

Municipal Association of Victoria Local Government Preventing Violence Against Women and Promoting Gender Equality Survey 2017

Survey Report

May 2018

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Introduction

The 2017 Preventing Violence Against Women (PVAW) and Promoting Gender Equality Survey is the third survey that the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) have conducted on PVAW and gender equality.

Local government play a key leadership role in promoting gender equality and preventing violence against women. As the level of government closest to the community, councils can model change through organisational policies and procedures, and through the vast range of services they deliver.

The survey aims to develop a benchmark of Victorian councils' engagement in the prevention of violence against women and promotion of gender equality, and how council activities and engagement in this space shifts over time. This survey seeks to understand and measure activity in the 2016/2017 financial year. Similar surveys were conducted in 2014 and 2015. The 2017 survey has built on and refined what has previously been collected to provide a picture of where councils are positioned and how this has changed over time.

The survey is designed to be replicated, and to provide insight into the work and priorities of the local government sector as they relate to the prevention of violence against women and the promotion of gender equality.

Survey data is collected across 10 broad themes: participation; leadership and recognition; policy, planning and implementation; service provision and planning; council workforce; funding; resource utilisation; collaboration; events and communication; and the role of the Municipal Association of Victoria.

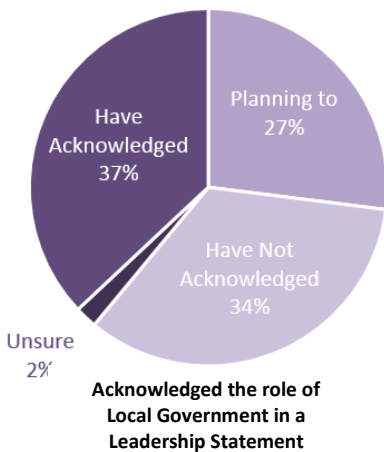
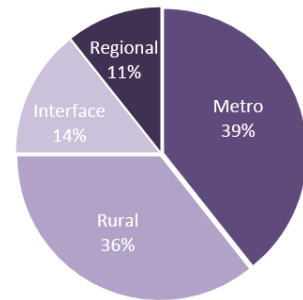
The Municipal Association of Victoria is the legislated peak body for local government in Victoria. We support councils to deliver, partner and lead gender equality and preventing violence against women work in their communities, and to raise the profile of local government's work in this space.

Executive Summary

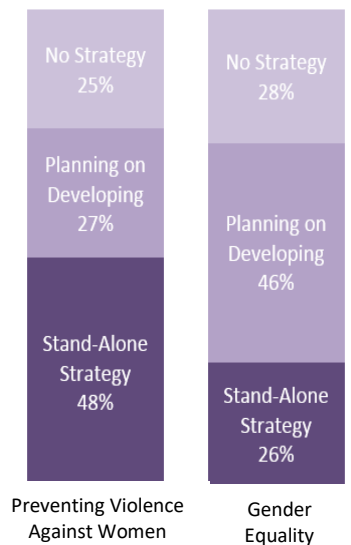
56 of 79 Victorian councils participated in the MAV Preventing Violence Against Women and Promoting Gender Equality Survey 2017. 22 of these were metropolitan councils, 20 were rural, 8 were interface and the 6 were regional councils.

In the past 12 months (2016-2017), 85% of councils reported they had increased their recognition of the issue of violence against women and the role local government can play.

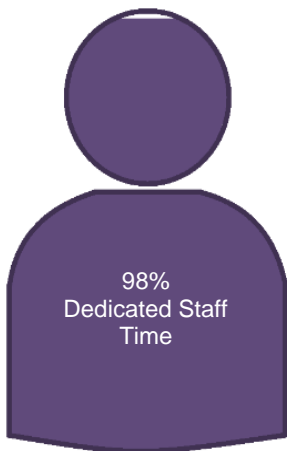
Council Participation



37% of councils surveyed had formally acknowledged the role of the local government level in PVAW and promoting gender equality in a leadership statement. 48% of councils demonstrated that they had a stand-alone PVAW strategy or plan, and 26% that they had a stand-alone gender equality strategy or plan.



