Condoning of violence against women

Violence against women is preventable. To stop this violence before it starts, we need to address the social conditions that drive it – the four gendered drivers. **Condoning violence against women** is one of these drivers, where violence is excused, downplayed, justified or denied; or where blame is placed on the victim rather than responsibility resting with the perpetrator.

What condoning violence can sound like

Media highlighting the victim's behaviour more than the perpetrator's violence

Saying the violence 'wasn't that bad' or should be kept quiet

Believing men can't control their need for sex

Blaming alcohol, mental illness or stress: 'he just snapped'

People who condone violence against women may not realise they are doing it. But their beliefs and behaviours influence others. Left unchallenged, they create a culture where it's OK to look away, deny the problem or make excuses for the bad behaviour.

What are the gendered drivers?

The evidence base tells us that gender inequality creates the social conditions for violence against women to occur. There are four key expressions of gender inequality that have been found to predict or drive this violence. To prevent violence against women, we must focus our efforts on addressing these drivers.[1]

1. **Condoning of violence against women**

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

3. Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity

4. Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

This tip sheet is one of four designed to support people working to prevent violence against women. The tip sheets should be read together as each driver is interrelated and equally significant.

What condoning violence looks like in daily life

Addressing different levels and contexts in prevention

Rates of family violence and violence against women are higher when it is condoned by societies, institutions, communities or individuals. Looking at how this driver manifests within different settings where people live, learn, work, socialise and play can help you to plan your approach to addressing it. The more areas across society where violence-supportive attitudes, behaviours and structures are challenged and rejected, the more influence and positive change we will create.

Societal level

Mistrusting women's reports of violence – 42% of Australians think it's common for sexual assault accusations to be used as a way of getting back at men – even though false allegations are rare.[2]

Public portrayals of men who use violence against women as passionate, protective, mentally ill, an alcoholic or drug addict, minimising or excusing their choice to use violence.

Institutional / systemic level

Restrictive family violence provisions in the migration act mean some migrant or refugee women on temporary visas risk losing their right to stay in Australia if they leave a violent relationship.

Magistrates insinuating in their judgements that the victim's behaviour was a factor in her experience.

Organisational / community level

Sexual harassment policies that focus only on reporting, without onus on organisational duty of care, or on bystanders to take action. This trivialises the impact of violence and places responsibility on the victim to manage the situation.

Sporting clubs allowing perpetrators of violence to continue playing with little consequence – putting the organisation's reputation/sporting success first rather than support for the victim or holding the perpetrator to account.

Individual / relationship level

Believing women find it flattering to be persistently pursued, even if they're not interested.

Excusing boys and mens mean or aggressive behaviour as 'boys will be boys' or ignoring phrases like 'treat 'em mean, keep 'em keen'.

How can we change this?

To prevent violence against women we must take action to address the gendered drivers.

Actions that will prevent violence against women:

1. CHALLENGE
condoning of violence against women

2. PROMOTE
women's indepedence and decision-making

3. CHALLENGE
gender stereotypes and roles

4. STRENGTHEN
positive, equal and respectful relationships

Challenging the condoning of violence against women means addressing attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, systems and practices that justify, excuse, or downplay violence against women.[3]

For example:

- implementing workplace policies and practices that show sexual harassment is taken seriously

- raising awareness about the prevalence and impact of different forms of violence (e.g. financial abuse, coercive control, stalking or technological abuse).

- ensuring that media stories highlight perpetrators' responsibility rather than victims' clothing or behaviour

~~Flirting woman killed out of jealousy~~
Controlling husband murders wife

Flirting woman killed out of jealousy

[1] Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, (2015). *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia,* Melbourne, Australia.

[2] ANROWS, (2018). *Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality. Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)*, Sydney, NSW.

[3] Our Watch, (2017). *Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice: How to Change the story,* Melbourne, Australia.

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

Violence against women is preventable. To stop this violence before it starts, we need to address the social conditions that drive it – the four gendered drivers. **Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence** is one of these drivers, where women's autonomy in both public life and private relationships is constrained. This can include undermining of women's decision-making and leadership in public life, or relationships where men control a woman's personal, financial or social independence.

What this driver can sound like

In the workplace, men make more capable bosses than women
(14% of Australians agree)*

Women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship
(25% of Australians agree)*

Men make better political leaders than women
(14% of Australians agree)*

*ANROWS, (2018). *Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality. Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)*, Sydney, NSW.

What are the gendered drivers?

The evidence base tells us that gender inequality creates the social conditions for violence against women to occur. There are four key expressions of gender inequality that have been found to predict or drive this violence. To prevent violence against women, we must focus our efforts on addressing these drivers.[1]

1. Condoning of violence against women

2. **Men's control of decision making and limits to women's independence in public life and relationships**

3. Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity

4. Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

This tip sheet is one of four designed to support people working to prevent violence against women. The tip sheets should be read together as each driver is interrelated and equally significant.

