

# Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality

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

#NCAS



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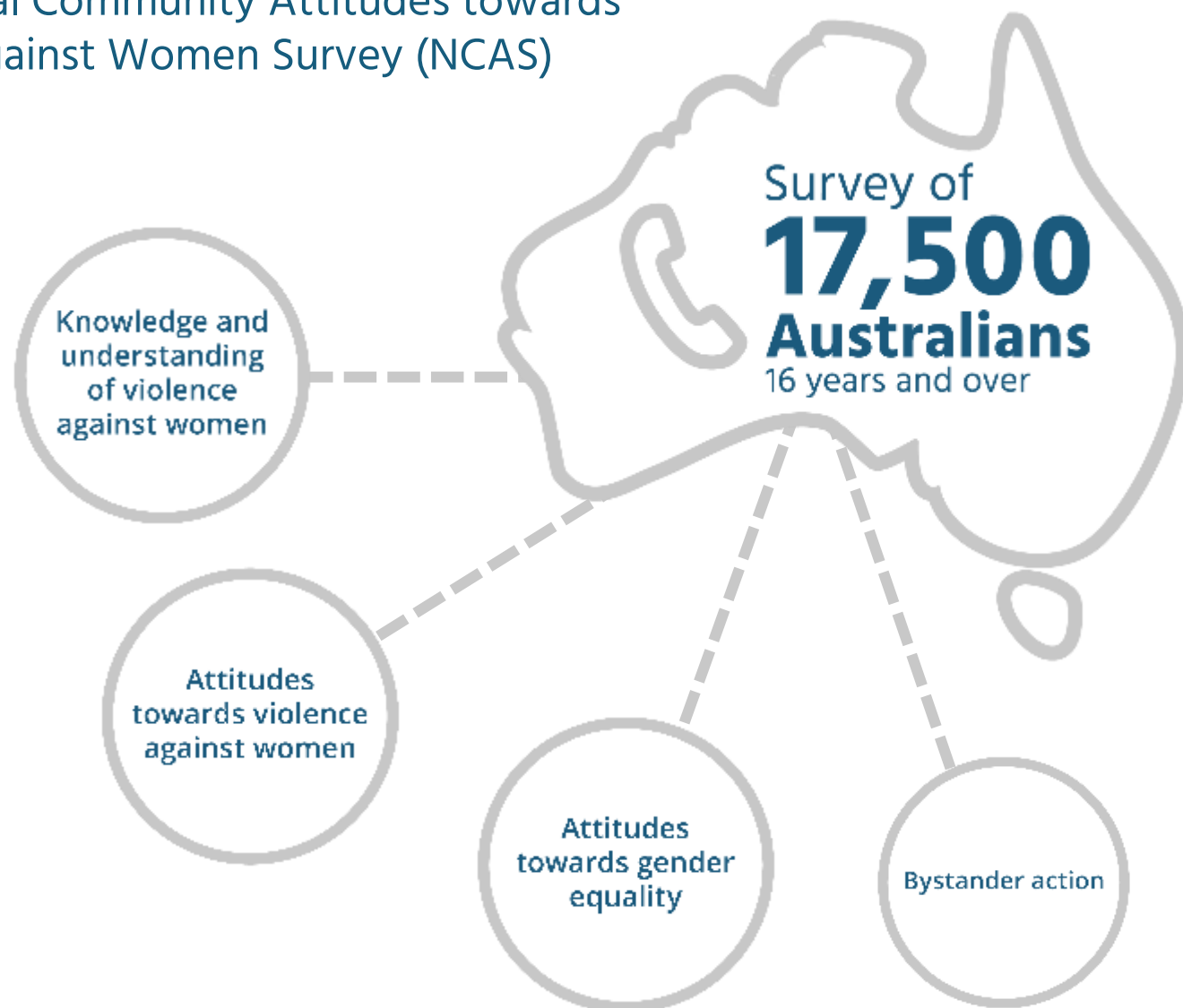
# Overview of today's presentation



- 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)



# 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



# 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

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*to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children*

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# 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

1995, 2009, 2013, 2017 (enabling monitoring)