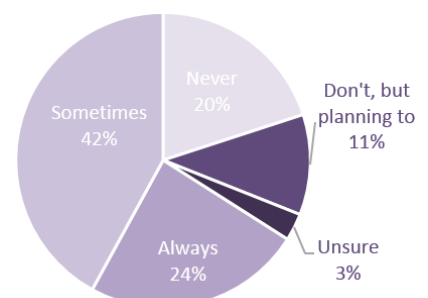
In the 2016/2017 financial year, staff time was dedicated to gender equality and preventing violence against women work in 98% of councils. The average FTE dedicated to this work was 0.5. Separate to staff time, funding was dedicated to preventing violence against women and activities promoting gender equality in 80% of participating councils. Of those who did dedicate funding:



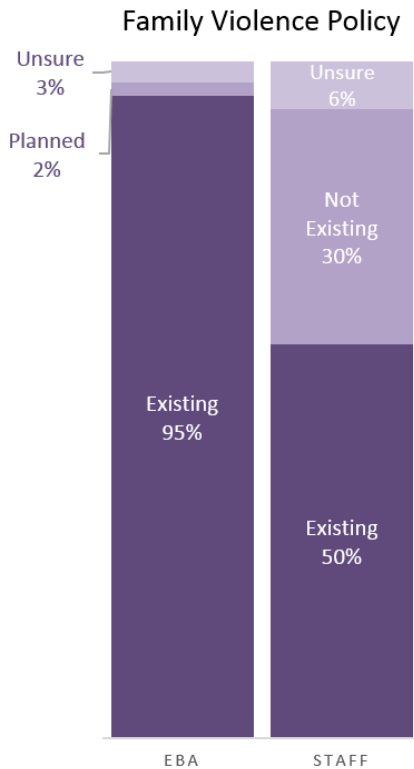
- 32% dedicated over \$20,000 to gender equality and preventing family violence activities
- 27% dedicated \$5,000-10,000 to gender equality and preventing family violence activities
- 20.5% dedicated \$10,000-20,000 to gender equality and preventing family violence activities
- 20.5% dedicated \$0-\$5,000 to gender equality and preventing family violence activities

Separate data for men and women was collected and used to inform policies, service planning, implementation and evaluation by 24% of council respondents. A further 42% indicated that they sometimes collected and used sex disaggregated data.

Collecting Separate Data



13% of councils responded that gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women was referenced in their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander plan. 29% indicated that one or more of these areas were referenced in their council Disability Plan, 27% of councils responded that they were referenced in their Multicultural Plan, and 11% of participants indicated that they were referenced in their Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Plan. It is important to note that it is not a requirement of councils to have any of the above plans, with the exception of Disability Plans, and that there is variance between municipalities. Disability Action Plans are required under Section 38 of the Victorian Disability Act 2006, or to be incorporated into Council Plans. For a more detailed breakdown, please view the analysis and discussion section of this report.



Councils can and have taken a leadership role in addressing family violence and violence against women amongst their workforce. 95% of respondents indicated that their council had a family violence clause included in their EBA, and 50% indicated that their council had a Family Violence Policy for staff. Family violence leave was provided to staff in 91% of participating councils. Based on the responses of survey participants, under this provision an average of 14 days per annum organisation wide have been claimed. There are some considerations to be taken into account in interpreting this data. Some respondents did not give meaningful numerical responses to this survey question, and the question format could have been re-framed around hours of leave taken, and not days. In addition to this, there may have been difficulties around gathering this information and barriers of disclosure that may have impacted employees' uptake of family violence leave.

There were some areas in which respondents identified unmet needs for councils in professional development. 78% of respondents indicated that there was an unmet need in local government for training focused on gender equity, and 70% identified that there was an unmet need for prevention of violence against women training. Training focused on family violence in the workplace was identified as an unmet need by 72% of participants. Councils also indicated that there were unmet needs in forums that were topic specific, and that were focused on councillor development.

91% of respondents indicated that their council had participated in or recognised the Victoria Against Violence campaign in 2017, which encompasses the 16 days of activism against gender violence from 25 November to 10 December.



Activity Shift: the evolution of prevention of violence against women work in local government

This survey aims to benchmark Victorian councils' engagement in the prevention of violence against women and promotion of gender equality for the 2016/2017 financial year.

Similar surveys were conducted in 2014, covering the 2013/2014 financial year, and 2015, covering the 2014/2015 financial year. The 2017 survey builds on and refines what has previously been collected to provide a picture of where councils are positioned and how councils have shifted on gender equality and prevention of family violence and prevention of violence against women activity.