What men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence looks like in daily life

Addressing different levels and contexts in prevention

Looking at how this driver manifests within different settings where people live, learn, work, socialise and play can help you to plan your approach to addressing it. The more that women's independence and decision-making is promoted in public and private life as well as across society, the more influence and positive change we will see.

Societal level

The widely held belief that men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household (16% of Australians agree with this statement).[2]

Women's portrayal in entertainment and the media – women and girls are often represented only through their relationship or connection to male protagonists, rather than as their own independent/multi-dimensional characters.

Institutional / systemic level

The underrepresentation of women in Parliament and other positions of political representation.

Female-dominated industries such as health and human services work and education having significantly lower levels of pay than male-dominated industries and occupations.[3]

Organisational / community level

Men's dominance of leadership roles in organisations and community groups, even in female-dominated industries.[4]

Workplaces failing to offer adequate flexible working arrangements for women and men, such as working from home and part time roles, making it more difficult for women to stay in employment after having children.

Individual / relationship level

Expectations that the man in a heterosexual relationship is the primary earner and he should control decisions about expenditure, assets and bank accounts.

Men's dominance of speaking time, and both men and women interrupting women during meetings more frequently than they do men.

How can we change this?

To prevent violence against women we must take action to address the gendered drivers.

Actions that will prevent violence against women:

1. CHALLENGE
condoning of violence against women

2. PROMOTE
women's indepedence and decision-making

3. CHALLENGE
gender stereotypes and roles

4. STRENGTHEN
positive, equal and respectful relationships

To address men's control in decision-making and limits to women's independence we must **promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and in their relationships**. This means supporting women's leadership (in all its forms), autonomy and social connectedness, and challenging the norms, practices and structures that enable and perpetuate men's control and dominance across different levels of society.[5] Sometimes these are justified as 'how things have always been done'.

Promoting alternatives could include:

- offering leadership training and mentoring programs for women both in communities and in workplaces

- providing opportunities for women to establish social networks

- implementing workplace gender equality strategies such as promoting flexible work arrangements for both men and women

- introducing workplace gender quotas for leadership.

[1] Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, (2015). *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia,* Melbourne, Australia.

[2] ANROWS, (2018). *Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality. Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS),* Sydney, NSW.

[3] Workplace Gender Equality Agency, (2018). *Gender Equity Insights 2018: Inside Australia's Gender Pay Gap*. Retrieved from https://www.wgea.gov.au/data/wgea-research/gender-equity-insights-inside-australias-gender-pay-gap.

[4] Workplace Gender Equality Agency, (2016). *Gender Segregation in Australia's workforce*. Retrieved from https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/20160801_Industry_occupational_segregation_factsheet.pdf.

[5] Our Watch, (2017). *Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice: How to Change the story,* Melbourne, Australia.

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Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity

Violence against women is preventable. To stop this violence before it starts, we need to address the social conditions that drive it – the four gendered drivers. **Rigid gender roles and stereotypes** is one of these drivers, where fixed beliefs and assumptions are held that men and women are naturally suited to different tasks and responsibilities or have personalities, likes, dislikes, desires, interests and abilities that aren't based on their individual personalities but their gender.

What rigid gender roles and stereotypes can sound like

Assuming women will do the cleaning, cooking or administrative tasks at work or community events.

Men as the primary breadwinner; women as the primary home keeper/child carer

Thinking men are 'naturally' more violent and driven by uncontrollable sexual urges[1]

What are the gendered drivers?

The evidence base tells us that gender inequality creates the social conditions for violence against women to occur. There are four key expressions of gender inequality that have been found to predict or drive this violence. To prevent violence against women, we must focus our efforts on addressing these drivers.[2]

1. Condoning of violence against women

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

3. **Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity**

4. Male peer relations that emphasise

Messages received from family, friends, advertising and the media influence people from a young age to take up limited and stereotyped gender roles and identities. For example, the belief that men should be tough and dominant often means that boys and men feel like they shouldn't cry, show emotions or demonstrate abilities to play caring roles; and the belief that women should be nurturing, 'lady-like' or sexually appealing means women and girls often feel pressure to behave in certain ways to meet these expectations. People who strongly believe in these stereotypes are more likely to condone violence; men who hold traditional, hierarchical views about gender roles and relationships are more likely to use violence; and women who strongly adhere to them may be less likely to identify and report violence.[3]

This tip sheet is one of four designed to support people working to prevent violence against women. The tip sheets should be read together as each driver is interrelated and equally significant.

What rigid gender roles and stereotypes look like in daily life

Addressing different levels and contexts in prevention

Looking at how rigid gender roles and stereotypes manifest within different settings where people live, learn, work, socialise and play can help you to plan your approach to addressing them. The more areas across society where limiting constructions of femininity and masculinity are challenged and rejected, the more influence and positive change we will create.

Societal level

Assumptions that men are more practical, rational and decisive than women. This can result in women being underrepresented in leadership or decision making roles because they are perceived as being less capable.

The double standard where men displaying assertiveness and leadership qualities are admired and respected, while women with the same qualities may be considered bossy or cold.