## Questionnaire framework

<b>Factors</b> <i>demographic, contextual &amp; attitudinal factors that may be associated with and influence attitudes</i>	<b>Questionnaire components</b> <i>made up of questions in themes</i>	<b>Composite measures</b> <i>made from groups of questions to measure an overall concept</i>
<b>Demographic factors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Household composition</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Labour force status</li> <li>• Occupation of respondent and main household income earner</li> <li>• Postcode</li> <li>• Self-identified disability</li> <li>• Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status</li> <li>• Country of birth of respondent and their mother and father</li> <li>• Year of arrival</li> <li>• Language other than English spoken at home</li> <li>• English language proficiency</li> </ul> <b>Contextual factors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender make-up of a person's social networks</li> </ul> <b>Attitudinal factors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prejudice Attitudes Construct (PAC) – Prejudice towards people on the basis of ethnicity, Aboriginality, sexuality and disability</li> <li>• General Violence Construct (GVC) – Support for the use of violence in general</li> </ul>	<b>Knowledge of violence against women</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definition / nature of the problem</li> <li>• Violence &amp; the law</li> <li>• Patterns &amp; consequences</li> <li>• Contributing factors</li> <li>• Knowledge of resources</li> </ul>	Understanding Violence Against Women Scale (UVAWS)
	<b>Attitudes towards gender equality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undermining women's independence and decision-making in               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– public life</li> <li>– private life</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Promoting rigid gender roles, stereotypes and expressions</li> <li>• Condoning male peer relations involving aggression &amp; disrespect</li> <li>• Denying gender inequality is a problem</li> </ul>	Gender Equality Attitudes Scale (GEAS) and scale themes
	<b>Attitudes towards violence against women</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excusing the perpetrator and holding women responsible</li> <li>• Minimising violence against women</li> <li>• Mistrusting women's reports of violence</li> <li>• Disregarding the need to gain consent</li> </ul>	Community Attitudes Supportive of Violence Against Women Scale (CASVAWS) and scale themes
	<b>Bystander action</b> When witnessing abuse or disrespect towards women <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentions</li> <li>• Confidence</li> <li>• Anticipation of social support</li> </ul>	Intention to Act Construct (ITAC)
	<b>Social norms**</b> Measured by what people think others think or what is expected of them <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social norms pertaining to violence against women and gender equality</li> </ul>	

\*\* Not measured in the 2017 NCAS. Subject to future development.

# Approach to analysis in 2017

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



# Key findings: Overall

Most Australians:

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

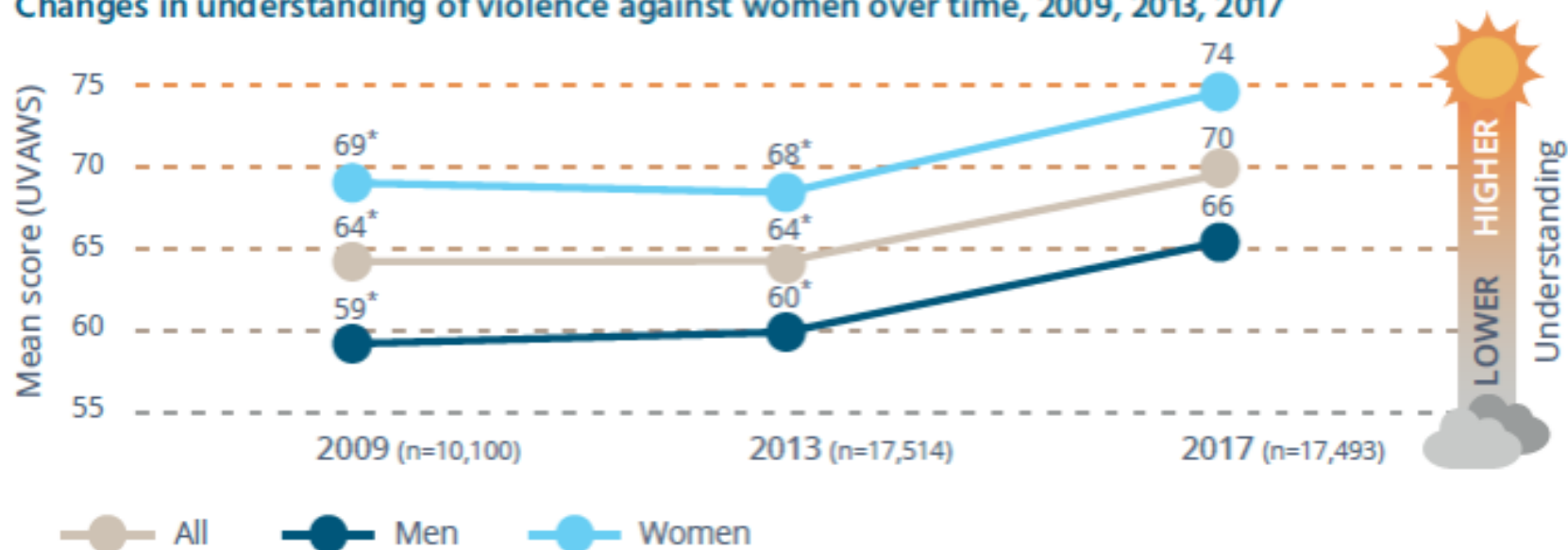
Improvement in 27 of the 36 (or 75%) individual questions asked in 2013 and 2017 and the three composite measures.