While some questions have altered over time in response to emerging trends and concerns for local government, many have remained the same, providing a point of comparison to prior surveys. A brief snapshot of changes over time has been given. For more detailed comparisons, or for access to shifts in data over time in a specific area or pertaining to a particular question, please contact the MAV.

Council participation in the Preventing Violence Against Women and Promoting Gender Equality Survey peaked in 2015, when 66 of the 79 Victorian councils completed the survey. In 2014, 47 councils completed the survey and in 2017 59 councils completed the survey.

Recognition of the issue of violence against women in the 12 months preceding the survey has steadily increased each year. In 2017, 85% of respondents indicated that their councils had increased recognition of the issue of violence against women and the role they could play in prevention. This represents a 7% increase from the 2015 survey, and a 11% increase on the 2014 survey.

In 2017, 48% of respondents indicated that their council had a stand-alone prevention of violence against women plan or strategy. This represents a 13% increase from both 2014 and 2015, where 35% of councils each year indicated that they had a PVAW plan or strategy.

The rates of councils that have indicated in MAV surveys that they have a standalone gender equity or equality strategy has fluctuated over the 4 year period. In 2017, 26% of respondents identified having a standalone gender equality strategy or plan. This represented a decrease from 2015 data, which indicated that 27% of councils had a gender equity or equality strategy or plan. Fluctuation may be a result of a decrease in overall participation rates in the survey between 2015 and 2017. In 2014, 16% of councils identified having a gender equity or equality strategy or plan in place.

The percentage of respondents who indicated that their council has a Family Violence Policy for staff has also increased each year. In 2017, 50% of participating councils indicated that their council had a Family Violence Policy, an 8% increase from 2015 data and a 22% increase from 2014 data.

In the 2014 and 2015 iterations of the survey, councils were asked to identify if they participated in or held activities on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25 November, also known as White Ribbon Day. In 2013, 95% of participating councils had participated in or held activities on this day. In 2014 this percentage decreased to 80%. In 2015 and 2017, councils were asked whether or not they participated in or held activities during the 16 Days of Activism that spans the Victoria Against Violence Campaign and begins on 25 November. In 2017, 91% of respondents indicated that their councils had participated in the 16 Days, a significant increase from the 34% who identified that their councils had done this in 2015.

Analysis and Discussion

Participation

56 Victorian councils participated in the MAV's Preventing Violence and Promoting Gender Equality Survey in 2017. Of these participating councils, 22 identified as metropolitan councils, 20 as rural councils, 8 as interface councils and 6 as regional city councils.

All data and analysis drawn from the survey is representative of these participating councils only. Survey questions were not compulsory, and survey data is indicative only of responses received. It is important to note, therefore, that while some inferences can be made and that the survey results contribute to building a valuable evidence base, they are not necessarily indicative of the entire state.

Leadership/Recognition

85% of respondents indicated that their council had increased its recognition of the issue of violence against women and the role it can play in prevention in the past 12 months. The remaining 15% indicated that their recognition of the issue, and of the role their council can play has remained about the same. Nobody responded that violence against women was not recognised by their council as an issue.

It is important to note that the 15% of responses that showed council recognition had remained about the same could be indicative in some cases of a strong and longstanding commitment to PVAW and gender equality work. 88% of respondents who indicated that council recognition remained about the same dedicated staff time to prevention of violence against women and gender equality work. 1.5 was the average full time equivalent identified by respondents as dedicated to PVAW and gender equality in these councils, a figure substantially higher than the .5 average full time equivalent identified across all surveyed councils. 75% of respondents that indicated that council recognition remained about the same also dedicated funding that was separate to staff time to PVAW and gender equality activities.

When asked if their council had formally acknowledged the role of the local government level in PVAW and promoting gender equality in a council leadership statement, 37% specified that they had, and a further 27% that they were planning to. 34% had not and 2% were unsure. Respondents were given to opportunity to provide additional examples of leadership through formal acknowledgement in this space. Examples given were primarily around organisational, participation in prevention or equality focused groups and a focus on PVAW within other council plans and strategies. 2 Councils identified White Ribbon Accreditation as an example of leadership through formal acknowledgement.

Policy, Planning and Implementation

Prevention of Violence Against Women and Gender Equity Strategies

Survey results indicated that 48% of councils have a stand-alone prevention of violence against women strategy or plan, with a further 27% indicating that they were planning to develop one. Remaining 25% did not have one.

