particularly on male-dominated settings and contexts.
- Provide support for and implement programs and initiatives that increase social cohesion, community connectedness and access to required services within communities across Australia, particularly those that experience multiple forms of social injustice arising from structural oppression and discrimination.
- Address the relationship between harmful alcohol use and social norms relating to both violence and gender, with a particular focus on groups and settings characterised by harmful masculine drinking cultures.
- Improve the regulation of alcohol in ways that help to change harmful social norms relating to the intersection between violence, alcohol, gender and gendered social/organisational contexts.
- Increase community-wide support for the importance of prosocial behaviours and their role in preventing and responding to violence against women.
- Work with boys, young men and adult men to build their knowledge about, and empathy for, the harmful impacts of violence, abuse, harassment, objectification and discrimination on women.
- Apply a gender lens to emergency management and response planning in the context of disasters and crises to address the increased likelihood of violence against women, ensure such events do not worsen existing inequalities, and increase community resilience over the long term.

Action 12.
Plan for, and actively address, backlash and resistance

- Plan and integrate strategies to address various forms of resistance and backlash (individual, community, collective, organisational, institutional, structural and systemic) into all prevention activity.
- Challenge dominant social norms about the role of men as 'breadwinners', 'providers' and 'heads of households' and promote social norms that support women's financial independence and capacity to provide financially for their partners, children, families and wider kinship networks.
- Develop strategies to ensure the safety of prevention practitioners, advocates and policy makers who may be the targets of backlash.
- Use legislative, policy and other levers to ensure effective consequences and penalties (both legal and institutional) for backlash that takes the form of illegal or potentially illegal behaviour such as doxing, cyberstalking, image-based abuse or threats of violence (whether in person, online or using digital technologies).
- Develop, implement, and evaluate specific strategies to address backlash and resistance from individual men or groups of men, drawing on evidence about the causes of this backlash or resistance, and ensuring the strategies are of sufficient duration to enable attitudinal and behavioural change.[231]
- Monitor and report on progress towards prevention goals within organisations and institutions in ways that enable any patterns of institutional resistance to be identified and addressed.

THE PROBLEM

Violence against women is serious, prevalent and driven by gender inequality

Gendered drivers of violence against women

Driver 1.	Driver 2.	Driver 3.	Driver 4.
Condoning of violence against women	Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life	Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity	Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control

Underlying **social context** for violence against women

SOCIAL CONTEXT

Gender inequality and other forms of **oppression**

such as racism, ableism, ageism, classism, cissexism and heteronormativity

Factors that reinforce violence against women

REINFORCING Factor 1.	REINFORCING Factor 2.	REINFORCING Factor 3.	REINFORCING Factor 4.
Condoning of violence in general	Experience of, and exposure to, violence	Factors that weaken prosocial behaviour	Resistance and backlash to prevention and gender equality efforts

These drivers and reinforcing factors play out at every level of society: from individual attitudes and behaviours, to social norms, organisational cultures and practices, policies, laws, and institutions.

THE SOLUTION

Violence against women is preventable if we all work together

Essential actions to address the gendered drivers

ACTION 1. ESSENTIAL
Challenge the condoning of violence against women

ACTION 2. ESSENTIAL
Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships

ACTION 3. ESSENTIAL
Build new social norms that foster personal identities not constrained by rigid gender stereotypes

ACTION 4. ESSENTIAL
Support men and boys in developing healthy masculinities and positive, supportive male peer relationships

Essential actions to address the underlying social context

ACTION 5. ESSENTIAL
Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life

ACTION 6. ESSENTIAL
Address the intersections between gender inequality and other forms of systemic and structural oppression and discrimination, and promote broader social justice

ACTION 7. ESSENTIAL
Build safe, fair and equitable organisations and institutions by focusing on policy and systems change

ACTION 8. ESSENTIAL
Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys, in public and private spheres

Supporting actions to address the reinforcing factors

ACTION 9. SUPPORTING
Challenge the normalisation of violence and aggression as an expression of masculinity

ACTION 10. SUPPORTING
Reduce the long-term impacts of exposure to violence, and prevent further exposure

ACTION 11. SUPPORTING
Strengthen prosocial behaviour

ACTION 12. SUPPORTING
Plan for and actively address backlash and resistance

These 12 actions need to be implemented at every level of society: using legislative, institutional, policy and program responses; by governments, organisations and individuals; in settings where people live, work, learn and socialise; in ways that are tailored to the context and needs of different groups.

Element 4 — Principles of a national approach to primary prevention

This section articulates the key principles that must be considered as part of any prevention activity, whether that is a national prevention strategy, policy or legislative reform, prevention workforce development activity, an organisational change strategy, or a program or campaign aimed at attitudinal and behaviour change. For further guidance on these principles, including how to embed them as part of prevention planning and implementation, see the Prevention Handbook.

Key principles

Use all available policy levers

Using policy, legislative and regulatory levers is a critical element of prevention practice. These mechanisms can directly address the drivers of men's violence against women. For example, legislation requiring workplaces to prevent (rather than only respond to) sexual harassment can help reduce this form of violence, just as legislation requiring employers to implement gender equality strategies can help change harmful male peer relationships in the workplace, and increase women's access to positions of power and decision-making. Regulations to ensure safe and appropriate media reporting of violence against women can help reduce the condoning of this violence. Reforms to paid parental leave legislation and policy settings can enable parents to make child-rearing arrangements based not on gender stereotypes and gendered expectations about men's and women's roles in the workplace or in the home, but on a more equal assumption about how these roles can be shared.

As well as having a powerful direct effect on the drivers of violence, policy levers can also create an enabling environment for other prevention activity, including setting or sector-based work. For example, a state government policy commitment that mandates a whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education creates an environment that drives and supports action across the whole school sector, with the potential for broad impacts across the jurisdiction. Appropriate local government policy settings can create an enabling environment for a range of prevention activities with reach across the local community.

Legislative and policy reform to advance gender equality in a general sense can also play a role. While this general approach alone will not be sufficient to prevent violence against women (because more specific action on the gendered drivers is necessary), it plays an important role in helping to shift the social context of gender inequality in which violence against women arises (described in Element 1). It also creates a more enabling environment for specific prevention activity. Gender equality policy, regulation and legislation is therefore an important foundation for prevention work.

Use an intersectional, gender transformative approach

A gender transformative approach is one that seeks not just to highlight harmful gender roles, practices and norms and unequal power relations between men and women, but to challenge and ultimately 'transform' them. An intersectional, gender transformative approach does this in a way that acknowledges the interactions between multiple systems and structures of oppression and the intersection of multiple forms of power and privilege, again with the explicit aim of transforming these dynamics.

An intersectional, gender transformative approach requires critical awareness of, and efforts to actively challenge:

- harmful, binary and unequal gender roles and the myriad of different ways these gender roles operate for women, men and non-binary people from a range of diverse backgrounds
- the attitudes, norms and practices that underpin gender inequality and how these both intersect with, and are informed by, racism, colonialism, classism, ageism, ableism, heteronormativity and cisnormativity.

Use the essential actions to address the gendered drivers

While changing the underlying social context (outlined in Element 1) is a critical element of prevention, working on gender equality alone is not sufficient; specifically and explicitly addressing the gendered drivers of violence against women is fundamental to reducing the prevalence of, and ultimately preventing, this violence. A comprehensive and coordinated national approach to prevention must:

- concurrently target all four gendered drivers of violence against women by implementing the eight essential actions across policy and practice, within long-term strategies
- include a focus on the four supporting actions to address the relationship between the gendered drivers and the reinforcing factors
- implement all the essential actions across all levels of the socio-ecological model – individual, relationship, family, community, organisational, institutional, structural and social
- combine different techniques for prevention practice, and work across all settings and sectors in addressing the essential and supporting actions.

Global evidence shows a gender transformative approach that works to shift harmful gender norms and redress power disparities among women and men is a fundamental component of effective violence prevention programming.[232]

Figure 9
How gender transformative work differs from other approaches

See alternate text for Figure 9 on page 131.

Image created by Our Watch. Content based on the WHO Gender Responsive Assessment Scale, with some adaptations.

Gender-unequal	**Gender ignoring** (or 'gender neutral')	**Gender-sensitive**	**Gender-specific/ gender responsive**	**Gender-transformative**
Perpetuates gender inequality by reinforcing unbalanced norms, roles and relations.	Often based on claim of being 'fair' by treating everyone the same. Ignores gender norms, roles, relations, and gendered differences in opportunities and resource allocation. Very often reinforces gender-based discrimination.	Considers gender norms, roles and relations, but does not address the inequalities they create.	Considers gender norms, roles and relations and how they affect access to resources or create specific needs for women and men. Takes targeted action in response to meet these needs. Makes it easier for women and men to fulfil duties ascribed to them based on their gender roles, without necessarily seeking to shift the allocation of these duties.	Actively works to challenge and transform gender norms, roles, relations, power imbalances and their impacts. Seeks to address the underlying causes of gender-based inequities, and foster progressive changes in gendered power relationships.

Draw on a range of appropriate evidence and expertise

Given the emerging nature of the field, it is important that those designing and implementing prevention strategies and activities draw not only on research and evaluation evidence but also on practice-based expertise and the knowledge of those with lived experience of gender inequality or violence. It is also important that they seek input and advice from specialists with technical expertise in primary prevention policy, communications, program design, practice and evaluation.

Be explicit about intended audience and tailor the approach

A national, population-level strategy for prevention requires an inclusive approach, engaging people across all demographic groups, in all locations and in a wide range of settings and sectors. However, this does not mean every prevention initiative must reach everyone; different kinds of initiatives need to be tailored for specific audiences or contexts. Tailored prevention activities should consider the needs, knowledge and experiences of the intended audience or community; the specific local or national context; any specific issues related to gender inequality and other forms of oppression that the intended audience or community may be experiencing; and any previous prevention work undertaken with that audience or community.

Ensure specific and intensive effort with communities affected by multiple forms of oppression

Equality and safety for all women can only be achieved through specific and intensive effort with those currently experiencing the greatest inequities and violence. More effort and resources need to be directed to communities or groups affected by multiple forms of oppression, discrimination and disadvantage, and to addressing the structures and norms that enable these. Population-level approaches to primary prevention must take into account the diversity of the Australian community, including those who are currently experiencing higher levels of inequality and violence. To achieve this, additional resourcing must be provided for activities that are developed, implemented and evaluated by communities affected by multiple forms of oppression. While all work to prevent violence against women needs to incorporate a gendered approach, in some contexts there may be valid reasons to place a greater emphasis on addressing other drivers of violence (such as racism, ableism, or the ongoing impacts of colonialism, for example).

Build partnerships across sectors and between violence prevention and gender equality specialists and other organisations

Partnerships in prevention are crucial to maximise impact, reach and applicability of prevention programs but also to enable strong, consistent approaches to policy and advocacy in primary prevention. There is a role for everyone in preventing violence against women but different stakeholders have different responsibilities and resources, bring different skills and expertise, and can achieve different levels of reach and impact. Whether at a local, state or national level, it is critical that partnerships for prevention involve participants with specialist expertise in violence against women, primary prevention and gender equality, and also, where relevant (depending on the context and aims of the activity), those with specific expertise in particular forms of violence or particular population groups, or who are working in other areas of social policy and practice.

Connect prevention activity to the response sector

Because prevention requires a whole-of-population approach, prevention activities inevitably reach people who have used and/or experienced violence or know someone

that has. When any prevention activity is planned, it should include a process for providing information, links and referral pathways to appropriate specialist response services (such as sexual assault and family/domestic violence services, as well as agencies that respond to violence or abuse in disability, aged care or residential settings, among others). These links should be established early in the planning stage. It is also critical that mechanisms are developed to respond to disclosures from victim–survivors and perpetrators, who may be identified through their engagement with the prevention activity.

A national approach to primary prevention must ensure policy, program and funding connects work across all levels – primary prevention, early intervention, crisis response, and recovery – and that all elements of this work are adequately resourced. This includes planning for the increased demands on specialist support services that can result from people engaging with prevention activities.

Work across the life course

Prevention efforts need to reach and engage everyone, at every age and stage of life. More importantly, in order to embed, reinforce and sustain change across the population, prevention must engage people not just on a one-off basis, but in multiple, mutually reinforcing ways over the course of their lives. In addition to ensuring the population receives appropriate messaging and engagement across all stages of their life, there are particular stages that are important transition points, or which present particular opportunities to address the drivers of violence against women using policy, program or legislative levers. These important life stages include:

- **Early childhood**: where gender roles become embedded and personal identities are forming, and where there are near-universal mechanisms to engage with children through kinder, day care and early childhood services.[233]
- **Primary school years**: where students develop and explore understandings about key concepts relevant to prevention (for example, safety, puberty, consent, bodies, gender equality, etc.) and where there are universal mechanisms to engage with children, educators and parents through the primary school setting.[234]
- **Adolescence**: where intimate/sexual relationships are beginning to be formed, where people are exposed to pornography,[235] where students in schools explore concepts relevant to prevention (for example, media literacy, respectful relationships, consent, gender roles and norms, etc.) and where there are universal mechanisms to engage with adolescents, educators and parents through the secondary school setting.[236]
- **Young adults**: when independence increases and people transition to post-secondary education or the workforce, opportunities arise for teaching of safe and healthy relationship skills including social-emotional learning and relationship skills as well as settings/sector-based approaches to prevention in TAFE, higher education or workplaces.[237]
- **Pregnancy and the early stages of first parenthood**: where gendered social practices become more entrenched and where parents can revert to more stereotypical gender roles, with negative implications for long-term equality within their relationship. Prevention efforts to address social norms, government policy settings, workforce structures and workplace policies and cultures are useful at this life stage.[238]
- **Adults**: a time when messaging about prosocial behaviours needs to be reinforced. People are consolidating their personal, family and professional lives and can be engaged as positive role models for younger generations.[239] Adults – in particular, white, educated, wealthy men – are often in positions of significant power, so this is a group that should be given strong messages about the need to use their positions of power to positively influence policy, institutional, organisational and social change.
- **Older age**: older people may have had limited engagement with primary prevention activity, given the relative newness of the field and the fact that they are less likely to be engaged in settings where prevention activity is becoming

common (for example, schools, universities/TAFEs, workplaces, sports clubs, etc.). As part of the life stage approach, it is important that prevention efforts include a focus on influencing older people's attitudes and behaviours and supporting older women's independence.

Combine techniques across multiple settings and sectors to make change 'stick'

The beneficial effects of prevention initiatives are significantly amplified when their reach is maximised and their messages are reinforced by simultaneous, complementary initiatives across other settings and sectors.[240] Single techniques employed in a single place may well have positive effects, but these will likely be limited to those participating, and – especially if they are part of a one-off project – may not be sustained, particularly where community and social norms and practices do not support their message.[241]

This amplification of impact at an initiative level will be significantly strengthened when:

- work to address the gendered drivers of violence against women is implemented across multiple settings and sectors as part of a coordinated local, regional, state-wide or national approach
- different techniques are employed simultaneously in any setting- or sector-based work
- there is policy, regulatory or legislative reform that supports the aim of prevention activity taking place within settings or across sectors and systems.