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

Some important insights on targeting future effort.

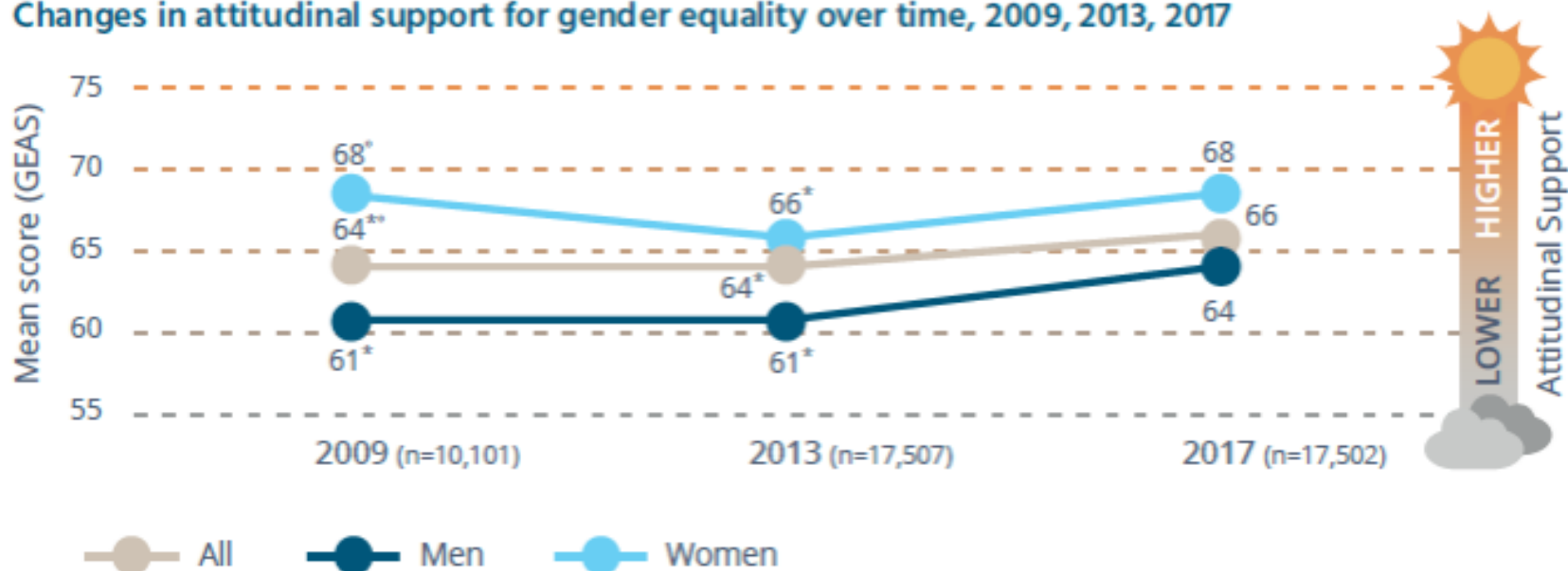
# Key findings: Change over time - understanding