26% indicated that their council had a stand-alone gender equality strategy or plan and 46% indicated that they were planning on developing one. Remaining 28% did not have one. Some councils indicated that that they had formally acknowledged the role of local government in both gender equality and PVAW plans, with a cross-over 36% of respondents demonstrating that they had both a PVAW and a gender equality strategy or plan in their council.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Disability, Multicultural and LGBTI Plans

Respondents were further asked to identify whether gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women was referenced in their council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan, Disability Plan, Multicultural Plan or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex (LGBTI) Plan.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plans:

- 13% mentioned gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women
- 16% planning on including gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women
- 29% did not include gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women
- 9% unsure if gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women was included
- 33% did not have an Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Plan

Disability Plans:

Under Section 38 of the Victorian Disability Act 2006, councils are required to prepare Disability Action Plans that identify actions to remove barriers for people with disability, are designed to promote inclusion and participation of people with disabilities, and change attitudes and practices which discriminate against people with disabilities. If a council does not address these issues in their Disability Plan, they are required to do so in their Council Plan. As Disability Action Plans are mandatory, it is probable that those councils who indicated that they did not have a disability plan, have incorporated these actions pertaining to people with disability into their Council Plan.

- 29% mentioned gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women
- 20% planning on including gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women
- 37% did not include gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women
- 7% unsure if gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women was included
- 7% did not have a Disability Plan

Multicultural Plans:

- 27% mentioned gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women
- 9% planning on including gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women
- 26% did not include gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women
- 5% unsure if gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women was included
- 33% did not have a Multicultural Plan

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Plans

- 11% mentioned gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women
- 9% planning on including gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women
- 17% did not include gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women
- 2% unsure if gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women was included
- 61% did not have a LGBTI Plan

Council Policies, Service Planning and Implementation

Respondents were asked to identify ways in which preventing violence against women and gender equality had informed council policies, services planning, and implementation in the following areas. Key examples and those that occurred frequently in each area have been selected for this report, some of which have been aggregated.

Aged Services/Positive Ageing

- Training and education around elder abuse
- Promotion of World Elder Abuse Day
- Common Risk Assessment Framework training

Arts and Culture

- Gender audits of artists
- Participation in the One Million Stars to End Violence project and exhibition

Childcare/Kinder

- Training for all staff in identifying and responding to family violence
- Gender audit of toys and equipment
- Referral information and help cards available at all centres

Communications

- Media campaigns run over the 16 Days of Activism
- Consideration to language, gender, and diversity in council communications
- Training for communications staff

Community Grants

- Gender equality and prevention of violence against women inclusion as a category, and part of criteria
- Sex-disaggregated data used in grant applications and assessment

Community Safety

- Prevention of violence against women and women's safety referenced in council Community Safety Plans

Disability Services

- Violence against women and disability training
- Common Risk Assessment Framework training

Emergency Management

- Prevention of Violence Against Women in Emergencies Action Plan
- The impact of family violence in emergencies reflected in Council Emergency Management Plan
- Family violence after natural disaster workshops
- Help cards available at recovery centres

Facility Design

- Gender neutral and accessible change rooms and toilets
- Female friendly sporting facilities
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design utilised

Festivals and Events

- Councils held and participated in International Women's Day events, and White Ribbon events

HR/Staff Induction

- Policies and professional development documents reviewed for gender bias
- Gender pay analysis
- Gender audit of job advertisements
- E-learning module to be introduced

Library Services

- Audit of book collection
- Booklist focused on gender equity developed and distributed, with books purchased for library branches
- Family violence referral resources available in libraries

Local Laws

- Allocation of parking permits to women escaping family violence
- Training around pets and processes for housing pets in family violence situations
- Common Risk Assessment Framework training

Maternal Child Health

- Delivery of Baby Makes 3
- Nurses undertake CRAF training
- Referral pathways in place

Multicultural Services

- Interfaith networks advocate for PVAW and gender equity initiatives
- Family violence resources translated into different languages
- Legal rights training for newly arrived communities, with a focus on education around men's legal obligations and women's legal rights

Procurement

- Contractors are required to sign up to council's code of conduct with prevention
- Gender Equality Statement included in procurement documents