Institutional / systemic level

Distinct and inflexible roles and practices for men and women within many religious institutions.

The lesser value of women's sporting achievements demonstrated through lower professional athletes' salaries, media coverage and sponsorship opportunities.

Organisational / community level

Gendered dress codes and school uniforms that restrict girls' movement and limit their capacity to participate in sports and other activities.

Unequal parental leave policies available for men and women in organisations based on the stereotype and expectation that women will be the main family caregiver.

Individual / relationship level

Messages such as 'man up', 'boys don't cry' and 'don't be such a girl' put pressure on men and boys to hide their fear, sadness or pain. These messages also belittle girls and women.

Asking people in a same-sex relationship who is 'the man' and who is 'the woman'.

How can we change this?

To prevent violence against women we must take action to address the gendered drivers.

Actions that will prevent violence against women:

1. CHALLENGE
condoning of violence against women

2. PROMOTE
women's indepedence and decision-making

3. CHALLENGE
gender stereotypes and roles

4. STRENGTHEN
positive, equal and respectful relationships

To address stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity we must **foster positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles.** This means supporting people to critique and reject rigid gender roles, and to develop personal identities that are not constrained or limited by gender stereotypes.[4]

For example:

- using the arts to raise awareness of gender stereotypes and explore alternative forms of masculinity and femininity

- implementing workplace policies that tackle biases in recruitment and training

- promoting flexible employment conditions for working fathers

- promoting gender equitable parenting and domestic practices

- undertaking activities that promote and encourage women and girls' participation in sport and STEM subjects.

[1] ANROWS, (2018). *Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality. Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)*, Sydney, NSW.

[2] Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, (2015). *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, Melbourne, Australia.

[3] Ibid, p25.

[4] Our Watch, (2017). *Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice: How to Change the story*, Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia.

Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women

Violence against women is preventable. To stop this violence before it starts, we need to address the social conditions that drive it – the four gendered drivers. **Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women** is one of these drivers, where men and boys seek to form relationships and bond with each other by proving their masculinity through actions that are sexist, disrespectful or hostile towards women.

What this driver can sound like

Sexist 'locker room talk' that disrespects women viewed as harmless and normal

Fear of rejection by male peers if they take a stand against their friend's disrespect of women

Believing it's natural for a man to want to appear in control of his partner in front of his male friends
(34% of Australians agree)[1]

When aggression, sexism and disrespect towards women is normalised and important for being 'one of the boys', it creates a culture where violence against women is more likely to be used, supported, excused or ignored.[2]

What are the gendered drivers?

The evidence base tells us that gender inequality creates the social conditions for violence against women to occur. There are four key expressions of gender inequality that have been found to predict or drive this violence. To prevent violence against women, we must focus our efforts on addressing these drivers.[3]

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This tip sheet is one of four designed to support people working to prevent violence against women. The tip sheets should be read together as each driver is interrelated and equally significant.

What male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women can look like in daily life

Addressing different levels and contexts in prevention

Looking at how this driver manifests within different settings where people live, learn, work, socialise and play can help you to plan your approach to addressing it. The more areas across society that support and strengthen equal and respectful relationships between genders, the more influence and positive change we will create.

Societal level

Online communities that are built on demeaning or humiliating women are allowed to remain active due to lack of enforceable standards to shut them down.

All-male sports commentary panels where degrading or demeaning talk about women is laughed off or ignored.

Institutional / systemic level

Sexualised objectification of women used as a marketing strategy, particularly around 'typical male' bonding activities such as sports and gambling.

The belief that sexism, gender discrimination and sexual harassment are inherent parts of male-dominated workplaces and professions (e.g. police, emergency services, construction and mining industries) and that this cannot be changed.

Organisational / community level

College chants, hazing and initiation rituals which allow and promote abuse and disrespect towards women.

The norm that some things are 'okay' to talk about in male peer groups but not acceptable in 'mixed company'. For example, 'locker room' talk in male sporting clubs.

Individual / relationship level

Men telling degrading jokes about women or bragging about their sexual 'conquests' as a way to bond with their male peers.

Boys and young men consuming and sharing hard-core, violent pornography or circulating photos of women without consent.

How can we change this?

To prevent violence against women we must take action to address the gendered drivers.

Actions that will prevent violence against women:

1. CHALLENGE
condoning of violence against women

2. PROMOTE
women's indepedence and decision-making

3. CHALLENGE
gender stereotypes and roles

4. STRENGTHEN
positive, equal and respectful relationships

To address male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women we must take action to **strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys**. This means challenging peer relations between boys and men that involve disrespect or hostility towards women.[4]

For example:

- implementing a whole school approach to respectful relationships education

- implementing organisational policies that send a clear message that gender discrimination and sexual harassment is not tolerated.

- delivering training programs to men and boys encouraging bystander action in highly masculine/male dominated work or peer environments

cat calling

sexist joke

c'mon guys, that's not okay

[1] ANROWS, (2018). *Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality. Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)*, Sydney, NSW.

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