This work requires several higher-level mechanisms for coordination and support, as well as long-term resourcing, all of which are set out in this section.

Scale up what works and ensure the long-term sustainability of effective initiatives

Scaling up effective practices to embed changes in whole systems, beyond individual workplaces, schools, sporting clubs (or any other setting/sector) is crucial. Embedding action to address the gendered drivers within policies, systems, processes and practices, across all priority settings and sectors, as well as within organisations and institutions, will significantly support efforts to sustain the change over the long term.

Scaling-up strategies involve adapting and implementing good practice policies, programs or initiatives in new contexts or settings, or over a more sustained period, with the intention of achieving more widespread and longer lasting change.[242] However, a program or strategy may not work the same way in each context, or if it is simply replicated without adequate planning to ensure the following are part of the scaling-up strategy:

- prioritisation of gendered, social justice principles and values, making sure that they are not lost or watered down during the scaling-up process[243]
- provision of the policy, regulatory or legislative supports required to scale up, followed by sustained organisational development initiatives at a sector or setting level to ensure readiness
- strong and sustained leadership (at setting, sector and system levels), including ongoing reflection on the applicability of the scaled-up model to new contexts, and capacity to commit the resources and support required for professional development, or to drive and secure whole-of-organisation support[244]
- creation of a workforce with appropriate skills and expertise to implement the scaled-up prevention activity.

Evaluate and innovate to continually build evidence and promote learning

While there is strong evidence about some of the techniques that are effective in preventing men's violence against women, and about many of the settings in which prevention activity has been effective, it is important that this evidence base continues to be extended and strengthened. This includes building further evidence about effective national approaches, how to better use policy, regulatory and legislative levers, and what

mechanisms can be used to sustain change in social norms. As the primary prevention evidence base continues to evolve, innovation and evaluation of new approaches is critical, alongside scaling-up of those activities and approaches for which there is already proven or promising evidence of success.

Evaluation of prevention activities across all levels of the socio-ecological model has a key role to play in extending and strengthening evidence. Evaluations will be stronger if they:

- build knowledge about how the gendered drivers of violence against women are expressed in different contexts and settings, and among different groups, and about how change occurs in each of these
- demonstrate what kinds of initiatives help shift the drivers of violence and reinforcing factors, and how – as well as where – these may be more resistant to change
- build knowledge about the kinds of short-, medium- and long-term changes in structures, norms and practices that contribute to shifts in the drivers of violence against women
- are informed by, and build on, learning from previous evaluations and research, and integrate evidence and feedback from practitioners, people and communities with expert knowledge or experience of the initiative
- enable people, communities and stakeholders to lead, facilitate and make sense of changes in the drivers of violence against women in their particular community, organisation or context
- are shared and promoted in accessible forms that can help guide improvements to future work.

Prevention of violence against women is still a young field, with a relatively limited (although growing) number of fully evaluated programs. However, the obligation to address violence against women as a human rights abuse has led international organisations to stress that the lack of evaluation must not be used by governments or funders as a justification for inaction, or avoiding investment or innovation.[245] Further, narrowly defined standards of evidence – often derived from other fields – may be inappropriate for such a complex social problem as violence against women.[246]

Rather, program design and development should draw on all available evidence, prioritising formal evaluations, but also incorporating lessons from research and practice, informed by consultation with, and advice from, those with relevant expertise. Attention should be paid not only to replicating successful techniques, but to testing, adapting and evaluating them in different contexts and settings – an approach that is not only evidence-based, but also evidence-building. Further, it is critical that evaluation not only addresses individual programs, but also assesses the impacts of multiple, mutually reinforcing prevention activities that are designed and delivered as part of a coordinated strategy across a setting or sector, or across a group of settings, or within a discrete community.

Element 5 — Prevention techniques and settings

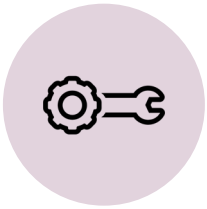
This element presents guidance on the most promising techniques for prevention of men's violence against women, and the priority settings and sectors for action.

Prevention techniques

A technique is the method for the delivery of prevention. Some techniques have proven effective;[247] others are considered promising, in that their implementation has resulted in significant improvements over the short to medium term against the known drivers of violence against women but there remains a critical gap in longitudinal evaluations. Each of these techniques is articulated separately on the following pages; however, prevention activities should aim to use a multitude of techniques to achieve significant and sustained change. These techniques will be more effective when they are supported by public policy, legislation and regulation, and a skilled workforce. Together, they create the critical infrastructure needed to enable sustained change, discussed in Element 6.[248]

Techniques that have demonstrated effectiveness or promise (when delivered in line with the evidence and approach outlined in this framework) include:

Direct participation programs



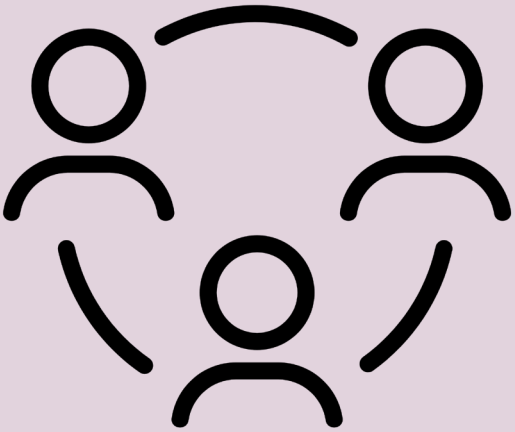
Organisational development

Community mobilisation and strengthening

Communications and social marketing campaigns

Civil society advocacy and social movement activism

Direct participation programs



This technique engages people at the individual, relationship or group level to build knowledge and skills for equal, respectful, non-violent relationships; improve access to the resources required to support such relationships; improve connections to social networks and institutions; and support them in preventing, or addressing the impacts of, various reinforcing factors.

Direct participation programs can be implemented in many contexts and have proven successful across various settings, most notably schools, local government, workplaces and collectives.

Other types of direct participation activities have not yet been evaluated over time for their impact on future perpetration or experience of violence, but have shown promise in addressing the drivers of violence against women. These include:

- peer education programs supporting individuals to engage and educate peers to critique gender norms and attitudes that support men's violence against women
- media and digital literacy programs, particularly those supporting young people to critically engage with media and popular culture regarding representations of women, men, and gender relations
- parenting programs building new parents' skills in non-violent and gender-equal parenting.[249]

Effective or promising practice

- ✓ Offer programs that build participants' understanding of sexist and gendered norms, attitudes and behaviours, and their skills to address these through 'bystander actions', as well as building organisational capacity to support and contribute to such bystander action.
- ✓ Provide opportunities for program participants to practise skills learnt and/or reinforce attitude and behaviour change, particularly among their peers.
- ✓ Design programs that deliver multiple sessions to a given audience and/or continue to engage the same audience through different strategies to strengthen and prolong impact, create mutually reinforcing effects, and encourage extended reflection on the issues.
- ✓ Implement complementary strategies to enable settings to reinforce program content,[250] such as delivering staff workshops on sexism to strengthen workplace gender equality policies.
- ✓ Include quality training and support for educators and program facilitators, and provide regular opportunities to build their confidence and program delivery skills.

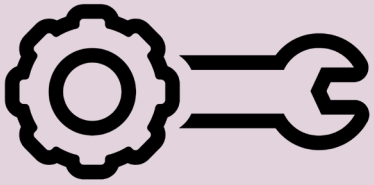
Less effective or harmful practice

- ✗ Delivering one-off or short-term programs.
- ✗ Including content that reinforces or perpetuates myths about men's violence against women, or that fails to acknowledge the gendered drivers of violence (such as by implying that victim–survivors are responsible for the violence perpetrated against them).
- ✗ Delivering bystander programs that focus on how participants should intervene in violent situations, or that fail to address the role of organisations in contributing to, and supporting, bystander action.
- ✗ Delivering participatory programs in isolation from their context (that is, without developing parallel strategies to address gendered structures, norms and practices in that setting or sector).
- ✗ Failing to include support mechanisms for people who disclose violence as a result of, or during, the program.
- ✗ Failing to include mechanisms for ethical collection of participant feedback to ensure that the model is not only effective, but appropriate and safe for those the direct participation activity seeks to engage.

Considerations for evaluation

- Direct participation programs are intended to impact on individual participants directly. The link between direct participation programs and long-term outcomes in relation to violence perpetration is usually complex and difficult to trace. It is important to ensure that evaluation is focused on how the processes of implementation have contributed to desired outcomes, including the reach of the program to the target audience; and short-term impacts such as change in perceptions, attitudes, behavioural intentions and knowledge.

Organisational development



Organisations and their cultures have a powerful influence on the behaviours of individuals and groups, as well as systems and structures across society, and an important role in modelling non-violent, equitable and respectful gender relations. Longitudinal evaluations for impact of organisational development are lacking, but several approaches have shown promise:

- Whole-of-school approaches that engage not only students, but teachers and other school staff, parents and the local community to create gender equality and challenge violence, discrimination and stereotyping across the school as a workplace, an education institution and community hub. In addition to developing the school as an organisation and workplace, such approaches usually employ a variety of strategies including peer education, advocacy and community mobilisation.
- Multi-technique, whole-of-organisation approaches with media outlets that promote gender equality in newsrooms and the responsible portrayal of women and girls and violence against women in the media.
- Organisational auditing processes that identify and develop strategies to address structures and practices contributing to gender inequality and violence against women, as well as inducements and incentives such as tying funding to compliance, or awards for best practice.[251]

Recognising the need for multifaceted and reinforcing prevention activity across the socio-ecological model, organisational development techniques can be part of a 'whole-of-setting' approach in addition to a 'whole-of-organisation' approach (see page 98).

Effective or promising practice

- ✓ Develop a 'whole-of-organisation' prevention plan to set priorities, identify key strategies, direct organisational resources, facilitate action and promote accountability.
- ✓ Employ strategies across multiple levels of an organisation so that change is promoted and mutually reinforced across the organisation.
- ✓ Ensure staff from across the organisation are involved in shaping understandings of existing practices and what needs to be changed, so that programs are contextually relevant.
- ✓ Concentrate initial effort where there is existing support and good potential for traction.
- ✓ Use senior leadership to create an authorising environment by establishing and reinforcing organisational commitments to violence prevention and gender equality.
- ✓ Establish mechanisms (such as enterprise agreements and policies) that support those within the organisation who have personal experiences of violence.[252]

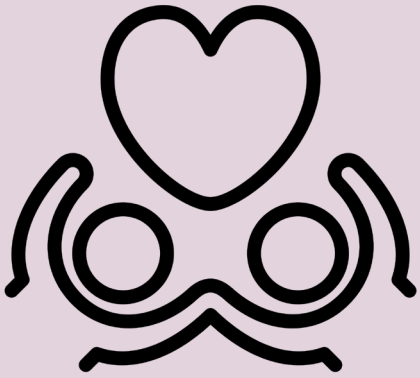
Less effective or harmful practice

- ✗ Delivering one-off or annual events that are not part of a broader organisational approach or commitment to prevention and gender equality.
- ✗ Delivering a program that is not tailored to the needs and context of an organisation.
- ✗ Focusing solely on capability building/ education for staff, without engaging organisational leaders or changing organisational policy.
- ✗ Failing to include support mechanisms for people who disclose personal experiences of violence as a result of, or during, the program.
- ✗ Implementing an organisational approach without an appropriate process for review and evaluation, or failing to include mechanisms for people to engage anonymously with an evaluation.

Considerations for evaluation

- Monitoring and evaluation of organisational development should be integrated from the beginning of the program's implementation and include specific data collection points that are tied to outcomes around prevention and equality. Where applicable, the activity should be linked to existing mechanisms or reporting cycles, so that measures remain visible and embedded in existing accountability processes. Organisational change needs to be measured at policy, culture and process levels, including by assessing formal and informal norms, practices, organisational structures and power relationships, and experiences of backlash or resistance to change processes. A framework for measuring the effectiveness of organisational development should include early identification of where responsibility for each aspect of change lies, and should aim to promote accountability for the changes identified as necessary to achieve equality.

Community mobilisation and strengthening



Community mobilisation most often happens at grassroots levels, powered by individuals or groups.

Community mobilisation works to:

- strengthen and support communities to address violence against women and to shift the social norms that make it acceptable
- increase community access to the resources required for action
- address broader community-level factors that may be contributing to violence against women.

Effective or promising practice

- ✓ Engage key organisations, recognised community leaders and diverse community members (ensuring representation from the intended audience) at all stages of the initiative.
- ✓ Empower communities to participate in shared decision-making to promote ownership of the initiative.[253]
- ✓ Ensure commonly marginalised community members and organisations are given a voice and an opportunity to contribute to decision-making.
- ✓ Invite key decision makers and those with control over resources to play an active role in the initiative.[254]
- ✓ Implement mutually reinforcing strategies to maximise stakeholder participation, develop local leadership and improve resource mobilisation.[255]

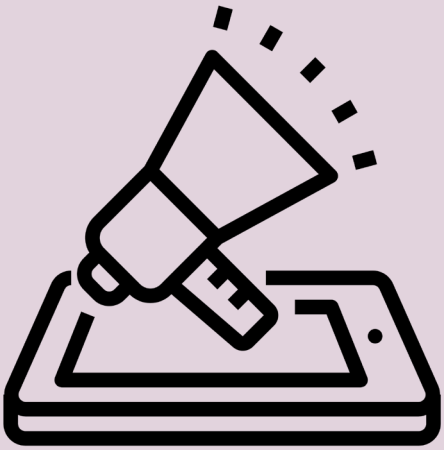
Less effective or harmful practice

- ✗ Failing to engage the community in the development of prevention initiatives, including the evaluation approach.
- ✗ Replicating an initiative that has proven successful elsewhere without tailoring it to the audience and context and/or without involving the target community and key stakeholders.

Considerations for evaluation

- Evaluation of community mobilisation should be context-specific and include participatory evaluation methods.[256] Evaluation could explore and provide evidence for increased voice, confidence and collective identity, the emergence of strengthened and broader commitments to the prevention of violence against women within the community, the contributions made by key actors and leaders, and the kinds of resources that are mobilised, as well as documenting any evidence of resistance or backlash.

Communications and social marketing campaigns



There are many ways to raise awareness of violence against women and challenge problematic attitudes, behaviours and social norms across a variety of channels, such as television, radio, print, online/digital, social media, cinema, outdoor media (billboards, etc.) and community engagement and events.

Research shows that communications and social marketing techniques are more likely to be useful when implemented in a sustained way, using a range of platforms and combined with other components designed to have impact at a community level. For example, single component communications campaigns, such as advertising or awareness-raising without other supporting activities, have been shown to be ineffective at addressing the drivers of violence against women.

Communications and social marketing activities should be based on rigorous and relevant research and testing with relevant audiences, to ensure effectiveness and avoid unintended consequences such as reinforcing stereotypes. They should comprise simple and consistent key messages with tailored messages for specific target audiences and channels, and a clear call to action. Finally, because one of the effects of any large-scale communications or social marketing activity may be an increase in the number of victim–survivors seeking support, appropriate levels of funding must be provided to crisis and response services to ensure they can meet increased demand.

