Australians’ attitudes to violence against women and gender equality

Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)

#NCAS
Overview of today’s presentation

1) The 2017 NCAS
2) Key findings
3) Available resources
4) Questions
What is the NCAS?
The National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)

Knowledge and understanding of violence against women
Attitudes towards violence against women
Attitudes towards gender equality
Bystander action

Survey of 17,500 Australians
16 years and over
What is the NCAS?

A ‘whole of population survey’ with a particular interest in attitudes among:

- Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander Australians
- Culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Young people
- People with disabilities

Survey of 17,500 Australians 16 years and over
What is the NCAS?

• Partners: the Social Research Centre (SRC) and The University of Melbourne, RMIT University, UNSW, and VicHealth

• Governance includes an Implementation Group, a Project Advisory Group, an Expert Panel, a Review Panel, and expert advisory groups specialising in work with young people, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities
What is the NCAS?

**Focus**
- Interpersonal violence (sexual assault, partner violence, stalking and sexual harassment)
- Men’s violence against women

**Aims**
- Benchmarking knowledge and attitudes
- Measuring change over time
- Strengthening understanding of the factors associated with attitudes towards violence against women

**Periodic**
Questionnaire framework

Factors
demographic, contextual & attitudinal factors that may be associated with and influence attitudes

Demographic factors
- Gender
- Age
- Household composition
- Education
- Labour force status
- Occupation of respondent and main household income earner
- Postcode
- Self-identified disability
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status
- Country of birth of respondent and their mother and father
- Year of arrival
- Language other than English spoken at home
- English language proficiency

Contextual factors
- Gender make-up of a person’s social networks

Attitudinal factors
- Prejudice Attitudes Construct (PAC) – Prejudice towards people on the basis of ethnicity, Aboriginality, sexuality and disability
- General Violence Construct (GVC) – Support for the use of violence in general

Questionnaire components
made up of questions in themes

Knowledge of violence against women
- Definition / nature of the problem
- Violence & the law
- Patterns & consequences
- Contributing factors
- Knowledge of resources

Composite measures
made from groups of questions to measure an overall concept

Understanding Violence Against Women Scale (UVAWS)

Gender Equality Attitudes Scale (GEAS) and scale themes

Community Attitudes Supportive of Violence Against Women Scale (CASVAWS) and scale themes

Intention to Act Construct (ITAC)

Social norms
Measured by what people think others think or what is expected of them
- Social norms pertaining to violence against women and gender equality

** Not measured in the 2017 NCAS. Subject to future development.
## Approach to analysis in 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Level of Analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What percentage agreed to individual questions? Has this changed over time?</td>
<td>Percentages of agreement for each question for 1995, 2009, 2013 &amp; 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has there been an overall change in understanding and attitudes over time?</td>
<td>Composite measures of understanding and attitudes</td>
</tr>
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<td>Are some concepts more likely to be supported than others?</td>
<td>Composite measures of themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors predict attitudes? (inclusion of the prejudice and general violence measure)</td>
<td>Multivariate models with demographic, contextual and attitudinal factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the gender make-up of a persons social network or workplace impact their attitudes?</td>
<td>New measures of the gender composition of these contexts</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Key findings: Overall

Most Australians:

- Have a good understanding of violence against women
- Do not endorse attitudes supportive of this violence
- Support gender equality

Improvement in 27 of the 36 (or 75%) individual questions asked in 2013 and 2017 and the three composite measures.

However results for a number of questions and themes are cause for concern.

Some important insights on targeting future effort.
Key findings: Change over time - understanding

Changes in understanding of violence against women over time, 2009, 2013, 2017

Mean score (UVAWS)

2009 (n=10,100)  2013 (n=17,514)  2017 (n=17,493)

- All
- Men
- Women

LOWER  HIGHER
Understanding

69*  64*
64*  68*  70  74
59*  60*  66
60
55

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Key findings: Change over time - gender equality

Changes in attitudinal support for gender equality over time, 2009, 2013, 2017

Mean score (GEAS)

- 2009 (n=10,101)
  - All: 61*
  - Men: 64**
  - Women: 64*

- 2013 (n=17,507)
  - All: 61*
  - Men: 64*
  - Women: 66*

- 2017 (n=17,502)
  - All: 66
  - Men: 68
  - Women: 68

LOWER HIGHER
Attitudinal Support
Key findings: Change over time - attitudes to violence against women.