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



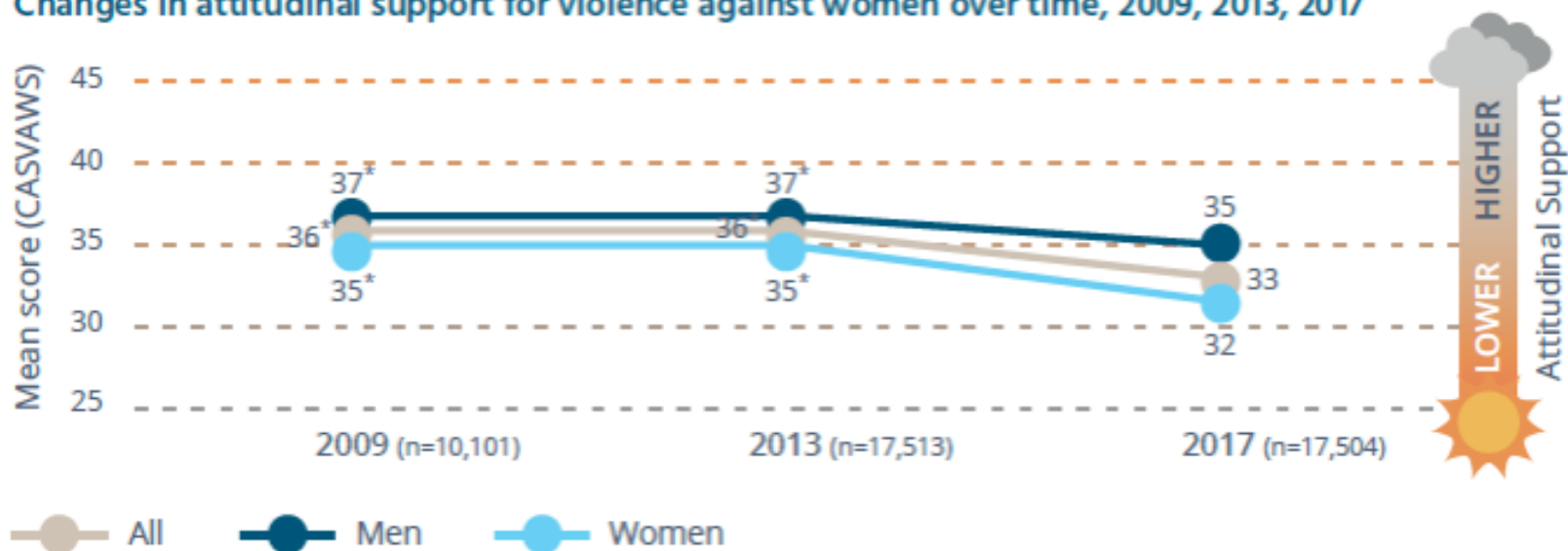
# Key findings: Change over time - gender equality

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



# Key findings: Change over time - attitudes to violence against women.

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



# Knowledge component

## Questionnaire components

*made up of questions in themes*

### Knowledge of violence against women

- Definition / nature of the problem

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- 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)



## ENCOURAGING RESULTS

# 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



## CONCERNING RESULTS

# 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



## ENCOURAGING RESULTS

# 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 **excuse 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%)

## Imagine...



A **married couple** have just been at a party

When they go home the man kisses his wife and tries to have sex with her. She pushes him away but he has sex with her anyway.



A man and woman who **just met** at a party

They get on well. They go back to the woman's home and when they get there he kisses her and tries to have sex with her. She pushes him away but he has sex with her anyway.



Do you agree that the man is justified in his behaviour?



What if **she** had taken him into the bedroom and started kissing him before pushing him away?



Do you agree that the man would have been justified in having sex with her anyway?





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)

# Bystander action

## Imagine two scenarios...

1

A male friend was **insulting or verbally abusing** a woman he was in a relationship with

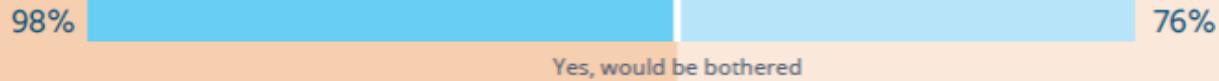


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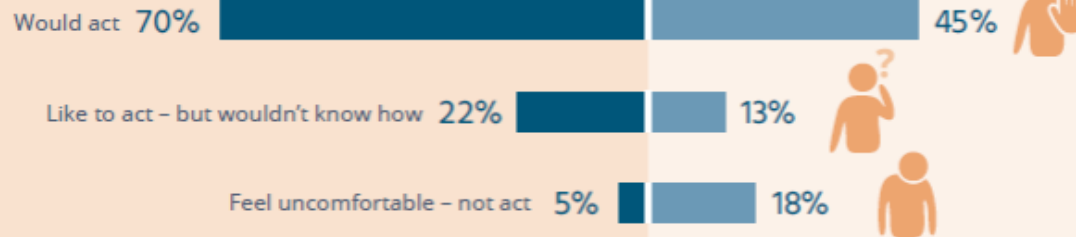
A male friend told a **sexist joke** about women



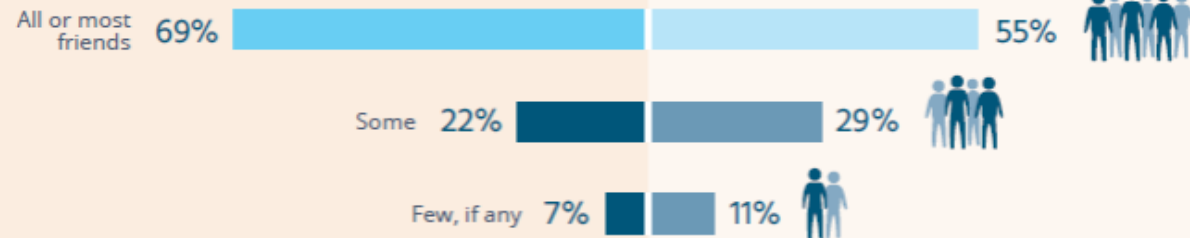
Would you be bothered?