Effective or promising practice

- ✓ Develop key messages that are simple, strong and consistent, with tailored messages for specific target audiences and channels, and a clear call to action.
- ✓ Identify and refine the target audience, including their key needs; scope the best communication channels to spread the message to the target audience in a way that will motivate them and elicit action.
- ✓ Ensure the campaign is connected to a range of mutually reinforcing 'on the ground' prevention activities and/or broader strategies for policy change.
- ✓ Devise campaigns with multiple components to promote key messages through a range of platforms, including, for example, social media and peer mentors.[257]
- ✓ Develop an evaluation framework that outlines how the reach, effectiveness and impact of the activity will be tracked and measured over time.

Less effective or harmful practice

- ✗ Focusing solely on raising awareness of the issue of violence against women.
- ✗ Delivering single-component communication campaigns that rely on only one 'platform' to reach the target audience.
- ✗ Failing to engage relevant stakeholders at the scoping stage of the project.
- ✗ Failing to effectively evaluate the strategy, or limiting the evaluation to reach, rather than measuring short- and longer-term impact.
- ✗ Devising communications and campaigns that reinforce gender stereotypes, rape myths and blaming attitudes (such as by targeting potential victims).
- ✗ Failing to advise relevant support services about the potential for increased demand as a result of the campaign.
- ✗ Failing to anticipate and take action to mitigate potential backlash and resistance to the message.

Considerations for evaluation

- Evaluation should consider the reach of campaign or messaging activity, the extent to which it has built engagement with the issues, and the role it has played in shaping public discourse, as well as the impact the messaging has had on perceptions, knowledge, behavioural intentions and attitudes. It should also identify the extent and type of any resistance or backlash.
- Evaluations should segment the audience to identify how well campaign messages have reached specific audiences and what impacts they have had on each. The strength of the connections between the communications activity and related strategies using other techniques (community mobilisation, advocacy, direct participation or organisational development for example) should also be evaluated.

Civil society advocacy and social movement activism

Civil society, or social movement advocacy involves building collective momentum to raise awareness about violence against women and to encourage governments, organisations, corporations and communities to take action to prevent it.

Civil society advocacy, particularly feminist advocacy led by women's movements and organisations, has proven essential to enduring and effective policy development to prevent violence against women.[258]

To be most effective, advocacy needs to be strategic and iterative, and have a clearly defined purpose and audience. To be sustainable enough to effect long-term change, social movement activism needs to focus not only on external advocacy and communication to prevent violence, but also internally, on movement building and strengthening strategies. This involves movement actors identifying the strengths, needs and priorities of their movements and using this knowledge to inform planning and strengthen movement infrastructure and capacity.[259]

Effective or promising practice

- ✓ Resource women's civil society organisations and networks to lead prevention advocacy, engagement and knowledge development.
- ✓ Use an intersectional approach and promote collaborative effort across civil society organisations and networks to address the gendered drivers of violence against women and other forms of systemic and structural discrimination and oppression.
- ✓ A 'grassroots' approach to movement organising, where effective champions and advocates take responsibility for leading action and undertaking the background work required to be effective in such roles.
- ✓ Apply advocacy strategies that connect the data and evidence with real life examples of the benefits of prevention for members of all communities and for society as a whole.
- ✓ Organising and movement building strategies that include training and ongoing support to build advocates' capacity and confidence to share evidence based and effective messages about prevention.
- ✓ Engaging a diverse range of advocates who are respected within their communities, and who hold both formal and informal positions of leadership and influence.
- ✓ Facilitate opportunities for women to network and advocate collectively, particularly on issues or in settings where they are underrepresented, such as in male-dominated workplaces and organisations.

Less effective or harmful practice

- ✗ Advocacy that is not aligned to the evidence base outlined in this framework.
- ✗ Advocacy efforts that are appropriated by leaders to give the impression of engagement with the issue but without involving meaningful change.
- ✗ Relying upon women (or women's organisations) to support and sustain male champions and leaders, reinforcing the unequal distribution of power between men and women.
- ✗ (Where champion, community advocate or ambassador models are used): failing to do due diligence on the individual and inadvertently appointing men who have a history of violence or abuse.
- ✗ Using spokespeople who reinforce myths or stereotypes about perpetration of violence and victimisation, or the drivers of violence (often the result of using individual experience as the sole or primary framing for the issue).
- ✗ Strategies that do not actively plan for and resource efforts to address resistance and backlash.
- ✗ Advocacy strategies that don't offer a positive, alternative vision for change or include clear messages about what actions those targeted by the strategy are being asked to take.

Considerations for evaluation

- Advocacy is a long-term process not easily measured by linear methods. It involves multiple actors, strategies and tactics that change in response to new opportunities or barriers. It is not always possible to make direct connections between advocacy actions and the desired change, but it is important to understand, for example, the dynamics of stakeholder interactions, the influence of champions, the breadth of support for issues, and the strength of alliances. The success of social movement advocacy should not only be measured through policy change; evaluation needs to encompass social norm change and cultural shifts as important outcomes.

Priority settings and sectors for action

Addressing a complex social problem like violence against women requires a large-scale effort, engaging the largest possible number of people across institutions, organisations and systems with sustained and meaningful interventions that encourage shifts in the way people think and behave in relation to gender inequality and violence against women.

Settings/sectors are the places or social contexts in which environmental, organisational and personal factors interact. Settings/sectors are where policy frameworks (such as tax, industrial relations, health, and social support) come to life, and where social and cultural values are produced and reinforced. Given this, prevention efforts need to engage people across the many settings/sectors where they live, work, learn, socialise and play, and involve the people, professionals and communities who are part of these settings.

The settings/sectors listed in Table 1 are those in which prevention activities (systemic and programmatic) are occurring across the country, and where there is a strong evidence base to draw from and existing resources to use. These settings/sectors present immediate opportunities for scale up and have a high potential for widespread impact on social norms, organisational practices and institutional structures. A whole-of-setting/sector approach (see page 98) in all these settings is critical to ensure the success of any prevention approach using any of the techniques described earlier in this element.

Table 1
(pages 91–95)
Settings and sectors with a high potential for impact and examples of actions that can enable effective activity in each

Early childhood education and care and primary and secondary education

Tertiary education including universities, TAFEs and vocational education and training organisations

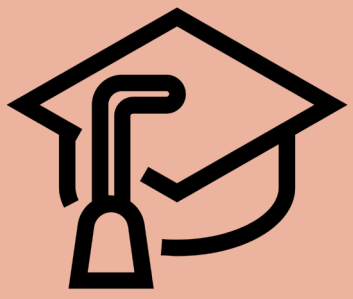
Workplaces, corporations and employee organisations

Sports clubs and institutions

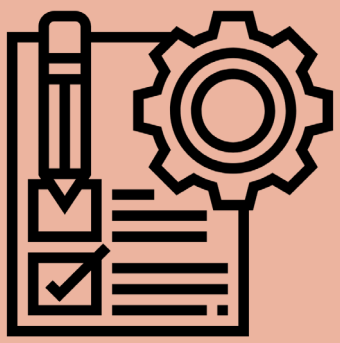
Media

Setting/sector	Rationale	Activity
Early childhood education and care and primary and secondary education *This group of settings includes early childhood education and care and early childhood services, primary and secondary schools and alternative education settings.*	**These settings are important because they:** ■ are some of the only settings that can provide almost universal access ■ play important roles in the socialisation and cognitive and emotional development of children and young people ■ are places where children and young people spend the majority of their time ■ employ large, often feminised, workforces and have infrastructure to support organisational change ■ operate as community hubs connecting families, carers and children across the community, so have significant reach into, and influence in, local communities.	**Examples of policy, regulatory and legislative actions to enable and support setting/sector-based activity:** ■ Provide appropriate policy, regulation and resourcing support to enable schools and services to embed a whole-of-school/ whole-of-organisation approach to primary prevention. ■ Embed primary prevention education in pre-service and in-service professional development and training requirements for teachers, early childhood professionals, youth workers and others who work in an education or care context. ■ Embed gender-based violence and primary prevention professional development requirements within registration for teachers and educators. ■ Use a gender lens to review working conditions and remuneration for staff. ■ Develop state/territory education and early childhood policy frameworks that articulate the role of these settings in building non-violent, equitable and respectful communities.

Setting/sector	Rationale	Activity
Tertiary education including universities, TAFEs and vocational education and training organisations *This group of settings includes academic, vocational and training environments.*	**These settings are important because they:** ■ have broad reach as places of learning, workplaces and community hubs and operate as mini-ecosystems where attitudes and norms are produced and reproduced ■ can proactively shape vocational norms and practices and build a future workforce that supports gender equality ■ reach audiences that may have more limited connection with other settings (e.g. international students, recent migrants and refugees, young adults with disabilities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities) ■ employ large workforces and have infrastructure to support organisational change ■ provide thought leadership through research that can influence Australian culture, policy, economy, legislation and social norms.	**Examples of policy, regulatory and legislative actions to enable and support setting/sector-based activity:** ■ State/territory higher and vocational education policy frameworks can create the enabling environment for this work by articulating the role of the setting in preventing violence against women and building non-violent, equitable and respectful communities, and providing guidance about what actions should be taken. ■ Higher education and VET regulators can introduce and promote requirements for, and guidance on, student health and wellbeing, including preventing violence against women. ■ Training and education policies and government workforce planning (e.g. to fill skills shortages) can incorporate a gender lens to support women's training and employment, and contribute to addressing gender segregation of the workforce. ■ Existing national and state/territory funding mechanisms can be used to increase the focus on research related to preventing violence against women. ■ Content on the prevention of violence against women can be embedded in relevant national training packages. ■ Evidence-based primary prevention workplace activity can be embedded in university and TAFE funding agreements. ■ Unions, peak bodies and professional associations can develop mechanisms to facilitate and enable a whole-of-setting approach.



Setting/sector	Rationale	Activity
Workplaces, corporations and employee organisations *This sector includes industry bodies, employers and employer networks, unions, employment agencies, and both public and private sector workplaces.*	**These setting are important because they:** ■ have significant reach into all areas of the Australian population, including people who may have more limited connection with other settings or sectors ■ are required to adhere to regulations and legislation that support broader gender equality and safety at work, and promote respect ■ have a strong normative influence on individuals' views about gender equality and violence against women.	**Examples of policy, regulatory and legislative actions to enable and support setting/sector-based activity:** ■ Federal, state and territory legal frameworks can be used to support and enforce changes implemented through initiatives at the workplace level. This includes creating structural change that is not possible at the organisation or industry level without regulatory intervention – e.g. through the use of industrial relations law, anti-discrimination legislation and work health and safety laws. Example actions include: ▪ Use the *Workplace Gender Equality Act* 2012 to strengthen data and public reporting on gender equality in a wide range of workplaces and industries. ▪ Strengthen sexual harassment legislation and use policy levers to mandate employer action to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. ▪ Use state and federal industrial relations legislation to facilitate access to, and take-up of, provisions such as domestic and family violence leave entitlements and flexible work arrangements, and to achieve equal pay. ▪ Strengthen Occupational Health and Safety legislative frameworks to mandate a focus on preventing and responding to gendered violence in the workplace as an OHS issue. ▪ Provide increased paid parental leave for fathers to encourage women's economic independence and help shift social norms regarding gender roles.



Setting/sector	Rationale	Activity
Sports clubs and institutions *This sector includes local and regional clubs, professional institutions, state and national professional sporting organisations (inclusive of elite leagues, clubs and organisations) and the organisations providing services and facilities to them.*	**These settings are important because sport:** ■ is seen by many as a significant to Australia's national identity ■ exerts a powerful influence on gender relations, attitudes, behaviours and social norms, and as role models athletes and sporting professionals can have significant influence (either negative or positive) ■ provides an opportunity to reach large groups and communities (employees, players and their families, sponsors, supporters, volunteers, etc) ■ provides an opportunity to reach large groups of men and boys in particular.	**Examples of policy, regulatory and legislative actions to enable and support setting/sector-based activity:** ■ Embed a focus on prevention of violence against women in the constitutions and formal policies of national and state leagues and associations/governing bodies. ■ Embed behaviours and attitudes that support gender equality and respect for women in codes of conduct (professional sporting codes in particular) and apply national penalties to officials and players who do not adhere to these codes. ■ Support all sporting codes to employ, develop and retain more women in decision-making and coaching roles. ■ Develop a coordinated approach to coaching staff on violence prevention education, specifically for use in sporting clubs teaching young men. ■ Sports governing bodies and the boards of elite sporting organisations can set quotas for female representation.

Setting/sector	Rationale	Activity
Media *This sector includes the industries and organisations that deliver media in all its forms – print, television, podcasts, digital and radio and includes both traditional and alternative media outlets.*	**This sector is important because it:** ■ has wide reach across the entire Australian population ■ has significant influence in shaping and maintaining social norms ■ includes media workplaces in which there is the potential to shift organisational cultures, attitudes and behaviours ■ has a strong influence on public opinion about violence against women and inequality ■ includes online sites where women experience high levels of abuse and harassment with limited formal avenues for complaint/redress (unlike other settings/sectors).	**Examples of policy, regulatory and legislative actions to enable and support setting/sector-based activity:** ■ Ensure that advertising guidelines for the media industry – news, entertainment and advertising media – include provisions for the promotion of gender equality and the prevention of violence against women. ■ Strengthen the current guidelines and editorial policies on the reporting of family and domestic violence and deepen knowledge of these guidelines/ policies across the sector. ■ Strengthen the capability of the Australian Press Council and the Australian Communications and Media Authority to support the use of current guidelines and manage any breaches. ■ Develop a specific standard of practice relating to the issue of violence against women to complement the Statement of General Principles set out by the Australian Press Council. ■ Embed education on the drivers of violence against women in pre-service training for journalists. ■ Work with global social media platforms to encourage the development and take-of up more effective mechanisms to better moderate and prevent online gendered abuse mechanisms. ■ Develop guidelines on how the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance Code of Ethics applies in the context of violence against women.

While most prevention activity to date has occurred in the settings listed in Table 1, there are other settings where it is crucial to develop and implement prevention activity, but which have received less investment and support. As a priority, work should be undertaken to build the evidence and practice expertise about how to use the following settings/sectors as sites for primary prevention:

- internet, digital and social media
- popular culture, advertising and entertainment, including the variety of industries, mediums and corporations that contribute to popular culture and shape consumer choices and behaviour
- arts and creative industries, including visual and performing arts, film, literature, designers and game developers, as well as community networks and professional organisations across the creative industries
- social, community and family engagement and support services
- residential aged care and disability care services
- healthcare services, including mental health and allied health and wellbeing services
- recreation, social and leisure facilities (both public and private)
- public spaces and facilities, public transport, including the wide range of industries and sectors that influence the development and use of public environments, facilities and transport in our society
- faith-based contexts, including organisations, networks and associations that are brought together on the basis of faith, religion or belief
- legal and justice sectors, including youth justice, corrections, police, courts and legal services.

The difference between whole-of-organisation and whole-of-setting/sector approaches

A **whole-of-organisation approach** works within an individual organisation such as a school, a sporting club or a workplace to develop an organisational approach to prevention. It considers, for example, how prevention activities can target all the individuals and different groups in the organisation; how formal organisational policies and procedures can be used to drive change; how to engage the leadership and shift organisational culture; and how to embed prevention into the day-to-day business of the organisation.