Professional Development

- Councils undertaking Act@Work program
- Training provided to staff around prevention of violence against women, understanding family violence, bystander intervention, male privilege and gender inequality, gender analysis and unconscious bias
- Tracking women in leadership development programs

Sport and Leisure Services

- Programs to increase female participation in sport
- Identified in Strategic Recreation Plan
- Focus on female friendly facilities

Youth Services

- Respectful Relationships
- Range of programs and specifically targeting youth cohorts including support to the Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Service in delivering 'Young Luv', awareness raising around bystander action and respectful relationships, Girls Talk/Guys Talk, SEA, START, Q program, International Women's Day events, training and information on pornography and sexuality

Respondents were asked to describe any other areas of council policy, service planning and implementation that references gender equality, preventing family violence or violence against women. A range of areas were given. Examples from respondents include housing strategies, gaming policies, Access, Equity and Inclusion Strategies, Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans, Women's Charters and sport and recreation strategies. Some councils also indicated that staff had undertaken training in this space, and that referral information had been displayed and disseminated across their municipalities.

Service provider and planner

Sex disaggregated data collection

Local government plays a key role as a service provider and planner for the local community. Survey participants were asked to identify whether their council collected and used separate data for men and women to inform policies, service planning, implementation and evaluation. Of the participating councils, 24% indicated that they did collect and use separate data for men and women, 42% that they sometimes did, and a further 11% that they did not, but were planning to. A further 20% of respondents indicated that they did not collect separate data for men and women, and the remaining 3% respondents were unsure as to whether or not separate data was collected by their council.

Respondents were further asked to provide comments or examples of where and how council utilised sex disaggregated data. Common examples of where separate data were used include in Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans, youth services, maternal child and health services, participation in sport and recreation and internal workforce analysis. Some councils commented that they were confident that sex disaggregated data was used widely across their organisation in planning and service provision, while others indicated that it was used on an ad hoc basis, or was dependent on service area.

Prevention of Violence Against Women in Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans

Prevention of violence against women was identified as a priority in 2013-2017 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans – or in combined MPHWP and Council Plans – by 76% of respondents. The remaining 24% of respondents did not have the prevention of violence against women included in their MPHWP or Council Plans for the 2013-2017 period.

The MAV survey asked respondents to identify whether preventing violence was expected to be a priority in their 2017-2021 MPHWP or combined Council Plans. While survey results indicated that the vast majority of councils (94%) were expecting PVAW to be a priority in their plans, developments in the implementation of recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence will result in all Victorian councils including PVAW in their plans. The Royal Commission into Family Violence was established in February 2015 by the Victorian Government and aimed to acknowledge and address family violence in Victoria, and the consequences and impact it has on communities, families, and individuals. All 227 recommendations of the Commission, finalised in 2016, were committed to by the Victorian Government. Recommendation 94 requires that councils report on proposed measures to reduce family violence and respond to the needs of victims in their Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans or combined Council and MPHWP.

Council workforce

Workforce Dedication to PVAW

98% of survey participants indicated that they had dedicated staff time to preventing family violence and gender equality work in the 2016/17 financial year. While for some councils this work was undertaken via a dedicated position, for the majority prevention of family violence and gender equality work forms a segment of other role(s). The average full time equivalent (FTE) dedicated by councils to this work was 0.5, the median FTE was 0.4 and the mode was represented in the data as 0.2. While this is useful information, it is important to consider when interpreting this data that the survey represents 56 of 79 Victorian councils. It is also important to consider that not all questions were compulsory. This data was further complicated by textual comments in the estimation of FTE, and the difficulty highlighted by some councils in gathering this information where there was no dedicated officer or staff member.

Workforce Policies and Procedures

71% of respondent councils have formally acknowledged the role they can play in preventing violence against women and promoting gender equality throughout their workforce, with a further 20% of councils indicating that they are planning to. At the time of the survey, the remaining 9% of respondent councils indicated that they had not formally acknowledged the role that they can play.

95% of respondents indicated that they had a family violence clause in the enterprise bargaining agreement, with a further 2% planning on introducing a family violence clause. The remaining 3% were either unsure, or did not have this clause in their EBA.

50% of participants in the survey have a family violence policy for staff, and a further 14% are planning to. 30% do not have a family violence policy for staff and the remaining 6% indicated that they were unsure.