If you were bothered, what would you do?



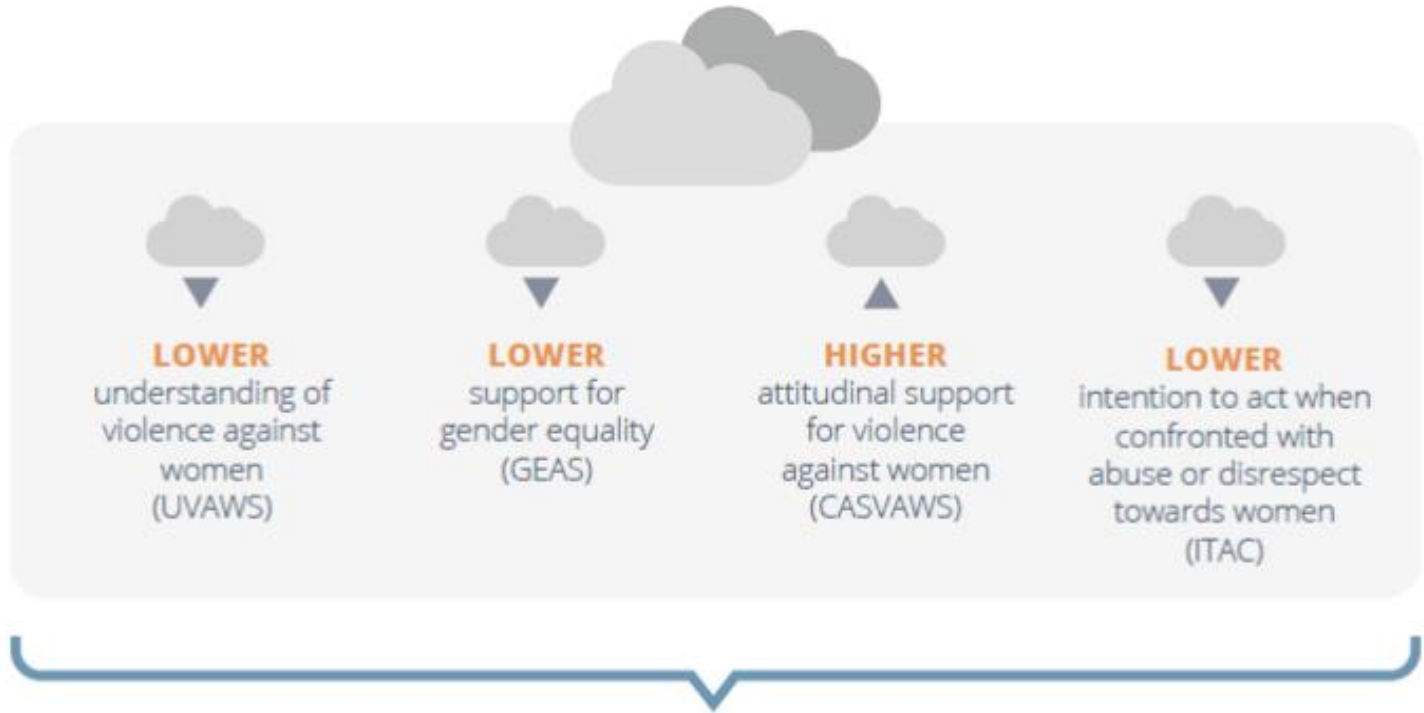
If you were to act, do you think you would have the support of your friends?