A **whole-of-setting/sector approach**, on the other hand, works at a broader level, with a group of like organisations that are governed by the same state/territory-wide or national policy, regulatory or legislative framework. While it will include organisations implementing organisation-wide actions, a whole-of-setting approach goes beyond this to focus on the connections between these individual organisations and the shared opportunities for change across that setting or sector. It considers how prevention goals can be achieved through consistent approaches, resource sharing, coordination, setting/sector-wide infrastructure and shared approaches to evaluation and learning.

Prevention work in any given setting needs to be multi-dimensional. It needs to encompass the individuals and groups within that setting, the organisations, institutions and systems that define it, and the laws, policies and regulations that govern it.

The importance of a whole-of-setting/sector approach

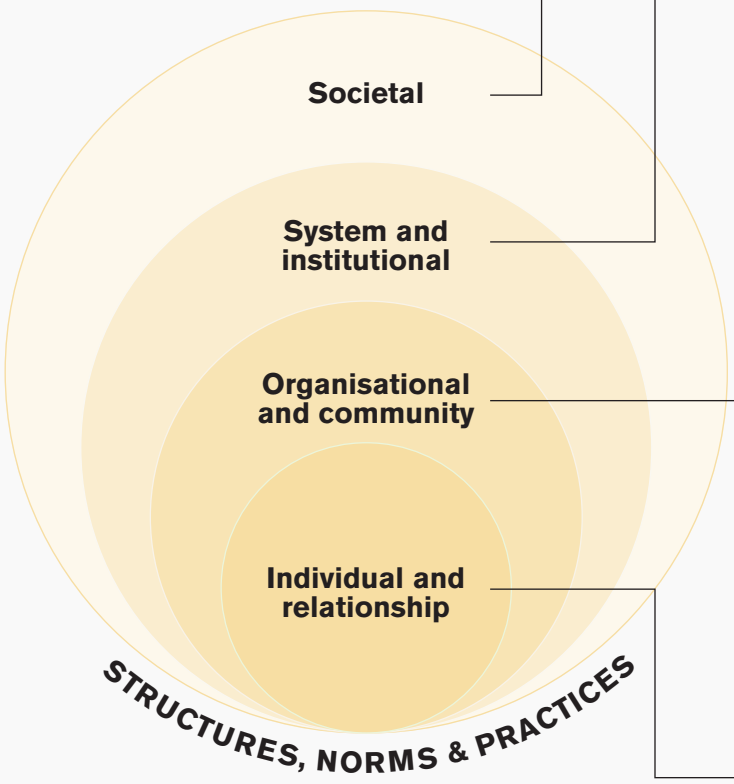
While not always possible for smaller-scale prevention activity, a whole-of-setting approach is critical when developing national, state/territory-wide or municipal responses to address the gendered drivers of violence against women. This holistic approach takes time, resourcing and leadership; where it is not immediately possible, early-stage prevention activities implemented by an individual organisation within a setting/sector can be an important first step, but should be framed as building blocks towards a longer-term vision that involves a whole-of-setting approach.

A whole-of-setting/sector approach means that efforts to address the gendered drivers must:

- include policy, practice and structural change within the setting and be complemented by the wider policy, regulatory or legislative change that will support and increase the effectiveness of settings-based work
- involve all those who engage with the setting, including leadership, staff, volunteers, the audience the setting serves, and those outside the setting who provide it with services or support
- consider the levers or mechanisms that can support, enable and systematise prevention activity across the setting or sector, beyond those that exist in individual organisations.

Figure 10
How a whole-of-setting approach works across all levels of the socio-ecological model

See alternate text for Figure 10 on page 131.



Prevention actions at each level, using the education setting as an example.

Schools are recognised by the community as educational institutions, workplaces and community hubs that have a significant role to play in positively influencing social issues, including gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence, and are supported by society in this work.

Governments, alongside state and territory education departments, recognise, prioritise and adequately resource a sustainable approach to respectful relationships education nationally.

Curriculum materials that address the drivers of gender-based violence are embedded in the Australian Curriculum across all classroom levels, F–12.

State and territory education departments and other education systems create policies to encourage and actively promote female leadership.

A whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education, which is inclusive for LGBTIQ young people, and addresses policy, practice, culture and leadership, is embedded across the school.

The whole-of-school approach recognises the importance of everyone within the school community and engages staff, students, families and community organisations in its ongoing approach to prevent gender-based violence.

Every student receives age-appropriate, ongoing, scaffolded and inclusive respectful relationships classroom education, which addresses the drivers of gender-based violence, across the lifespan of their primary and secondary schooling.

All staff, teaching and non-teaching, are supported through a comprehensive and ongoing professional development strategy, to build their knowledge and understanding of gender-based violence and how it can be prevented.

Element 6 — Critical infrastructure for a national approach to prevention

Because violence against women has multiple, interrelated drivers which play out across every level of society, preventing this violence requires a holistic, multilayered national approach, engaging the largest possible number of people and organisations. Until recently, evidence for the effectiveness of prevention efforts came largely from discrete program evaluations. However, international reviews[260] show that to achieve the broad, deep and sustainable change needed to prevent violence against women and create a truly gender equitable society, discrete programs are not enough.[261]

That level of change requires a sustained investment in prevention, through a coordinated, long-term, national approach based on multiple, mutually reinforcing efforts. These efforts must:

- address the multiple gendered drivers and reinforcing factors of violence within an intersectional feminist framework
- use a mix of techniques, activities and levers that are mutually reinforcing, in different settings/sectors, across the life course
- target change at different levels – individual and interpersonal, organisational and community, system and institutional, and societal.

Because this national approach is complex, it requires effective local, state and national infrastructure in order to ensure long-term success and produce sustained change. Key elements of an effective prevention infrastructure are:

- sustained political leadership
- private sector, civil society and community leadership
- a well-resourced, independent women's movement
- policy, regulatory and legislative reform
- mechanisms for coordination, collaboration and quality assurance
- mechanisms for workforce and sector development
- a strong evidence base informed by ongoing research, practice and evaluation
- national monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

Each of these elements is described in more detail on the following pages but they are deeply interrelated, overlapping and at times interdependent, in that activity to address one aspect of the infrastructure may be supported or hindered by inactivity in another.

Key elements of an effective prevention infrastructure

Sustained political leadership

Strong and sustained political will is crucial to drive and sustain prevention approaches over the long term.[262] Governments have considerable power to directly enact significant policy change (see page 108 for more information), but in addition to this, leadership by all levels of government and by politicians across the political spectrum emphasises the national importance of primary prevention of violence against women and helps legitimise, support and motivate widespread efforts by a range of stakeholders. It is critically important that this leadership be sustained beyond an individual or single party or term of government – to address a deeply entrenched issue like violence against women, political leadership over many decades will be required. There is evidence that political and civil society leadership has been effective in increasing the visibility of gender inequality and violence against women in Australian political discourse over the past decade, and it is important that political leaders continue to build on this positive momentum.[263]

Sustained political leadership at all levels of government can most obviously be demonstrated through:

- legislative and policy reform on issues related to violence (see page 102 for further discussion)
- support for, and long-term funding of, evidence-based prevention efforts consistent with this framework.

However, political leadership can also be demonstrated in other ways, including by:

- framing prevention of violence against women as a human rights obligation, and expressing public support for prevention efforts
- including a long-term commitment to gender equality as part of a policy platform
- increasing the focus in political discourse on men's accountability for their use of violence, and on men's responsibilities to challenge and shift the drivers of violence
- contributing to political and public debate in ways that recognise and reject gendered, cisnormative and heteronormative, racialised and classist power relationships
- speaking out where there is resistance to addressing violence against women as a gendered issue, or backlash to gender equality more broadly
- adopting robust approaches to prevention and gender equality across the public service, for example through direct participation programs, academic accreditation frameworks, ambassador or champion programs, and workplace accreditation programs
- making public statements about the importance of a dedicated approach to primary prevention, including through mechanisms such as public hearings, parliamentary debate, the presentation of petitions or constituency statements, and motions to acknowledge a significant day or specific incident of violence against women.

Private sector, civil society and community leadership

Private sector, civil society and community leadership on prevention is also critical. Civil society and private organisations – including those that represent specific settings and sectors such as workplaces or sporting codes, and those that represent specific communities – can provide leadership on this issue by supporting and encouraging primary prevention efforts among their sectors, members and networks; contributing to public and community discourse on the issue; and collaborating to encourage and support policy and legislative reform. Private sector organisations have significant influence over policy, the economy and community norms and values, and as such have a critical role to play in both undertaking prevention activity themselves (with a focus on their employees, workplaces and clients/customers) and in advocating for a strong focus on gender equality and the prevention of violence against

women within their spheres of influence (which will often include state/territory and federal government). Equally important are the more informal networks and groups, or communities of individuals who have a shared commitment to addressing the drivers of violence against women, keeping the issue of violence against women on the public agenda, and advocating for, and leading change within, the range of environments they connect with.

Supporting and affirming the value of social movement activism and civil society mobilisation is an important component of a national approach to prevention. Effective political, private sector, community and civic leadership will not only deliver consistent and mutually reinforcing prevention strategies across the country, it will also build broad, nationwide support for such efforts. Collectively, such leadership creates an enabling environment that encourages and supports change and ensures it is sustained over time. This leadership draws national attention – across the public, media, institutions, and all levels of government – to the importance of prevention and helps to promote widespread participation by a range of stakeholders.

A well-resourced, independent women's movement

There is clear evidence that collective, pro-feminist movement-based activism provides a significant form of leadership on violence against women and is effective in driving social policy change to prevent this violence.[264] A study of 70 countries across six continents spanning four decades found that a 'strong, autonomous feminist movement is both substantially and statistically significant as a predictor of government action to redress violence against women.'[265] In addition to the direct impact they have on violence against women, women's rights and feminist movements have also achieved change across a range of interconnected issues, including economic rights, access to childcare, reproductive rights and services and political representation, all of which are directly related to the gendered drivers of violence against women.

Given how important independent women's movements are to the success of any national or international strategy to prevent violence against women and promote gender equality, building mechanisms to enable, support and sustain these movements is critical. This can be achieved through:[266]

- supporting a diversity of formal and informal women's rights organisations and networks to work on both preventing violence against women and advancing the rights of women more broadly
- adequately resourcing the range of work undertaken by these organisations, through a range of funding modalities with both short- and long-term flexible funding, and by providing other forms of support to enable capacity building and to maximise the reach and impact of their work
- recognising the expertise of these organisations and the importance of the work they do as part of a national approach to violence against women, and ensuring they are meaningfully involved in government and other decision-making processes and forums where possible
- fostering collaboration and strong partnerships with and between these organisations and networks and with other social movements, to strengthen collective voice and impact
- supporting the safety and independence of these organisations and networks.

Policy, regulatory and legislative reform

Policy, regulatory and legal reforms help drive broader societal change by shifting social norms and supporting and reinforcing other prevention activities.[267] When connected to programs of work that use the approaches outlined in Element 5, they also provide a powerful signal to other sectors and settings, and to the public as a whole, of the necessity of primary prevention, and the role that policy and legislative reform can play in the national approach.

The policy and legislative reforms that are most important to enable primary prevention are those that address the gendered drivers of violence against women (and other forms of systemic and structural discrimination and oppression), support redistribution of resources and responsibilities, and transform the underlying causes and structures of gender inequality. Examples of such reforms include:

- Supporting, and providing long-term funding for, prevention efforts consistent with this framework.
- Undertaking gender responsive policy-making across all portfolios in order to identify ways to advance gender equality, and improve the health, safety, wellbeing and economic independence of women in Australia (for example, policy/legislation in relation to women's employment security, labour force participation, pay equality and parental leave).
- Challenging the structural and institutional condoning of violence against women, including by reforming systems and institutions that, in their operation, may justify, trivialise, excuse or downplay violence against women, or blame the victim of violence. This includes reforming internal government systems and institutions to ensure that governments lead by example.
- Taking action to address other forms of systemic and structural discrimination and oppression that result in inequality for many Australians, particularly where they intersect with the drivers of violence against women, and play a role in exacerbating violence.
- Gender responsive budgeting to ensure the design of all budget measures is informed by the use of a gender lens, to determine whether they will benefit or disadvantage individuals based on their gender, and identify where changes can be made to promote greater gender equality.

Mechanisms for coordination, collaboration and quality assurance

Mechanisms are needed to enable coordination and collaboration across jurisdictions, sectors and settings, and to promote consistency between legislative and policy reforms, programs, communications campaigns and other prevention efforts. This requires the deliberate development of, and investment in, quality standards, governance mechanisms to support coordination, and advisory bodies. Coordinated communication activities ensure consistent prevention messaging, reduce duplication and ensure messaging includes appropriate referral pathways to response services.

'With regards to violence against women, autonomous feminist movements ensure that institutional reforms live up to the potential imagined by activists who demand them and ensure that "words become deeds". [268]

Coordination and collaboration mechanisms – across and between federal, state/territory, local and regional levels – are essential parts of a national approach because they:

- enable mutually reinforcing activities across multiple levels and settings, alongside other social policy issues
- ensure consistency between legislative, regulatory and policy reforms, programs, communications campaigns, and other prevention efforts
- support the integration of gender equality and violence prevention into the work of established agencies, organisations and networks and use existing infrastructure at the national, state, regional and local levels
- support the scale-up, systematisation and embedding of approaches that are effective at preventing violence against women, and funding of grants to support evidence building.

A holistic approach should integrate primary prevention activity into the work of established agencies, organisations and networks and use existing infrastructure at the national, state, regional and local levels wherever possible.

It is important that a wide range of government and civil society agencies are engaged in these coordination and quality assurance mechanisms, including primary prevention specialists, those working in early intervention and response, and those working to address other systemic and structural forms of oppression, discrimination and inequality, and that their participation is adequately resourced to ensure a depth of engagement and sustained connection with these structures.

If they are to be effective, coordination and collaboration mechanisms require dedicated and adequate funding to ensure they become a core part of Australia's prevention infrastructure. While there is evidence that some of Australia's current coordination mechanisms are effective, further work is needed to ensure such mechanisms extend to intragovernmental and intergovernmental work at local, state and national levels, and that they also include opportunities for effective civil society engagement.[269] For further information about the role of government in coordination, see page 108.

Quality assurance mechanisms can relate to program design, techniques, setting- or sector-based activity, workforce development, funding or evaluation. Examples include nationally consistent criteria for program funding and evaluation, and both accredited and non-accredited education and training and professional development programs to ensure a skilled, coordinated and connected workforce. The implementation and monitoring of setting/sector-specific practice standards, models and frameworks can help ensure a consistent and high quality approach to prevention practice and programming across different levels and sectors.[270] Adequate monitoring and evaluation is also an essential quality assurance mechanism and is further discussed on page 105.

Mechanisms for workforce and sector development

An effective and sustainable national approach to primary prevention requires significant investment in workforce and sector development. This is needed to meet both the existing demand for prevention activities in various settings/sectors safely and effectively, and to expand the reach and uptake of prevention policy, strategy, practice and research across the country to effect the change that is necessary to reduce – and ultimately end – violence against women.