Family violence leave was provided to council staff for 98% of respondents, with the remaining 2% indicating that they were not sure if family violence leave was provided at their council. The survey asked respondents to nominate the amount of leave provided in their council due to family violence:

- 37% provided 11-20 days for staff under the family violence leave provision
- 17% provided 6-10 days for staff under the family violence leave provision
- 15% provided 1-5 days for staff under the family violence leave provision
- 15% provided unlimited leave for staff under the family violence leave provision
- A further 12% provided unspecified leave for staff under the family violence leave provision
- 4% provided 21-30 days for staff under the family violence leave provision

Nobody indicated that their council provided over 30 days of leave, excluding those who indicated that unlimited leave was available. Based on the responses of survey participants, under this provision an average of 14 days per annum have been claimed. In interpreting this data, it is important to consider that many respondents were unsure of the amount of leave claimed under this provision in their council, and that only 25 councils gave meaningful numerical responses to this question. The question was also framed around number of days taken, and could have been re-framed around hours taken under this provision. It is also important to consider that there may be barriers to uptake of family violence leave surrounding disclosure issues.

Respondents were asked to identify what workplace activity, structures and processes were in place to improve gender equality and prevent family violence and violence against women among their council's workforce. Some examples given by respondents include organisational training, awareness raising, gender equity ambassadors program, gender audits, and internal working groups.

Funding

80% of respondents indicated that their council had dedicated funding – separate to staff time – to preventing family violence and promoting gender equality activities. The remaining 20% indicated that their council had not dedicated funds to this work. Of those who had dedicated funds:

- 32% dedicated over \$20,000 to preventing family violence and gender equality activities
- 27% dedicated \$5,000-10,000 to preventing family violence and gender equality activities
- 20.5% dedicated \$10,000-20,000 to preventing family violence and gender equality activities
- 20.5% dedicated \$0-\$5,000 to preventing family violence and gender equality activities

For 48% of respondents, this funding represented that resourcing remained about the same as the previous year, while for 41% this funding represented an increase in resources. 7% were unsure as to whether this represented an increase or decrease, and 4% indicated that it was a decrease in resourcing from the previous year. Common reasons given for increases in funding include the Royal Commission into Family Violence and funding applications. Resourcing that remained about the same represents sustained and committed funding from councils to PVAW and gender equality, while the current political context has contributed to an overall spike in funding.

Dedication of resources to prevention and to gender equality initiatives was in some cases the result of grant funding. 78% of participants applied for grant funding in the 12 month period prior to the distribution of the survey. Of these, 63% indicated that their applications had been successful, with the remaining 37% indicating that their applications had been unsuccessful. When interpreting this statistic, it is important to consider the framework of the survey. Respondents were asked only if their council had applied for grant funding, and if this had been successful. It did not include opportunities for councils to indicate, other than in the comments section, how many grants they had applied for and how many of these applications had been successful. In addition to this, the survey did not make a distinction between partner organisations and lead applicants. Interpretation of this data needs to give consideration to this, as a distinction was not made clear in the framing of the questions.

Resource Utilisation

A number of resources are available to councils to utilise in their work on the prevention of violence against women and gender equality work. The MAV survey asked respondents to identify whether their council used a number of resources, and then to indicate how effective these resources were to their work.

MAV resources

88% of respondents indicated that they utilised the MAV website, and 95% indicated that they found it either very useful or useful. 87% of participants responded that they utilised the MAV prevention of violence against women e-news, and 100% of respondents to this question indicated that they found the e-news either very useful or useful (46% very useful; 54% useful).

51% of respondents utilised the MAV Preventing Violence Against Women Leadership Statement, with a further 10% indicating that they are planning to. The remaining 39% of respondents either did not utilise the Leadership Statement, or were unsure. 78% of participants utilised the MAV Preventing Violence Against Women Information Sheets, and a further 12% indicated that they were planning to. The remaining respondents did not utilise the information sheets. 97% found the information sheets to be either very useful or useful, and 3% indicated that they did not find them useful. 69% of councils responded that they had utilised the Ten Ways Local Government Can Advance Gender Equity Fact Sheets. A further 15% were planning to. The remaining 16% either did not utilise the fact sheets or were unsure whether their council did or did not utilise this resource.

Other resources

The Victorian Local Government Women's Charter was utilised by 53% of council respondents. 40% either did not use the Charter or indicated that they were unsure. The remaining 7% were planning on utilising the Charter in the future.