# People most likely to have either:

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Demographic factors



Are



People aged 65 years plus



men



people in highly male dominated occupations

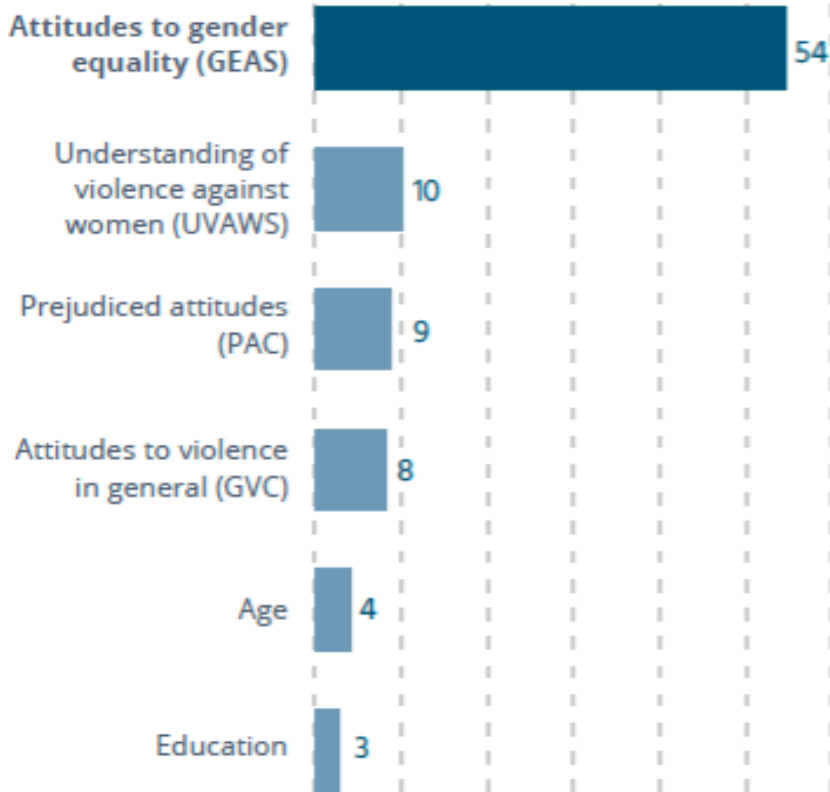


people with mainly male friends

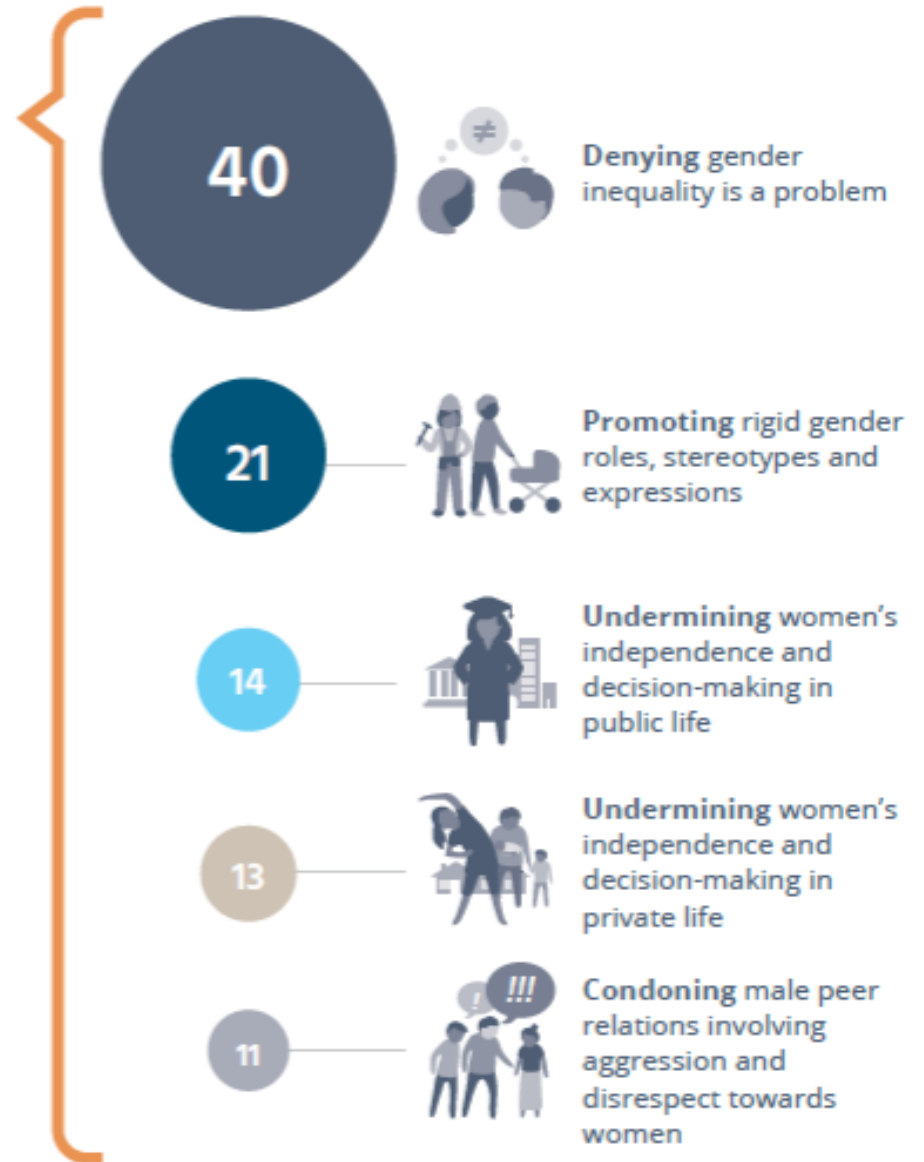


people experiencing one or more forms of disadvantage (e.g. low education, living in a disadvantaged area, being unemployed)