Given the nature of prevention work (population-wide and multi-sector/setting), the prevention workforce will be multidisciplinary and diverse, and will comprise a wide range of roles. It will include policy makers, researchers, communicators, evaluators and practitioners whose professional role is primarily dedicated to prevention; practitioners who work across multiple disciplines and undertake prevention activities as one element of their work (for example, teachers who deliver respectful relationships education, HR professionals leading workplace prevention programs, or sports administrators who are leading club-based prevention activity); as well as volunteers, trainers/educators and technical specialists, among many others.

Building pathways to specialisation for professionals in this workforce is critical, as they play a leadership role in policy, regulatory and legislative reform: informing and supporting quality assurance mechanisms; providing civil society leadership; and offering technical assistance and guidance to diverse stakeholders who are doing prevention work within their own setting/sector, in particular contexts, or within a particular community.

For a national approach to primary prevention to be effective in the short term and sustained over the long term, it requires both a workforce with a high level of specialisation in preventing violence against women and a much larger, multidisciplinary workforce that can deliver prevention work in different settings, sectors and communities.

Despite the essential role of the prevention workforce in building Australia's long-term capacity to prevent violence against women, there is currently no national or coordinated mechanism to enable appropriate workforce planning and sector development across the country. To create a mature, robust and sustainable prevention sector, investment is needed in the workforce and the development of infrastructure. This investment should be coordinated at a state/territory level (given the unique needs of each jurisdiction), but connected to the national agenda. Any investment should focus both on building the capacity of the current prevention workforce, and on increasing the overall size of the workforce across Australia. To achieve this, the establishment and resourcing of appropriate infrastructure is required. This may include the creation of dedicated education and training pathways for prevention specialists and those interested in leading settings/sector-based work, the creation of pathways and upskilling opportunities for the broader prevention workforce, and/or access to peer and collaborative learning opportunities. Any sector development infrastructure must also include approaches that address systemic barriers and inequalities that some communities may face in accessing prevention education, training or other capability building activities.

Strong evidence base, informed by ongoing research, practice and evaluation

While *Change the story* sets out the evidence base for prevention in Australia – and is based on the most up-to-date global and national evidence about what drives violence against women – it is critical that work continues to deepen and strengthen this evidence base.

There are a range of different forms of knowledge that inform this evidence base,[271] including programmatic and other evaluations, expertise from practitioners, academic research and the knowledge held by those with diverse lived experiences – of violence and/or gender inequality.

Elements of the national evidence base that should be prioritised for attention and future work include:

- gathering stronger and more nuanced data, particularly on perpetration and perpetrators of violence, but also on particular aspects of prevalence, victimisation, impacts and dynamics (see Appendix 1 for more information)
- expanding the practice evidence about what works to prevent violence against women in particular settings/sectors and contexts, and with specific population groups, cohorts, audiences and communities
- identifying effective legislative, regulatory and policy mechanisms and understanding how these can best be utilised to drive nationwide change.

It is also critical that the coordination mechanisms for monitoring progress (articulated below) are used to help build the evidence base, as these mechanisms can gather valuable information about changes occurring across all areas of the socio-ecological model, over the long term, and across the entire country.

National monitoring and reporting mechanisms

National monitoring of primary prevention is the purposeful and intentional collection and analysis of information (qualitative and quantitative) to track the progress of population-level changes to address the drivers and reinforcing factors of violence against women, and the development of associated infrastructure.[272] Change can be monitored at every level of the socio-ecological framework. However, national monitoring and reporting specifically refers to the processes and structures that support Australia-wide, population-level monitoring across the norms, practices and structures that both drive and reinforce violence against women. The Our Watch resource *Counting on change*[273] provides a framework for this kind of national monitoring, and the *Tracking progress in prevention*[274] report translates this into practice, providing both a baseline report

on progress, and an example of how national monitoring could be done on an ongoing basis.

Investments in the development of a national approach to monitoring and reporting are progressing, with a national research agenda (ANROWS), and the development of data platforms and tools (such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics Gender Indicators). There is also evidence of commitment to national data collection, management and dissemination strategies, with efforts being made to continually refine shared datasets at the population level. However, this work could be further supported through the establishment of a coordinating body with responsibilities for mechanisms that measure and monitor progress at the national level.

Infrastructure to support national monitoring and reporting should:

- Coordinate efforts to promote rigorous evidence, shared learning and efficiencies in population-level monitoring.
- Develop mechanisms to encourage and compel population-level monitoring against the drivers and reinforcing factors of violence against women.
- Promote ongoing development and refinement of national indicators, ensuring these centre, and remain accountable to, the people and communities who are the intended beneficiaries of violence prevention.
- Provide for the different types and levels of monitoring and reporting (for example, population-level, quantitative, qualitative, those that are evaluative in different ways, those that speak to the drivers and essential actions, and those relevant to different levels of the socio-ecological model).
- Invest in workforce capability and building capacity for monitoring.
- Invest in structures to support robust analysis and effective dissemination of learnings through collaborative leadership and coordination across different jurisdictions and fields of knowledge.
- Encourage and compel the use of evidence from shared national frameworks, guides and previous monitoring processes.

However, monitoring alone is not a motivator for action. Achieving a reduction in the rate of violence against women requires social transformation. It relies on sustained intent to transform structural inequalities, not only through appropriate and long-term action but also through investment in the infrastructure that will enable and support these actions. Analysing and applying data gathered during national monitoring can help identify where, across society, positive change is beginning to occur, and where there is resistance to change. Analysing and using monitoring data in this way enables policy makers and practitioners to learn from their own endeavours and share these lessons with others, in order to build knowledge about enablers and barriers to social transformation and ultimately direct investments and attention in ways that accelerate progress.

Element 7 — Stakeholder roles and responsibilities

This element describes the most appropriate and effective roles different stakeholders can play in the interests of maximising collective national impact, including:

- Commonwealth, state and territory governments, and local governments
- those working in key settings and sectors
- other specialist organisations
- those working on other social issues
- Our Watch.

An effective national approach to prevention comprises the coordinated efforts of multiple stakeholders. Governments have primary responsibility for ensuring the health, safety and equality of women[275] as part of their international human rights obligations. But government action, while critical, is not enough. Every sector, institution, organisation, community and individual has a role to play in preventing violence against women. Different stakeholders have different responsibilities, expertise and capacities, and different spheres of influence. Their efforts will be most effective if they take advantage of the specific opportunities available to them within their spheres of influence, as well as work in collaboration or partnership with others to ensure different prevention efforts are consistent and mutually reinforcing. It is critical that these stakeholders – from the Commonwealth government right through to locally based organisations leading prevention work – communicate effectively and share information to support coordination and mutually reinforcing effort as part of a national approach.

Partnerships that include women's organisations, specialist services and community controlled organisations who are working on women's health, domestic/family violence and sexual assault will ensure that prevention efforts are informed by a well-developed understanding of the complex dynamics of violence against women, gender and other social inequalities, and draw on existing prevention expertise. To ensure community ownership of prevention work, and the inclusion of diverse perspectives, building trusted and transparent relationships between government and civil society is important through design, implementation and monitoring.

Collectively, leadership by all these different stakeholders creates an enabling environment (culturally and politically) that encourages and supports change and ensures it is sustained over time. This leadership helps to draw national attention to the importance of primary prevention, in order to legitimise, support and motivate widespread participation by a range of stakeholders.

The responsibility of governments to prevent violence against women

Governments have primary responsibility for ensuring the health, safety and equality of women[276] as part of their international human rights obligations. Commonwealth, state/territory and local governments all have critical roles to play as described on the following pages.

Commonwealth and state/territory governments

The Commonwealth and state and territory governments demonstrated best practice leadership when together they produced a 12-year National Plan (2010–2022) which included both responding to and preventing violence against women and envisaged broad-based cultural and systemic change for Australia. While a national plan forms the foundation of a national approach to prevention, the role of governments extends far beyond this. Commonwealth, state and territory governments in particular have unique access to policy, legislative and regulatory levers that no other stakeholder in the prevention field has, and these levers are critical to facilitate social, cultural and structural and systemic change. As such, the focus of governments should be primarily on the work that only they are able to lead as part of a national approach to prevention.

Each of these interconnected areas is articulated on the following pages, to highlight the critical role that Commonwealth and state/territory governments play as part of a collective national approach to prevention.

Developing and implementing a long-term national plan that includes a specific focus on preventing violence against women

National plans enable a shared focus on issues of national importance. A long-term national plan which supports strong and coordinated action is a critical element in ending violence

against women. It is crucial that governments seek guidance from specialist agencies with appropriate expertise to inform the development of policies, strategies and plans focused on preventing and responding to violence against women. The implementation of prevention under this national plan and any subsequent action plans should align with, and be guided by, this *Change the story* framework, to ensure an evidence-based and effective approach. Clear implementation strategies should be developed to support and drive the implementation of the plan, and the plan should include measures to enable ongoing assessment of progress.

Policy, legislative and regulatory reform to address the drivers of violence against women and promote gender equality

Policy, legislation and regulation are some of the most critical levers for governments, because they can enable systemic and structural change, large-scale change across the population, and change that is long-lasting. Governments can use legislation, policy and regulation to effectively address gender inequalities across Australian society and change the underlying conditions that produce and support violence against women. In using these powerful levers, government can both normalise gender equality and send a strong signal to the Australian public that the prevention of violence against women is a serious and urgent national priority that demands high-level action. For more information about how policy, regulatory and legislative reform can enable prevention, see page 102.

Developing and managing coordination, governance and information-sharing mechanisms

To support and sustain the commitments under the National Plan, federal, state and territory governments have a critical role to play in coordinating prevention activity in their jurisdictions. Effective governance mechanisms in particular are critical to ensure accountability, quality and impact over time in a complex field of work that sits across multiple departments and jurisdictions. Governance and coordination mechanisms should be designed to last the life of the national plan (rather than being time-limited or issue specific) and should have a focus on inter- and intragovernmental coordination (across Commonwealth and state/territory governments).

International research suggests that leadership and coordination of prevention activity should be supported by monitoring, accountability and quality assurance frameworks at each level of government, and that this work is best undertaken through portfolios with a mandate to plan and manage whole-of-government prevention activity (such as appropriately resourced offices for women).[277] Interagency structures and processes, such as ministerial councils and steering committees, can assist with coordination across portfolios, and should be complemented by government partnerships and collaboration with non-government and community stakeholders. For more on the importance of coordination mechanisms, see page 103.

Strengthening funding for prevention activity and infrastructure

Effective prevention activities require appropriate resourcing to support careful development, implementation and evaluation processes, and to scale up or systematise effective initiatives. Funding for programmatic activity is crucial, including funding to scale activities up to a national or state/territory level, where appropriate. A lack of funding for the infrastructure required to enable the effective design, implementation, coordination, monitoring or evaluation of prevention programs and activities often minimises or dilutes their impact. Long-term funding is needed to support the development and maintenance of the critical prevention infrastructure outlined in Element 6, as well as for those agencies that play a key role in influencing the quality, reach, impact and coordination of prevention activities at a national level. These agencies include, but are not limited to:

- Our Watch (to provide independent national leadership on primary prevention)
- ANROWS (to deliver the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey and the prevention elements of the national research agenda)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (to deliver the Personal Safety Survey)
- the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.

Strengthened funding enables the meaningful and sustainable engagement of civil society actors, networks, alliances and organisations in advocacy, leadership, awareness-raising and community education, and is critical to the success of prevention activity in Australia.

Developing national monitoring mechanisms and publicly reporting on progress

Monitoring and reporting on progress creates transparency and provides critical forms of internal and external accountability for the commitments in the National Strategy and Action Plans. Leadership from the Commonwealth government is critical to ensure that all jurisdictions and key stakeholders are working in partnership on policy and strategy that is aligned with best practice. Monitoring mechanisms will be stronger when they are developed with input from all jurisdictions and key stakeholders, as this will help ensure the development of meaningful and relevant measures, and the effective use of resources. All participating government agencies with responsibility for the prevention of violence against women must be able to report on progress, and evaluate their efforts against shared objectives as well as consistent measures and short- and long-term targets.

Providing cultural leadership, setting standards and modelling best practice

Visible political leadership helps create an enabling environment for progress towards the nationwide cultural and systematic change needed to prevent violence against women. Furthermore, through setting standards for effective prevention practice, governance, coordination, research and evaluation – both by modelling best practice and by using regulatory and policy levers – governments can demonstrate genuine leadership on this issue.

Leadership skill and capability should be measured by its ability to achieve the social, legal, political and economic transformation required to prevent violence against women.[278] For examples of what this cultural leadership and best practice modelling by governments could look like, see page 101.

Local governments

Local government is the closest jurisdiction to people's everyday lives, with reach across all communities and key roles in promoting social change for the prevention of violence against women and gender equality. Local governments can provide significant political and cultural leadership to drive change, model best practice, respond to local concerns and both lead and enable the take-up of primary prevention activities through their operations and partnerships, as well as internally, with their employees.

Local government works across the life course and has a mandate to fund, work within or connect with many settings and sectors, such as education, sports, health, infrastructure, workplaces, aged care and disability services, youth services, arts and culture, and emergency management. Councils are civic leaders and significant local employers, and as such have a pivotal role to play in building workplaces that are safe, equitable and respectful. The work of local councils – and the important reach into communities and settings that they have – can be amplified when their work is shared, coordinated and supported by state/territory-wide agencies who have a specific remit to enable effective prevention activity within local governments.

The critical role of non-government organisations and networks

Women's rights organisations and civil society networks

Some women's rights organisations work at local levels with their communities, while others work across policy, practice and advocacy at the national or state level. These organisations support women, create networks, build capability, advocate for reform, build the evidence base, share knowledge, and work with institutions and organisations to prevent violence against women and promote women's participation in decision-making.[279]

Women's rights organisations, led by women and with a focus on representing the needs and interests of women, are able to identify and creatively solve many of the systemic problems faced by women in Australia.[280] Effective political, sector-based and civic leadership will not only deliver consistent and mutually reinforcing prevention activities, it will also build broad, nationwide support for such efforts.[281] Non-government and civil society organisations of all types have key roles to play in developing the gender lens and gender analysis tools necessary to work at all levels, and in advising on policies and their impacts on women.

Specialist violence prevention organisations

Violence prevention specialists as well as women's health, domestic and family violence and sexual assault peak bodies and organisations, have a particularly important leadership role, given their significant expertise on violence against women. Not only do they play a critical role as part of the collective, feminist civil society movement, they have a depth of expertise on the issue of violence against women and the gendered nature and dynamics of this violence, as well as significant knowledge as to what works to prevent it. Appropriate engagement, partnership and co-design structures and processes should be established to ensure knowledge and expertise informs work by governments at all levels, as well as those in other sectors and settings who are leading prevention policy, research, strategy or programming.

Other agencies that have specialist expertise in the experiences and impacts of violence for particular population groups are critical to the design and implementation of any national, state or local prevention activity. It is crucial that agencies with expertise in the violence that is perpetrated against women from a range of diverse backgrounds and experiences have a central place in a national approach to prevention, and that activities are informed by their expertise and the lived experiences of the people they represent.