Changes in attitudinal support for violence against women over time, 2009, 2013, 2017

Mean score (CASVAWS)

2009 (n=10,101)  2013 (n=17,513)  2017 (n=17,504)

37*  37*  35  All
36  36  35  Men
35*  35  33  Women

Lower Higher Attitudinal Support
Knowledge component

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire components</th>
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<td>Understanding Violence Against Women Scale (UVAWS)</td>
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<td>• Knowledge of resources</td>
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Knowledge of violence against women

Overall Australian’s understanding of VAW has improved

- 97% recognise **slaps or pushes** and **forced sex** as domestic violence
- 93% recognise that a woman **doesn’t have to resist physically** to indicate non-consent to sex
- 92% recognise **emotional abuse** such as repeated criticism to make a partner feel bad or useless as domestic violence
- 91% recognise **social control** as domestic violence
Knowledge of violence against women

- **1 in 5** do not understand financial control as a form of domestic violence (19%)
- **1 in 3** are unaware that women are more likely to be raped by someone known to them, rather than by a stranger (36%)
- **12%** believe that non-consensual sex in marriage is illegal, and a further **7%** did not know this.
- **2 in 5** would not know where to get outside help about a domestic violence issue (40%)
CONCERNING RESULTS

Knowledge of violence against women

- Fewer are aware that men are more likely than women to use violence in relationships (down 22 percentage points since 1995).
- Fewer are aware that women are more likely to suffer greater physical harm from this violence (down 8 percentage points since 2009).
- Less than half (49%) of Australians’ are aware that levels of fear from domestic violence are worse for women (down 6 percentage points since 2009).
Attitudes to gender equality

Attitudes towards gender equality

- Undermining women’s independence and decision-making in
  - public life
  - private life
- Promoting rigid gender roles, stereotypes and expressions
- Condoning male peer relations involving aggression & disrespect
- Denying gender inequality is a problem

Gender Equality Attitudes Scale (GEAS) and scale themes
Attitudes undermining gender equality

- Most Australians agree that men and women can play a range of roles regardless of gender
- Fewer Australians in 2017 believe that men make better political leaders than women (14% vs 27% in 2013)
- Fewer believe that a woman has to have children to be fulfilled (8% vs 12% in 2013)
- Nearly all Australians reject the idea that it is okay for men to joke with their male friends about being violent towards women (97%)
CONCERNING RESULTS

Attitudes undermining gender equality

• 1 in 3 Australians believe that it’s natural for men to want to appear in control of a partner when in front of his friends (34%)
• 2 in 5 believe that many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia
• 1 in 4 believe that women prefer a man to be in charge of a relationship (25%)
• More than 1 in 10 believe that men generally make better bosses than women (14%)
Overall, Australians are more likely to support gender equality in public life, while still undermining women’s independence in intimate relationships and denying that gender inequality continues to be a problem.
Attitudes to violence against women

Attitudes towards violence against women
- Excusing the perpetrator and holding women responsible
- Minimising violence against women
- Mistrusting women’s reports of violence
- Disregarding the need to gain consent

Community Attitudes Supportive of Violence Against Women Scale (CASVAWS) and scale themes
ENCOURAGING RESULTS

Attitudes supportive of violence against women

- Fewer Australians in 2017 excused domestic violence as either a loss of control (12%), if a violent person shows regret (14%), as the result of childhood abuse (8%), or if the offender is affected by alcohol (5%) than in previous surveys.

- Fewer Australians believe domestic violence is a private matter (12%) or that it’s a woman’s duty to stay in a violent relationship (4%).
CONCERNING RESULTS

Attitudes supportive of violence against women

- 2 in 5 Australians believe that **women make up false reports** of sexual assault in order to punish men (42%)
- Nearly 1 in 4 believe that many **women exaggerate** the problem of male violence (23%)
- 1 in 5 Australians believe **domestic violence is a normal** reaction to stress (20%)
- Nearly 1 in 3 Australians believe that a lot of times, women who say they were raped had **led the man on** and then had regrets (31%)
**Imagining Non-consensual Sex Scenarios**

**Scenario 1:** A married couple have just been at a party. When they go home, the man tries to have sex with his wife, but she pushes him away. 4% agree that the man is justified in his behavior. If the woman had taken him to the bedroom and started kissing him before pushing him away, 15% agree that the man would have been justified in having sex with her anyway.

**Scenario 2:** A man and woman who just met at a party. They get on well and go back to the woman's home. He kisses her and tries to have sex with her, but she pushes him away. 3% agree that the man is justified in his behavior. If the woman had taken him to the bedroom and started kissing him before pushing him away, 13% agree that the man would have been justified in having sex with her anyway.

2017 (n=8,817)
Overall, Australians are more likely to mistrust women’s reports of violence, and disregard the need to gain sexual consent – than they are to minimise violence, or to excuse the perpetrator.
Bystander behaviour

**Bystander action**

When witnessing abuse or disrespect towards women
- Intentions
- Confidence
- Anticipation of social support

**Intention to Act Construct (ITAC)**
Imagine two scenarios...

1. A male friend was **insulting or verbally abusing** a woman he was in a relationship with.
   - **Would you be bothered?**
     - Yes, would be bothered: 98% (76%)
   - **If you were bothered, what would you do?**
     - Would act: 70% (45%)
     - Like to act – but wouldn’t know how: 22% (13%)
     - Feel uncomfortable – not act: 5% (18%)

2. A male friend told a **sexist joke** about women.
   - **If you were to act, do you think you would have the support of your friends?**
     - All or most friends: 69% (55%)
     - Some: 22% (29%)
     - Few, if any: 7% (11%)
People most likely to have either:

- LOWER understanding of violence against women (UVAWS)
- LOWER support for gender equality (GEAS)
- HIGHER attitudinal support for violence against women (CASVAWS)
- LOWER intention to act when confronted with abuse or disrespect towards women (ITAC)

Demographic factors:

- People aged 65 years plus
- Men
- People in highly male dominated occupations
- People with mainly male friends
- People experiencing one or more forms of disadvantage (e.g., low education, living in a disadvantaged area, being unemployed)
### Top 6 predictors of attitudinal support for violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to gender equality (GEAS)</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of violence against women (UVAWS)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudiced attitudes (PAC)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to violence in general (GVC)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Influence of gender equality themes in predicting attitudinal support for violence

- Denying gender inequality is a problem: 40
- Promoting rigid gender roles, stereotypes and expressions: 21
- Undermining women’s independence and decision-making in public life: 14
- Undermining women’s independence and decision-making in private life: 13
- Condoning male peer relations involving aggression and disrespect towards women: 11
Implications

Need to be considered in the context of the strengths and limitations of the survey.

• Cautious optimism but no room for complacency!

• Attitudes are not the only factor and are influenced by wider social conditions. Multi-strategy approach indicated (v. an exclusive focus on attitudes)

• Whole of community approach, although some grounds for targeting
Key implications

• Focus on gender equality as a key determinant of attitudinal support for violence against women, with a particular focus on:
  
  ➢ the concept that ‘gender equality is no longer a problem’ (both most widely held and most strongly linked to attitudes to violence against women)
  
  ➢ adherence to rigid gender roles and expressions (strongly linked to attitudes to violence against women)

• Importance of addressing ‘backlash’

• Importance of a gender transformative approach
Key implications

Potential to improve pro-social bystander behaviour by converting the ‘uncomfortable yet willing’ via:

- reassurance of the likelihood of social support
- Improving skills
- Strengthening attitudes and knowledge
Communicating the #NCAS
Available resources
Reports available

Summary of 2017 NCAS findings

Findings from the 2017 NCAS

2017 NCAS methodology report

2017 NCAS methodology report appendices
Forthcoming reports & resources

2019 Reports
- Reports for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, respondents from non-English speaking backgrounds and young people
- Tables with demographic data for each question
While Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality are improving, there are some disturbing trends.

Many people's knowledge and attitudes to violence against women are not up to date with the evidence, and with women's experiences. It's concerning that a substantial minority believe women's reports of violence, and feel the problem of gender inequality is exaggerated. We need to do more to change these attitudes.

Our attitudes to sexual consent are concerning. We need to focus on the abused, not women's choices.
Stakeholder kit

Includes
- Key messages with suggested tweets
- Frequently asked questions
- NCAS cheat sheet
- Media release

Australians’ attitudes to violence against women and gender equality:
The 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)
1 in 4
Australian women have experienced violence by an intimate partner.

compared to 1 in 13 men.¹

yet

23%
believe that many women exaggerate the problem of male violence

¹ Since the age of 15. Intimate partner includes current and former partner, boyfriend, girlfriend or date. Source: ABS 2017.
Find out more at ncas.anrows.org.au
9 out of 10 women who have been sexually assaulted do not report to the police,¹ and false allegations are rare.²

yet

42% of Australians believe it is common for sexual assault accusations to be used as a way of getting back at men.

Source: ¹ABS 2017, Personal Safety Survey. ²For a review see the 2017 NCAS.
Find out more at ncas.anrows.org.au
Gender inequality continues to be a problem in Australia. Women earn less pay on average than men across all industries.¹

Yet

40% of Australians believe that many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia.

Source: ¹ Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2017. Find out more at ncas.anrows.org.au
Sharing intimate images of a person without their consent is illegal.

Yet

Nearly 1 in 3 Australians believe that if a woman sends a nude image to her partner, then she is partly responsible if he shares it without her permission.

Find out more at ncas.anrows.org.au
2017 NCAS videos

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7ru-k0u54o
Questions?

Contact
violeta.poltioff@anrows.org.au
ncas@anrows.org.au
Leaving an abusive partner can be difficult, and often dangerous.

32% of Australians believe that a female victim who doesn't leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing.

We need to focus on the abusive behaviour, not women's choices.

Find out more at ncas.anrows.org.au
Being controlling is a key risk factor for abuse in relationships.¹

34% of Australians think it’s natural for a man to want to appear in control of his partner in front of his male friends.

Healthy relationships are equal and respectful.

Source:¹ World Health Organisation (2005)
Find out more at ncas.anrows.org.au
There is no excuse for violence.

yet

1 in 5
Australians believe that a lot of what is called domestic violence is really a normal reaction to day-to-day stress and frustration.

Find out more at ncas.anrows.org.au
NEARLY
9 out of 10
women who have been
sexually assaulted knew
their assailant.¹

1 in 3
Australians are unaware that a
woman is more likely to be sexually
assaulted by someone she knows
than by a stranger.

Source: ¹ Most recent incident data, ABS 2017, Personal Safety Survey.
Find out more at ncas.anrows.org.au