## Top 6 predictors of attitudinal support for violence<sup>i</sup>



## Influence of gender equality themes in predicting attitudinal support for violence<sup>ij</sup>



# 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

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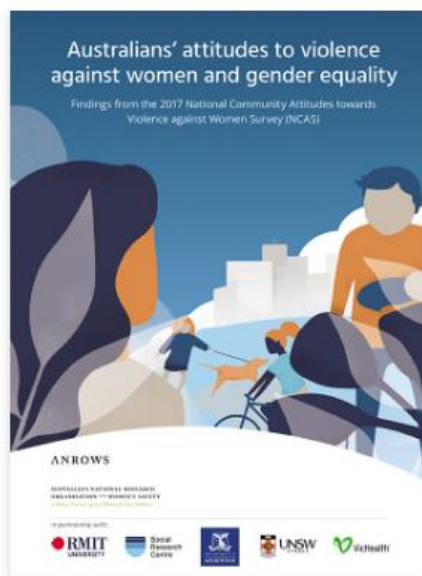


# Reports available



Summary of 2017  
NCAS findings

DOWNLOAD



Findings from the  
2017 NCAS

DOWNLOAD



2017 NCAS  
methodology report

DOWNLOAD



2017 NCAS  
methodology report  
appendices

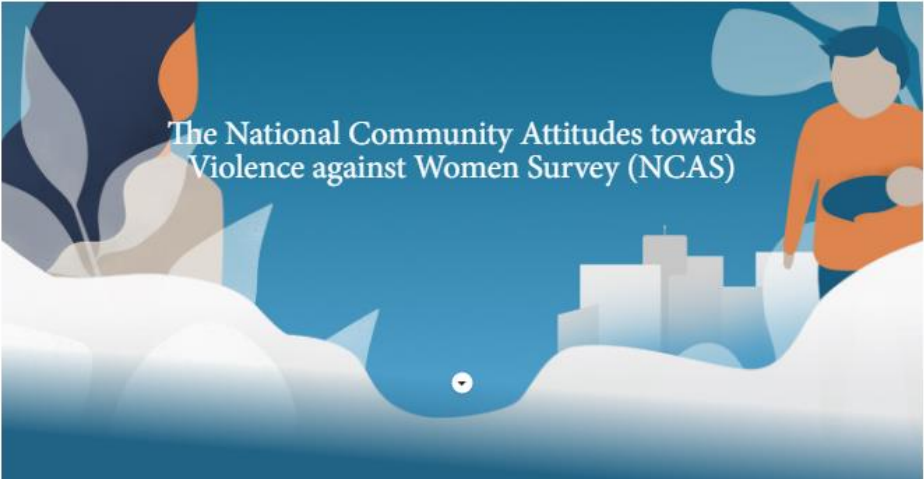
DOWNLOAD

# 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

ncas.anrows.org.au



# The National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)

The 2017 NCAS findings are here!

[GO TO THE SUMMARY](#)

Understanding violence against women

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

About the survey

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



AUSTRALIANS' ATTITUDES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

## 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 out of step with the evidence, and with women's experiences.

It's concerning that a substantial minority mistrust 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 abusive behaviour, not women's choices.

[GO TO THE SUMMARY](#)



# Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality:

The 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)

## Stakeholder kit



### Includes

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

# 1 in 4

Australian women  
have experienced violence  
by an intimate partner<sup>1</sup>

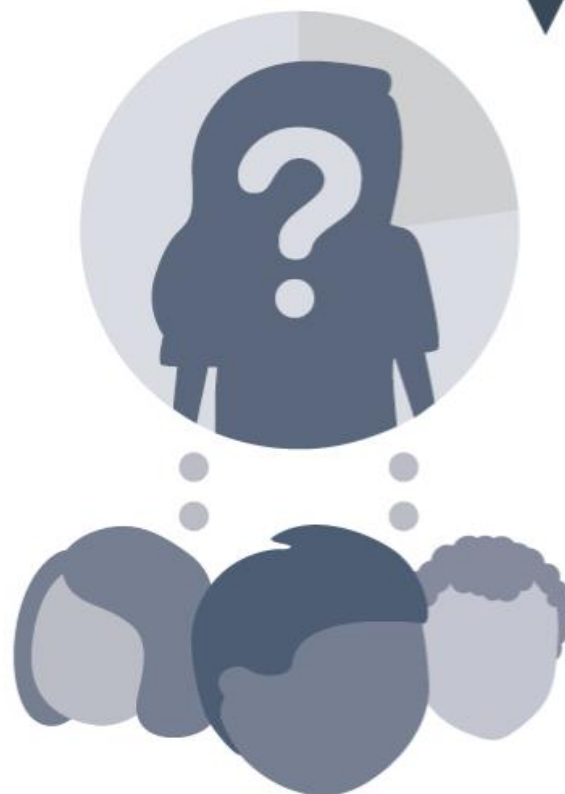


yet

compared to 1 in 13 men.<sup>1</sup>

# 23%

believe that many  
women exaggerate the  
problem of male violence



<sup>1</sup>Since the age of 15. Intimate partner includes current and former partner, boyfriend, girlfriend or date. Source: ABS 2017.