Other specialist organisations

A range of organisations and agencies have experience and expertise in working with particular community groups, or in particular contexts. They may not necessarily have specialist expertise in violence against women or how to prevent it, but they do have in-depth knowledge of how to work appropriately and effectively with particular cultural or age groups, communities, or in particular locations, or on issues that are relevant to particular contexts. Through either building their internal capability, or through engaging in partnerships with specialists in violence prevention, these organisations have the potential to translate this framework into approaches appropriate for the communities, sectors, settings or contexts in which they work.

These organisations can then lead work to address forms of violence against women that require more specific and specialised prevention approaches.[282] This will ensure that prevention strategies are community-owned and led, and carefully implemented, using strengths-based and community strengthening approaches to ensure that they do not inadvertently stigmatise the communities in which particular practices of violence occur.

How those working in diverse settings and sectors can contribute

For prevention activity to reach all people, across the diverse communities in which they live and in all the settings/sectors where they work, learn, play and socialise, there is a need for leadership from settings and sectors beyond those that have to date engaged in responding to violence against women. It is only when a broad range of everyday settings and sectors – including schools, workplaces, unions, business, leisure venues, early childhood services, sports clubs, civil society organisations, human and social service organisations, advertising, public transport and the arts – are leading their own, tailored prevention activities that we will start to see attitudinal and behavioural change on a social scale. These settings/sectors have leverage into all areas of the community, and can set the standard, not only for individual behaviour, but for the role organisations and institutions play in addressing the drivers of violence against women and advancing gender equality.

Sector associations and national and peak bodies can play an important coordination and leadership role in their fields, and high-profile or influential leaders can make valuable contributions to public debate and act as champions or ambassadors for change. Opportunities for advocacy for violence prevention and gender equality exist across all such sectors, and in partnership with prevention and gender equality specialists, sectors and organisations can themselves model equitable and respectful structures, norms and practices.

Community and civil society organisations, and those representing specific settings or sectors such as workplaces or sporting codes, can also provide cultural leadership on this issue by supporting primary prevention efforts among their members and networks, or publicly speaking out to address the drivers of violence against women.

How those working on other social policy issues can play a role

To address the various reinforcing factors and intersecting forms of discrimination and privilege that contribute to violence against women, partnerships between those specifically working on preventing violence against women and those working on other social policy issues would be beneficial. These issues might include alcohol and other drugs, childhood exposure to violence, mental health and wellbeing, economic disadvantage, poverty or social exclusion, or responding to crises and natural disasters. To maximise effectiveness in achieving shared goals, partnerships should acknowledge the relevance of other social policy issues to preventing violence against women and ensure that work on these other issues incorporates appropriate gender analysis.

As part of an intersectional feminist approach to preventing violence against women by addressing both the gendered drivers and reinforcing factors, partnerships with those working to end discrimination based on class, ethnicity, race, gender identity, sexuality, age and disability, are critical. These partnerships should aim to ensure that work on these other social policy issues includes a focus on violence against women and integrates a gendered analysis, and, conversely, that efforts to address the drivers or reinforcing factors of violence against women are informed by evidence and practice in these other social policy areas.

The national leadership role of Our Watch

As a national and independent organisation dedicated to the prevention of violence against women, Our Watch led the development of both the original *Change the story* in 2015 and this second edition. Yet *Change the story* is not an action plan for Our Watch alone; it is a prevention framework for the whole country, which points to a need for action by many different stakeholders. At the same time, Our Watch has a key role to play in providing national leadership on prevention: to drive widespread change in the social norms, structures, attitudes, practices and power imbalances that underpin, drive and support violence against women. We will:

- Advocate for, drive and support the implementation and coordination of the holistic, shared national approach outlined in *Change the story*.
- Engage and liaise with governments and policy makers to encourage and support government action on, and resourcing for, prevention, and to advance policy change.
- Lead and sustain a constructive public conversation about the prevention of violence against women.
- Help translate evidence into policy solutions that in turn enable effective, sustainable prevention practice, research, strategy and action across the country.
- Monitor the emergence of new evidence, and help to expand the evidence base for prevention, through ongoing research, practice and evaluation.
- Support a coordinated national approach to prevention by facilitating connections, networks and relationships and promoting best practice and shared learning across the country.

Critically, Our Watch also has a role to play in implementing *Change the story* across the country. We will develop innovative prevention initiatives that build the evidence about what works in different settings, sectors or contexts and how prevention can be implemented in a more systematic way across the country; provide support, guidance, tools and resources for prevention practice and practitioners; and lead national campaigns and social marketing to encourage attitude and behaviour change in relation to violence against women. And to help track Australia's short-, medium- and long-term progress towards the prevention of violence against women, we will continue to advocate for coordinated, evidence-based and transparent approaches to national monitoring and reporting.

Finally, across all our work, Our Watch will work collaboratively and in partnership with other organisations aiming to prevent or respond to violence against women on our shared objective of ending this violence. We are committed to supporting Aboriginal self-determination in the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and to partnering and building alliances with specialist agencies and diverse stakeholders as part of Our Watch's intersectional feminist approach to primary prevention.

Our shared vision: An Australia free from violence against women

Prevention is possible, and we know it is the only way to deliver a violence-free future for women. But the bigger picture is that prevention can transform our society for the better in many other ways.

The primary prevention of violence against women has positive impacts that go well beyond ending violence itself. In addition to improving health and wellbeing for women and their children, it builds more inclusive and equal organisations that respect and value diversity and difference. It helps ensure that families and communities support healthy and positive personal development for people of all genders, fostering respectful relationships and increasing social wellbeing.

To make this future possible, everyone needs to play a role.

In our families, and as neighbours, colleagues and friends, we must be open to difficult conversations about all forms of violence. We must believe and support those who disclose violence, and we must have the courage to speak out – not only against violence itself – but against the attitudes, social norms and structures that drive it.

Prevention can help create a future that is not only safer for women and girls, but more just, equal and respectful for all.

This task is significant, and the substantial work needed to achieve this vision is collective. It requires individuals, communities and organisations to play their role. It requires action by employers and workplaces, in the media and in our public institutions. But most critically, it requires strong leadership and significant policy and funding commitments from all levels of government.

Prevention is not just a technical exercise: the way we approach it is critical. Prevention is part of a broader movement for progressive social change. The principles and values that are embedded in this framework are crucial to achieving this shared vision for the future.

Our collective work must be gender transformative, intersectional and human rights based.

An Australia free of violence against women is one where people of all genders are treated equally, respected and valued. In this future Australia, everyone is supported to develop personal identities based on their individual character, not constrained by rigid, hierarchical and binary gender stereotypes. Our children know how to identify and reject sexist and violence-supportive messages they encounter among peers, in popular culture or on social media. Schools and education institutions across the country model and promote respectful relationships, non-violence and gender equality. In our workplaces, all people are valued, and inequalities in decision-making, recruitment and promotion are recognised and addressed. Our public and social spaces are inclusive, safe and accessible to all. Boys and men – both as individuals, and in peer groups, organisations, and institutions – choose to develop, adopt, promote and model healthy, positive forms of masculinity that are safe, respectful and ethical.

In this future Australia, intimate relationships are healthier, happier, more equitable and respectful, with decisions between partners made jointly and labour shared fairly. Sexual relationships are based on the principles of consent, agency and mutual pleasure. Power, resources and decision-making are genuinely shared, not only in relationships but also in public life, where people of all genders play a respected and valued role and participate equally in our social, political, cultural and economic institutions.

This Australia is one that many of us have been working towards for decades – in the women's movement, in many other social change movements and in civil society organisations and networks . Many schools, workplaces, sporting clubs and media outlets have already joined the movement for change, and governments have begun to take some of the steps needed to support and enable this change. There are good practice initiatives and signs of progress across the country. But to achieve our long-term vision, these efforts need to be scaled up, supported and coordinated, so that they benefit everyone, everywhere, and this activity is sustained to create transformational, intergenerational change.

Change the story **provides a roadmap to guide this collective effort: a framework for all who share this vision of an Australia free of violence against women.**

Appendix 1 — The prevalence and impacts of violence against women

This supplementary section provides a high-level overview of some of the key data sources on the prevalence, dynamics and impacts of violence against women, particularly in an Australian context. It is not intended as a comprehensive list of all the available data on violence against women, but rather aims to demonstrate how common this violence is, the various forms it takes, and how harmful it is to women and to the community as a whole.

The global prevalence of violence against women

On average globally, almost one in every three women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner, or sexual violence by a non-partner. This means that between 736 million and 852 million women will experience some form of sexual or physical violence in their lifetime. Global estimates suggest that almost one in four young women between the ages of 15 and 19 have already experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner since the age of 15.[283]

The prevalence and dynamics of violence against women in Australia

In Australia, women from all different backgrounds are impacted by violence, which can occur at any time in their lives. Many experience violence perpetrated by someone known to them, often a partner or ex-partner. Others experience workplace sexual harassment or harassment on the street, or in another public place. Others experience violence within an institutional context. Some women experience multiple different forms of violence, harassment or abuse during their lifetimes – from a range of different perpetrators and in various different contexts.

While there are gaps in, and limitations to, Australian prevalence data (see page 120), the data we have points to some of the ways the dynamics of violence differ across age and demographic groups, and gives a picture of the many different forms of violence that women experience:

- In Australia, on average, **one woman a week is killed by a partner or former partner**,[284] and the **killing of children** is also strongly correlated with a history of domestic/family violence.[285]
- One in five women has experienced **sexual violence** since the age of 15. In the most recent incident of sexual assault, 87 per cent of women were assaulted **by a male they knew**. In 2015 alone, 5.1 per cent of women (480,200 women) experienced sexual violence.[286]
- All forms of violence against **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women** occur at higher rates than violence against non-Indigenous women and are more likely to involve severe impacts: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are nearly 11 times more likely to die due to assault than non-Indigenous women, and 32 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence–related assaults.[287]
- One in three women has experienced **physical violence** by a partner, other known person or a stranger since the age of 15.[288]
- Nearly 1 million women have experienced **multiple incidents of physical violence** from the same man.[289]
- Almost one in four women (2.2 million women) has experienced **emotional abuse** by a current or former partner since the age of 15.[290]
- In 2016, women aged 18–34 were 2.7 times as likely as those aged 35 and over to have experienced intimate partner violence in the previous 12 months.[291]
- In 2017, **young women (15–19 years)** had the highest rates of reported sexual assault of any age and sex group, followed by girls aged 10–14 years and women aged 20–24.[292] Overall, young women are the age group most likely to experience both sexual and physical violence.[293]
- **Young men** aged 15–19 had the highest offending rate of sexual assault.[294]
- **Young women and girls** also experience specific types of violence, such as child or early marriage, forced marriage or female genital mutilation.[295]
- Older women are likely to experience **violence from a wide range of perpetrators**, including partners, ex-partners, adult children (particularly sons[296]), grandchildren, other relatives, neighbours and friends.[297] For some older women violence is part of an ongoing pattern of family violence experienced during their lifetimes.[298] Overall, there is emerging evidence that older women may be more exposed to violence because of **economic dependence on male partners**, and lifetime economic inequities that lead to poverty and insecure housing.[299]
- Migrant and refugee women can be subjected to **forms of violence that relate to their uncertain citizenship**,[300] where perpetrators threaten them with deportation or withhold access to passports, and can also be subject to violence from an extended range of perpetrators, including in-laws and siblings.[301] Overall, refugee women arrive from countries and circumstances often with insecure visa status, which can increase their exposure to violence and poverty, minority status, and disrupted family and community support systems.[302]
- The experiences of violence of **culturally and linguistically diverse women have some distinct contributors** which relate to other intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination, and may also include culturally specific norms about gender and relationships.[303]
- Women with disabilities experience violence or abuse from a **wider range of perpetrators** than women without a disability, including from intimate partners, family members, carers and support workers, in both home and institutional settings.[304]
- **Women and girls with disabilities are more likely to experience additional forms of violence** such as forced sterilisation, forced abortion, forced contraception, denial of legal capacity, forced treatment, restrictive practices, seclusion, restraint, indefinite detention, and forced and coerced marriage.[305]

- The intersections of homo-, bi- and transphobia with the gendered drivers of violence against women means that **lesbian, bisexual and trans women can experience additional, unique forms of violence** as a result of their gender identity and/or sexual orientation, including threats of 'outing' or shaming (connected to sexual orientation, gender identity or HIV status), or, for those who are HIV-positive or taking hormones to affirm their gender, withholding of hormones or medication.[306]
- Three in ten women (30 per cent) surveyed in 2018 said that they had experienced online abuse or harassment, with 37 per cent of these women indicating that on at least one occasion, these online experiences made them feel that their physical safety was threatened.[307]
- As many as 65 per cent of **young women and girls** aged 15–25 have been exposed to a spectrum of online violence including sexual harassment and abuse (compared to the global figure of 58 per cent). Most girls started to experience harassment on social media between the ages of 12 and 16.[308]
- Almost all (99.3 per cent) frontline family violence workers who participated in an Australian survey reported that they had clients who had experienced **technology-facilitated stalking and abuse**, including constant text messages, perpetrators tracking, monitoring and restricting women's use of technology and controlling their banking and finances through technology.[309]
- Two-thirds of women who experienced **physical assault by a male** did not report the most recent incident to police.[310]
- Nine out of ten women did not contact the police to report the most recent incident of **sexual assault by a male**.[311]

Sexual harassment in Australia

Sexual harassment is a form of violence against women and can occur in any setting. However, because sexual harassment is only illegal in particular areas of public life, Australian data primarily focuses on these forms of harassment (in particular, workplace sexual harassment), although newer studies are looking at the prevalence of sexual harassment in other areas, including public spaces.

- At least one in two women (53 per cent, or 5 million) has experienced sexual harassment during their lifetime, with some data suggesting the rate is much higher.[312]
- In 2018, 23 per cent of women in the Australian workforce reported experiencing some form of workplace sexual harassment in the previous 12 months.[313]
- In 2015, eight out of ten women aged 18–24 reported they had experienced street harassment in the previous year.[314]

The limitations of prevalence data

In Australia, the primary vehicle for measuring the prevalence of violence is the Personal Safety Survey (PSS), conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Australia's PSS is valuable, and important for Australia's work on building knowledge about violence against women.

There are however, some limitations to the PSS that are important to acknowledge, including the following:

- The PSS does not measure the prevalence of all forms of violence against women. For example, reproductive coercion, coercive control, technology-facilitated abuse, financial abuse and abuse in institutional settings are not currently included.
- It focuses on victimisation, or experiences of violence, and as such provides little information about the perpetration of violence against women, nor does it determine whether the reported violence is part of a systematic pattern or an isolated incident.[315]
- PSS data is not published in a form that allows disaggregation by demographic factors other than gender, nor can it be disaggregated by demographic diversity.
- The survey delivery mechanisms limit some people's ability to participate, including people with disabilities and those who do not speak English as a primary language, and only selects respondents from private dwellings (for example, houses, flats and caravans), thereby excluding people without a fixed address, those living in care, or other types of care settings and institutions, which particularly affects women with disabilities and older women.[316]
- Until 2020, the PSS did not gather data about sexual orientation, nor does it currently gather information about gender identity.
- The PSS asks people whether they have experienced violence, which means it can only provide data on victimisation. Obtaining reliable data on perpetration requires a similarly rigorous and comprehensive population-level survey that seeks to build evidence about the perpetration of violence against women and non-binary people, which would also require a focus on gathering data about the gender identity and sexual orientation of the perpetrator and the victim.
- The PSS does not gather information about any socioeconomic indicators such as income, wealth, level of educational attainment, employment status or geographic location (among others). This information is vital to building an understanding of the impacts of class, wealth and broader socio-economic status on both experiences and perpetration of violence.

Other limitations to prevalence data at a national level include:

- A lack of research and population-level data on whether or how rates of violence against women vary according to ethnic identity, country of origin, cultural or linguistic background, migration status and religion (of either victim or perpetrator). Some valuable information on aspects of this question is beginning to emerge, but it is not yet comprehensive or robust enough to enable comparative analysis at the population level.[317]
- A lack of research and population-wide data that measures the prevalence of intimate partner or family violence experienced by LGBTIQ people, because Australian national data sets and studies do not include adequate questions about sex characteristics, gender identity and sexuality.[318] There are some studies that do attempt to measure violence in same-sex relationships, or against non-binary, trans or intersex people, but these are not representative population-level data sets, and the methodological approaches used make it difficult to compare prevalence rates in these studies to those in the population as a whole.[319] There is also a dearth of disaggregated data from such studies which would enable analysis of particular experiences of violence for different populations within LGBTIQ communities.[320]
- There is limited evidence in Australia about violence against older women.[321] Some studies on elder abuse[322] are starting to provide greater reliability in estimates

of prevalence, but these studies are rarely disaggregated by gender. Gaps in evidence remain regarding intimate partner violence and violence against older women in institutional settings.

- Gaps in the data on prevalence of violence against women in particular population subgroups, and issues with the small sample size of available data on these groups, makes comparison with population-level prevalence data difficult.
- There is currently no population-level prevalence measure that captures all types of sexual violence,[323] nor is there a mechanism to capture experiences of violence in online, virtual and cyber spaces to further build an evidence base that is relevant to the 21st century.

There are many other research gaps in relation to the perpetration of violence, including a need for quantitative and qualitative data on which men use violence; what forms of violence, abuse and control they use; and in what circumstances. Further, there is a need for research to better understand the reasons for men's use of violence, their 'pathways' to perpetration, and the role that demographic factors, particular life experiences, attitudes and beliefs about women, notions of masculinity, and other factors may play in making some men more likely to perpetrate violence.

Currently the data that is available on perpetrators of violence against women is inherently limited because it is largely derived from studies of men who have come into contact with the justice or service systems – likely to be a small minority of all the men who use violence against women. For this reason, it is not representative, either of the Australian population or of men who use violence.

These gaps in data and evidence inhibit the development of nuanced understandings of how prevalence varies across the population, and of the dynamics of perpetration and the characteristics of perpetrators. Despite these limitations, there is sufficient scholarship and adequate population prevalence data in Australia in particular to paint a clear picture that this violence is prevalent, serious and harmful. Ongoing development of more detailed data relating to many population subgroups, and data on perpetrators and perpetration, remains critical to building a deeper understanding of gendered violence in Australia.

The impacts of violence against women

Violence against women takes a profound and long-term toll on women's health and wellbeing, on their children and on families. What is often not as well recognised or understood is the impact that violence against women has on communities, the economy and on society as a whole. It is because of these significant, widespread individual and social impacts that investment in prevention – the cultural change required to stop this violence from occurring in the first place – is so critical.

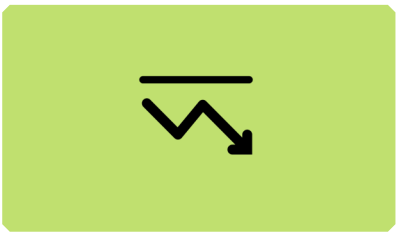
Violence has significant impacts on women's short- and long-term physical and mental health and wellbeing.[324] In Australia, intimate partner violence alone contributes to more death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44 than any other preventable risk factor.[325]

Exposure to violence against mothers or other caregivers, as well as their own experiences of violence or abuse, causes profound harm to children and has long-term effects on children's physical and mental wellbeing, behavioural, cognitive and emotional functioning, social development and – through a process of 'negative change effects' – education and later employment prospects.[326] Exposure to this violence has the potential to negatively impact on children's attitudes to relationships and violence later in life.[327] Family violence is a common factor in child protection notifications, including those resulting in the removal of children from their families. This has particularly devastating implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, given the ongoing legacies of the Stolen Generations, and the continued disproportionate rate of removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.[328]

Violence against women is also a key driver of homelessness for women and children (which has further negative impacts on safety and health). Over one-third of women accessing homelessness services do so because they are fleeing family/intimate partner violence.[329] Violence is the leading cause of children's homelessness in Australia.[330]

Both intimate partner violence and workplace sexual harassment contribute to poverty and financial insecurity among women,[331] and impede their progress in employment and their long-term career and financial prospects.[332]

The impacts of violence against women are felt across workplaces of all types. Experiences of violence against women at home and in the workplace have impacts on staff retention,[333] presenteeism, absenteeism and morale, and undermine workplace productivity.[334]



The combined economic cost of violence against women is high, and increasing; in 2015, it was estimated to cost $21.7 billion a year. Victim–survivors bear the primary burden of this cost; however, Commonwealth, state and territory governments bear the second-biggest cost burden, estimated at $7.8 billion a year in health, administration and social welfare costs. If no adequate action is taken to prevent violence against women, these costs will rise to $323.4 billion by 2044–45.[335]

For many women, particularly those with responsibility for children, a major consequence of violence (particularly intimate partner violence) is that they are pushed into poverty and financial hardship because of loss of employment, income, assets or housing and social support networks.[336] These impacts can be greatly exacerbated for women in low-income neighbourhoods where community cohesion and potential sources of support may be reduced by the combined effects of concentrated socio-economic disadvantage, underinvestment in local services and institutions and insecure housing.[337]

Appendix 2 — Language and conceptual framing

This appendix outlines a number of important language and conceptual framing considerations that are critical to understanding the framework, including:

1. articulating how the framework understands 'women', to support readers in recognising the significant diversity that exists among women in Australia
2. why this framework uses the term 'violence against women', to support readers in understanding the justification for this language and the limitations of other common ways to name this problem
3. a discussion on binary language, to support readers in understanding both the relevance and the limitations of this language in prevention work.

These explanations and definitions are a lens that should be applied across the framework to guide its interpretation.

What we mean when we say 'women'

Change the story recognises that the category of 'women' is a socially constructed one, and part of a binary system of sex and gender categories that does not represent the gender diversity of the population. The inherent limitations of binary language are acknowledged on page 126.

The framework's definition of a woman includes anyone who identifies and lives as a woman, which includes cisgender and trans women. It recognises that the violence experienced by cisgender heterosexual women can be different from violence experienced by lesbian women, bisexual women or trans women, who may also be targeted on the basis of their sexuality and/or their perceived gender non-conformity.

Women are not a fixed or homogenous group. Women comprise 50.2 per cent of the Australian population who all have experiences as women, but who also hold multiple identities and have different experiences based on their age, religion, class, ethnicity, experience of disability, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or non-Indigenous status, education, geographic location, sexuality or gender identity, health status, migration experience or family background.

Why this framework refers to 'violence against women'

Our Watch and this framework deliberately adopt the language and scope of 'violence against women' or 'gendered violence'. These terms are more appropriate for a national prevention framework than others, such as 'domestic, family and sexual violence', for the following reasons:

- 'Violence against women' is the term used in the international human rights context, derived from the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, reflected in United Nations guidance, and used in international research and practice. Australia's approach should align with this international usage.
- While domestic, family and sexual violence are the most common forms of violence against women, there are other forms of violence that women experience that are not captured by this language, including, for example, sexual harassment, violence against women in residential care, misogynistic and violent online abuse, reproductive and other forms of coercion (for example, withholding medication or disability aids), and trafficking of women. The broader term 'violence against women' is better able to encompass the whole range of different forms of violence against women that occur across diverse contexts but that share gendered drivers.

- Women make up the overwhelming majority of victims of domestic and family violence and sexual violence, making the term 'violence against women' more appropriate and accurate, and more effective in communicating the gendered nature of this violence.
- The term 'domestic, family and sexual violence' suggests three separate or different forms of violence, yet domestic and family violence often includes sexual violence.
- Even in relation to partner violence, the terms 'domestic' or 'family' violence are too narrow to capture violence perpetrated by men who are not in a 'domestic' or familial relationship with their victim (for example, dating violence). The term 'violence against women' provides a scope that better encompasses all forms of intimate partner/ex-partner violence.

Framing a national approach to prevention of all forms of 'violence against women' and maintaining consistency in the use of this language will help address all these issues. This framing requires a focus on the gendered nature of the issue. It brings multiple forms of gendered violence into view and helps build understanding of the connections between them. From a prevention perspective, it demonstrates the value of addressing the shared gendered drivers that underpin the many different but related forms of men's violence against women.

The use and limitations of binary language

The current framing of much prevention work tends to use binary language; that is, language that assumes only two categories of sex and gender and is limited by binary terms such as men/women, male/female, masculinity/femininity. The field is also largely focused on the experiences of those who are cisgender and heterosexual. Binary language is commonly used and understood in Australia because the evidence shows that cisgender heterosexual women make up the largest cohort of victims of gendered violence (and current data collection mechanisms are likely to prioritise these experiences), and that this violence is overwhelmingly perpetrated by cisgender heterosexual men.

While neither sex nor gender exist in binary categories, these categories still have very real effects. For this reason, binary language is useful to frame discussions about gendered violence, because it conveys the overwhelmingly gendered nature and dynamics of perpetration and victimisation. At the same time, however, there are people whose experiences and identities are not captured by the use of binary language and this should be acknowledged.

This framework's focus is on the prevention of violence against women (including both cisgender and trans women). While this scope necessitates the use of binary language, the framework also seeks to challenge these conventions. It does this by pointing to the need for a gender transformative approach to prevention.

Prevention efforts ultimately seek to be gender transformative, and this means wherever possible using inclusive, expansive language that does not reinforce gender binaries. However, it is also important that prevention efforts both acknowledge the very real effects of binary categories in the current social context, and respond to current community understandings of gender, if they are to effectively take people on this transformative journey. This means that there will be circumstances in which it is necessary to use binary gendered language to convey an intended meaning. In doing so, it remains important to recognise the limitations of such language and acknowledge the need for additional work to reflect the experiences of those whose experiences and identities do not fall within a binary framing.

Appendix 3 — How this framework was developed

The first edition of Change the story, published in 2015, was informed by a review of the national and international evidence on correlates of violence against women and what works to prevent it, a suite of evidence-based 'think pieces' produced by expert authors, and two rounds of national consultations with over 400 stakeholders.

Building on the deep evidence that informed the first edition of *Change the story*, this second edition distils the latest evidence on the prevention of violence against women, the drivers and contributors to that violence, the characteristics of effective prevention practice, and the systems and mechanisms required to plan, implement and sustain prevention activity. This second edition has been informed by the international and Australian evidence from academic and grey literature that has become available since 2015, as well as extensive stakeholder input.

The evidence that informs this framework primarily consists of country- or population-level studies, multi-country studies and studies that are a meta-analysis of existing research. Where appropriate, the review also incorporated smaller or one-off studies that might help to shed light on experiences of intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination, or how gender inequality intersects with these to influence the prevalence and dynamics of violence against women.

Stakeholder consultations undertaken to inform the second edition included:

- an online survey for *Change the story* end-users and prevention practitioners
- collaborative workshops with technical experts (prevention specialists and researchers)
- consultation sessions (group and individual) with a wide range of sector and issue-specific experts, practitioners and policy makers from around the country
- expert reviews of earlier drafts
- input from Our Watch staff with experience in the use and adaptation of the original framework, and knowledge of stakeholder feedback gathered in the years since its release.

That the development of this edition of the framework was able to benefit from so much generous input, and such a high level of active and passionate engagement, is a sign of the deep and genuine commitment of so many to addressing this critical issue.

This second edition maintains a consistent conceptual approach for preventing violence against women in Australia. It is a framework intended to support a shared understanding and collaborative action.

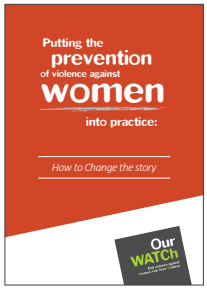
Appendix 4 — Supporting evidence: Other Our Watch publications

Change the story is based on national and international research and evidence gathered for the specific purpose of developing the original framework and this revised version.[338] In addition, this second edition is informed and supported by a number of Our Watch publications that have been produced since the release of the original edition, and which form part of the evidence base for prevention in Australia (see page 129.)

The implementation of this framework is supported by *Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice: How to Change the story*, which is a handbook for practitioners who are working 'on the ground'. The handbook has been adapted into a website (handbook.ourwatch.org.au) to increase accessibility and encourage uptake around the country. The handbook supports prevention practitioners in translating this national framework into their local setting, community or context, to ensure that prevention work is evidence-based, meaningful and effective.

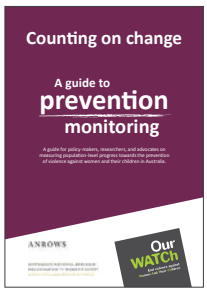
In addition to the handbook, Our Watch has developed a range of other online tools and resources, including practice toolkits, to support prevention work in specific settings, including:

- Workplace Equality and Respect: workplace.ourwatch.org.au
- Respectful Relationships Education: education.ourwatch.org.au
- Equality and Respect in Sport: sport.ourwatch.org.au
- Prevention toolkit for local government: handbook.ourwatch.org.au/localgovtoolkit
- Media Making Change: media.ourwatch.org.au

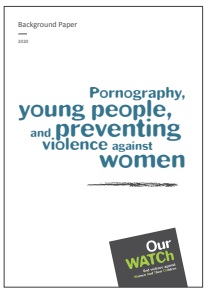


Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice: How to Change the story (2017).

Men in focus: Unpacking masculinities and engaging men in the prevention of violence against women (2019).



Counting on change: A guide to prevention monitoring (2017).



Pornography, young people and preventing violence against women: Background paper (2020).

Primary prevention of family violence against people from LGBTI communities: An analysis of existing research (2017).

Tracking progress in prevention: A national monitoring report on progress towards the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia (2020).

Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children (2018).

Changing the picture: Background paper – Understanding violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children (2018).

In 2022, Our Watch will publish *Changing the landscape: A national resource to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities* and *Prevention of violence against women and girls with disabilities: Background paper*.

Our Watch has also published a range of evidence reviews and evaluations of prevention in key settings, including schools, sports and news media.

Alternative text for figures

Figure 4

Infographic illustrating the social context for violence against women. It shows that this context comprises many intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination, as well as many factors that play out at different levels of society. These include:

- social, economic and political conditions, systems and structures
- historical and cultural factors
- laws and policies
- social norms, values and beliefs
- social, organisational and community practices.

Return to Figure 4 on page 29.

Figure 5

Infographic showing the different factors which influence the occurrence of violence against women.