# 9 out of 10

women who have been sexually assaulted do not report to the police,<sup>1</sup> and false allegations are rare.<sup>2</sup>



yet

# 42%

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



Source: <sup>1</sup> ABS 2017, Personal Safety Survey. <sup>2</sup> For a review see the 2017 NCAS. Find out more at [ncas.anrows.org.au](https://ncas.anrows.org.au)

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Gender inequality continues to be a problem in Australia. Women earn less pay on average than men across all industries.<sup>1</sup>



yet

**40%**

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





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.

# 2017 NCAS videos

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



# Questions?

Contact

[violeta.poltioff@anrows.org.au](mailto:violeta.poltioff@anrows.org.au)

[ncas@anrows.org.au](mailto:ncas@anrows.org.au)

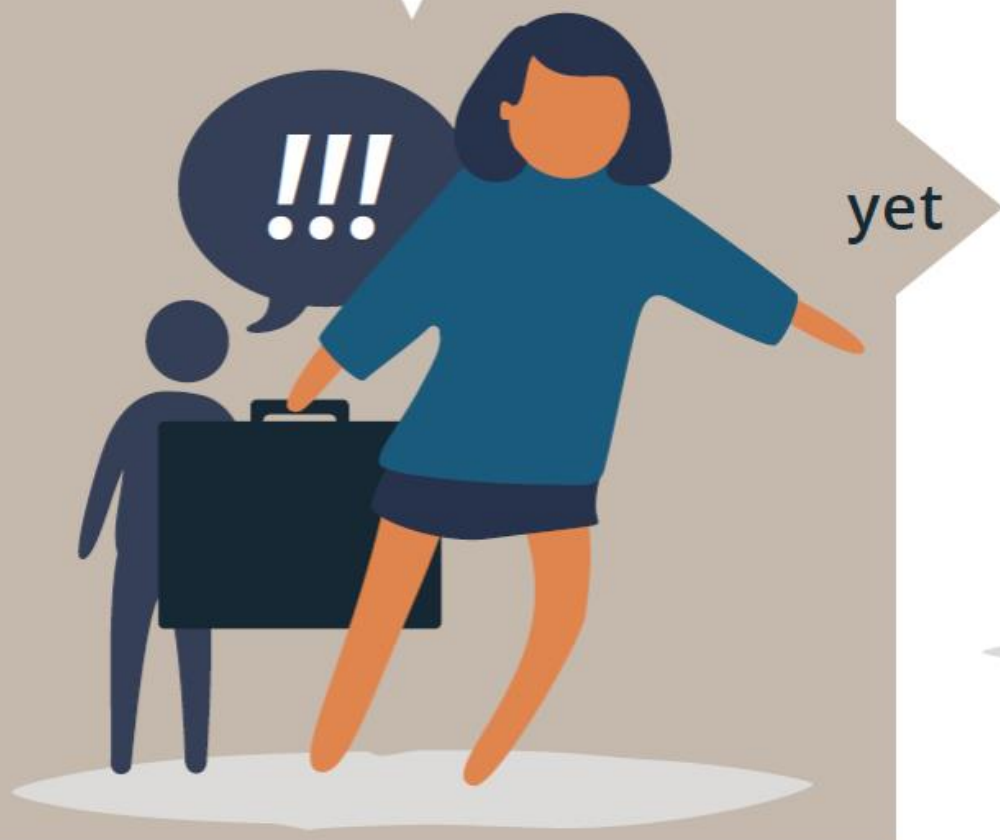
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Leaving an abusive partner can be difficult, and often dangerous.



yet

**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.**

Being controlling is a key risk factor for abuse in relationships.<sup>1</sup>



yet

**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.**

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.



NEARLY

**9 out of 10**

women who have been sexually assaulted knew their assailant.<sup>1</sup>



yet

**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: <sup>1</sup> Most recent incident data, ABS 2017, Personal Safety Survey.  
Find out more at [ncas.anrows.org.au](https://ncas.anrows.org.au)

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