The figure represents violence as the outcome of interactions among many factors at four levels.

It shows examples of structures, norms and practices found to increase the probability of violence against women, at different levels of the social ecology.

The highest level is the societal level: dominant social norms supporting rigid roles and stereotyping, or condoning, excusing and downplaying violence against women.

The second level is the system and institutional level: failure of systems, institutions and policies to promote women's economic, legal and social autonomy, or to adequately address violence against women.

The third level is the organisational and community level: organisation and community norms, structures and practices supporting or failing to address gender inequality, stereotyping, discrimination and violence.

The fourth and final level is the individual and relationship level: individual adherence to rigid gender roles and identities, weak support for gender equality, social learning of violence against women, male dominance and controlling behaviours in relationships.

Return to Figure 5 on page 34.

Figure 6

Infographic showing multiple intersecting forms of oppression and privilege that shape the social context in which violence against women occurs, and affect its prevalence and dynamics. The illustrated intersecting forms of oppression and privilege are ableism, ageism, racism and colonialism, class discrimination, sexism and gender inequality, heteronormativity, homophobia and biphobia, and transphobia and cisnormativity.

Return to Figure 6 on page 46.

Figure 7

Infographic representing the scale of backlash, from passive to active. The forms range in order as denial, disavowal, inaction, appeasement, appropriation, co-option, repression, and backlash.

Return to Figure 7 on page 53.

Figure 8

Infographic showing the relationship between primary prevention and other work to address violence against women. The relationship between these is depicted as a pyramid that narrows from broader whole-of-population initiatives to response services for individuals.

Primary prevention: whole-of-population initiatives that address the primary ('first' or underlying) drivers of violence against women.

Early intervention (or secondary prevention): aims to change the trajectory for individuals at higher-than-average risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence.

Response (or tertiary prevention): supports victim–survivors and holds perpetrators to account, aiming to prevent the recurrence of violence.

Recovery: ongoing process that enables victim–survivors to find safety, health, wellbeing, resilience and to thrive in all areas of their life.

Return to Figure 8 on page 58.

Figure 9

Infographic showing a five-step scale, ranging from gender-unequal to gender-transformative:

- Gender-unequal: perpetuates gender inequality by reinforcing unbalanced norms, roles and relations.
- Gender ignoring (or 'gender neutral'): often based on claim of being 'fair' by treating everyone the same. Ignores gender norms, roles, relations, and gendered differences in opportunities and resource allocation. Very often reinforces gender-based discrimination.
- Gender-sensitive: considers gender norms, roles and relations, but does not address the inequalities they create.
- Gender-specific/ gender responsive: considers gender norms, roles and relations and how they affect access to resources or create specific needs for women and men. Takes targeted action in response to meet these needs. Makes it easier for women and men to fulfil duties ascribed to them based on their gender roles, without necessarily seeking to shift the allocation of these duties.
- Gender-transformative: actively works to challenge and transform gender norms, roles, relations, power imbalances and their impacts. Seeks to address the underlying causes of gender-based inequities, and foster progressive changes in gendered power relationships.

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Figure 10

Infographic showing prevention actions at each level of the socio-ecological model, using the education setting as an example. The actions address structures, norms and practices.

At the highest level – the societal level – schools are recognised by the community as educational institutions, workplaces and community hubs that have a significant role to play in positively influencing social issues, including gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence, and are supported by society in this work.

At the second level – the system and institutional level – governments, alongside state and territory education departments,

recognise, prioritise and adequately resource a sustainable approach to respectful relationships education nationally.

Curriculum materials that address the drivers of gender-based violence are embedded in the Australian Curriculum across all classroom levels, F–12.

State and territory education departments and other education systems create policies to encourage and actively promote female leadership.

At the third level – the organisational and community level – a whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education, which is inclusive for LGBTIQ young people, and addresses policy, practice, culture and leadership, is embedded across the school.

The whole-of-school approach recognises the importance of everyone within the school community and engages staff, students, families and community organisations in its ongoing approach to prevent gender-based violence.

At the fourth and final level – the individual and relationship level – every student receives age-appropriate, ongoing, scaffolded and inclusive respectful relationships classroom education, which addresses the drivers of gender-based violence, across the lifespan of their primary and secondary schooling.

All staff, teaching and non-teaching, are supported through a comprehensive and ongoing professional development strategy, to build their knowledge and understanding of gender-based violence and how it can be prevented.

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Glossary of terms

Backlash/resistance – the resistance, hostility or aggression with which gender equality or violence prevention strategies are met by some groups. From a feminist perspective, backlash can be understood as an inevitable response to challenges to male dominance, power or status, and is often interpreted as a sign that such challenges are proving effective.[339]

Cisgender – describes a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex that was assigned to them at birth.

Cisnormativity – refers to a general perspective that sees cisgender experiences as the only, or central, view of the world. This includes the assumption that all people fall into one of two distinct and complementary genders (man or woman) which corresponds to their sex assigned at birth (male or female) or what is called the gender binary. It also relates to the systemic and structural privileging of the social models of binary sex and gender.

Class – a system of structured inequality based on unequal distributions of power, education, wealth and income that determine social position and status.

Domestic violence – refers to acts of violence that occur in domestic settings between two people who are, or were, in an intimate relationship. It includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse.[340] See also Family violence.

Dominant forms of masculinity – the particular attitudes, norms, stereotypes, roles and practices that men are expected to support, conform to or participate in, and that operate at and across structural, systemic, organisational, community, interpersonal and individual levels of society.

Doxing – the act of publicly revealing previously private personal information about an individual or organisation.

Emotional/psychological violence – can include a range of controlling behaviours such as control of finances, isolation from family and friends, continual humiliation, threats against children or being threatened with injury or death.[341]

Family violence – a broader term than domestic violence, as it refers not only to violence between intimate partners but also to violence between family members.[342] This includes, for example, elder abuse and adolescent violence against parents. Family violence includes violent or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour that coerces or controls a family member or causes that family member to be fearful.[343] In Indigenous communities, family violence is often the preferred term as it encapsulates the broader issue of violence within extended families, kinship networks and community relationships, as well as intergenerational issues.[344] For LGBTIQ people, 'family' may be defined as the 'chosen family' sometimes created in the context of rejection by biological families, but there is no research on violence in this context.[345]

Framework – the conceptual structure underlying and supporting an approach to a specific outcome, in this case an Australia free from violence against women. A framework is typically made up of interrelated component parts or elements, as well as descriptive models used to plan the required work to achieve the outcome.

Gender – the socially learnt roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that any given society considers appropriate for men and women; gender defines masculinity and femininity.[346] Gender expectations vary between cultures and can change over time.[347]

Gender-based violence against women – violence that is specifically 'directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately'.[348]

Gendered drivers of violence – the underlying causes that are required to create the necessary conditions in which violence against women occurs. They relate to the particular structures, norms and practices arising from gender inequality in public and private life, but which must always be considered in the context of other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage.

Gender equality[349] – involves equality for people of all genders. This term is used in the substantive sense to mean not only equality of opportunity but also equal or just outcomes (sometimes also called equity). It requires the redistribution of power, resources and responsibilities between men and women in particular, and the transformation of the underlying causes and structures that create and sustain gender inequality.

Gender lens – a way to make gender visible by investigating whether policies, laws, regulations and opportunities have different effects on women and men, or whether they reproduce harmful gender stereotypes or gender-based discrimination.

Gender norms – the dominant beliefs and rules of conduct which are determined by a society or social group in relation to the types of roles, interests, behaviours and contributions expected from girls and boys, men and women. Norms are not neutral in their effect, but rather create and maintain unequal relations of power.

Gender transformative – approaches that move beyond simply being aware of gender inequality, or sensitive to gender differences, and instead deliberately challenge harmful gender roles, stereotypes, practices and norms, with the explicit aim of shifting the unequal distribution of power and resources between women and men.

Hegemonic masculinity – describes the currently accepted or dominant ways of being a man – that is, the set of ideals and practices that denote the most prized ways of being a man in any given society or context, which help to maintain and legitimise gender inequality and men's overall dominance, privilege and power over women.[350]

Heteronormativity – a belief and general perspective that sees heterosexuality as the only 'normal' sexual orientation, and heterosexual experiences as the only, or central, view of the world. This perspective also assumes a linear relationship between sex, gender and sexuality (for example: male, man, heterosexual man), and is based on and reinforces the systemic and structural privileging of binary models of sex and gender, that assume a person's sex and gender identity corresponds to their sex assigned at birth.

Hypersexuality – used in this framework to explain the idea that men have a high sex drive and should be sexually active, and that this is essential to their masculinity and sexuality. This feeds into ideas of male sexual entitlement and the expectation that men will be more dominant and controlling in their sexual relationships, all of which strongly link to violence against women, and sexual violence in particular.

Image-based abuse – when an intimate image or video is shared without the consent of the person pictured. This includes images or videos that have been digitally altered. Image-based abuse also includes the threat of an intimate image being shared.[351]

Intergenerational trauma – a form of historical trauma transmitted across generations. Survivors of the initial experience who have not healed may pass on their trauma to further generations. In Australia, intergenerational trauma particularly affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, especially the children, grandchildren and future generations of the Stolen Generations.[352]

Intersectionality – describes the interactions between multiple systems and structures of oppression (such as sexism, racism, classism, ageism, ableism, heteronormativity and cissexism), as well as policy and legal contexts (such as immigration status). It acknowledges that some people are subject to multiple forms of oppression and 'the experience is not just the sum of its parts'.[353] An intersectional approach is 'a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other'.[354] Conversely, intersectionality also highlights the intersection of multiple forms of power and privilege. An intersectional approach is critical for preventing violence against women because patriarchal power structures always intersect with other systems of power. Violence against women occurs in the context of both gender inequality and multiple other forms of structural and systemic inequality, oppression and discrimination. All of these intersect to influence the perpetration of violence, the prevalence, nature and dynamics of violence, and women's experiences of violence. Understanding and addressing these intersections is necessary to effectively address the drivers of violence against women and prevent this violence across the population.

Intimate partner violence – any behaviour within an intimate relationship (including current or past marriages, domestic partnerships, or dates) that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm. This is the most common form of violence against women.[355]

Lateral violence – refers to damaging behaviours that come from within a particular community or population subgroup, such as backstabbing, bullying or even physical violence. The term is used in particular by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, in which such behaviour is often seen as a form of internalised colonialism because it arises out of being an oppressed group of people. When people feel oppressed and live with fear or anger, they can turn on each other, even on those closest to them.[356]

Non-partner sexual assault – sexual violence perpetrated by strangers, acquaintances, friends, colleagues, peers, teachers, neighbours and family members.[359] See also Sexual violence.

Normalisation of violence – where violence, particularly men's violence, is seen and treated as a normal part of everyday life.

Normative support for violence against women – is expressed through attitudes, behaviours and systems that justify, excuse, downplay or tolerate such violence, or blame or hold women at least partly responsible for violence perpetrated against them.[360]

Norms – see Social norms.

Patriarchy – a social structure where the ideas, needs and actions of men are dominant over those of women (and non-binary people) and where men (as a group) hold social, political, cultural and economic power. Patriarchy is associated with a set of ideas that seek to explain and justify this dominance and attribute it to innate differences between men and women.

Practices – what people do, or the actions they take. Gendered practices are the things people do to distinguish between girls and boys, or between male and female roles or spheres. They include a wide range of everyday actions, processes and behaviours that are undertaken both at individual and relationship levels, and at organisational/institutional and society levels, and that reinforce and perpetuate gendered norms and structures.

Reinforcing factors – factors which become significant within the context of the drivers of violence. These factors do not predict or drive violence against women on their own. However, they each play a role in influencing the occurrence or dynamics of violence against women. Reinforcing factors are context-specific; they have an influence in particular circumstances and at particular levels of the socio-ecological model. See also Gendered drivers of violence.

Settings – environments in which people live, work, learn, socialise and play.

Sex – the biological and physical characteristics used to define humans as male or female.

Sexism – discrimination based on gender, and the attitudes, stereotypes and cultural elements that promote this discrimination.[361]

Sexual assault – see Sexual violence.

Sexual harassment – an unwelcome sexual advance, unwelcome request for sexual favours or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated, where a reasonable person would anticipate that reaction in the circumstances.[362]

Sexual violence – sexual activity that happens where consent is not obtained or freely given. It occurs any time a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity, such as touching, sexual harassment and intimidation, forced marriage, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, sexual assault, and rape. Sexual assault is only one type of sexual violence and does not include sexual harassment, or broader and complex forms of sexual violence, such as technology-facilitated or image-based abuse.

Social norms – the informal, mostly unwritten and unspoken collective rules that define typical, acceptable, appropriate and obligatory actions in a social group, setting or society. They are produced and reproduced by customs, traditions and value systems that develop over time to uphold particular forms of social order.

Socio-ecological model – this model is a feature of public health, and is used here to demonstrate how violence is a product of multiple, interacting components and social factors.[363] The model conceptualises how the drivers of violence manifest across the personal, community and social level and illustrates the value of implementing multiple mutually reinforcing strategies across these levels.

Structural discrimination and disadvantage – a condition produced when the norms, policies and systems that operate within society create patterns that see people in particular groups more likely to experience discrimination and are more likely to be disadvantaged compared to others.

Structures – macro-level mechanisms and structural forces (economic, political, cultural, organisational) that maintain social order and the status quo and which, in turn, shape our lives. Social structures, and the systems which support them, are reinforced through government, institutions and laws that serve to organise society, determining who has social and political power. Social change processes challenge those social structures and political and cultural institutions, and thus the organisation of society and the distribution of power and resources.

Systemic social inequalities – a pattern of discrimination that is reflected within social norms and reinforced through law, education, the economy, healthcare and politics, and results in the privileging of certain groups and individuals over others.

Systems and structures – macro-level mechanisms, both formal (policies, institutions and laws) and informal (social norms), which serve to organise society, and create power relationships between different groups of people and patterns of social and political power.

Violence against women – any act of gender-based violence that causes, or could cause, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life.[3]64 This definition encompasses all forms of violence that women experience (including physical, sexual, emotional, cultural, spiritual, financial, and others) that are gender-based.

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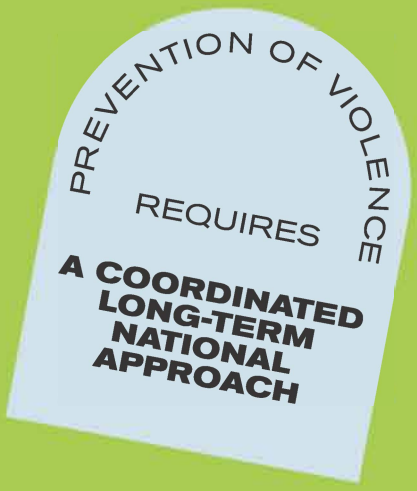
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS
PREVENTABLE

WE CAN STOP
THIS VIOLENCE
BEFORE IT STARTS

EVERY SECTOR
INSTITUTION, ORGANISATION & COMMUNITY
HAS A ROLE TO PLAY

WE CAN CHANGE THE STORY


PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE
REQUIRES
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RESPECT AND VALUE
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