81% of respondents indicated that they utilised their regional women's health service, with 97% indicating that they found this resource either very useful or useful. The Partners in Prevention (PiP) network was utilised by 55% of respondents, with 85% finding it either very useful or useful.

85% of respondents utilised the Our Watch website, with 100% of respondents citing that they found it either very useful (66%) or useful (34%). The ANROWS website was utilised by 49% of respondents, with 100% indicating that they found it either very useful (45%) or useful (55%).

The Victorian State Government family violence website was utilised by 76% of respondents, with 91% indicating that they found the family violence website either very useful (22%) or useful (69%).

The Victorian State Government women website was utilised by 65% of participants, with 89% finding the women website either very useful (15%) or useful (74%).

Councils were also asked to share any other resources that they utilised in their work promoting gender equality and preventing violence against women. Common examples shared by respondents included VicHealth resources, information from White Ribbon, and the work of other councils.

Professional development

Survey respondents were asked to identify unmet needs in regards to training or forums in the following areas: councillor forums; topic specific forums; gender equity training; prevention of violence against women training; and, family violence in the workplace training.

44% of respondents identified an unmet need in councillor forums, and 55% identified an unmet need in topic specific forums. 78% of respondents identified an unmet need for gender equity training, and 70% indicated that there was an unmet need for prevention of violence against women training. Family violence in the workplace training was identified as an unmet need by 72% of council participants.

Respondents who identified topic specific forums or as an unmet need were asked to share suggested topics for forums that would further their work. Responses were varied, and included suggestions of both forums and training specifically targeted at local government; regional and rural forums with a wider geographical scope; bystander action; and, workforce focussed sessions.

Collaboration

54% of survey participants indicated that their council convened a committee or network for gender equality, prevention of violence against women or prevention of family violence. A further 5% responded that they did not currently convene a committee or network in any of these areas, but that they were planning to.

Respondents were also asked if their council participated in any of the following: their local family violence prevention network; prevention of violence against women activities on a regional level; and, if their council participated as a partner in their regional local prevention of violence against women plan.

70% of indicated that their council participated in their local family violence prevention network, with a further 5% indicating that they were planning to. 5% of respondents indicated that there was no family violence prevention network in their region, and a further 5% indicated that they were not aware of any network in their region. 13% did not participate in their local family violence prevention network, and 2% were unsure as to whether their council participated or not.

91% of participant councils were engaged in PVAW activities on a regional level, and 7% were planning to engage in this. 2% of respondents did not participate in PVAW activities on a regional level. 96% indicated that their council was a partner in their regional prevention of violence against women plan, and 2% that their council was planning on becoming a partner.

Events and Communications

Respondents were asked to identify if their council recognised or participated in the Victoria Against Violence Campaign in 2017, which ran from The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25 November to Human Rights Day 10 December. 91% of participants did participate in the Campaign, and the remaining 9% identified that their council had not.

A wide variety of examples were given surrounding council involvement and participation in the Victoria Violence Campaign. White Ribbon related events were common among participant councils, although many activities were undertaken for the duration of the 16 days campaign.

Some examples of participation in the Victoria Against Violence Campaign across the 16 days included social media postings; media publications; coffee cup campaigns; community events; participation in the Walk Against Family Violence; participation in the 'go orange campaign'; and, internal education campaigns and events.

The role of the MAV

The MAV PVAW role

Respondents were asked to identify what they had benefitted from through the MAV Prevention of Violence Against Women role. Options given were: information from newsletters, networks and contacts, information from prevention of violence against women meetings, and information from conversations with the MAV PVAW policy adviser.

88% of participants indicated that they benefitted from information from MAV newsletters. 77% indicated that they benefitted from networks and contacts from the MAV PVAW role. 73% benefitted from information from PVAW meetings. As PVAW meetings are held in the CBD, distance may be a barrier to participation for some regional and rural councils. 70% of councils identified benefitting from information from conversations with the MAV PVAW policy adviser.

Following on from this question, survey respondents were asked to share any relevant examples. Common examples given included: enabling and promoting the sharing of resources and ideas amongst local government; having a central point of reference for gender equality and PVAW work and policy advice; receipt of key updates; and, notifications about grant opportunities.

Advocacy to other levels of government

When asked about the importance of the MAV's role in advocating to and liaising with State and Federal Government on behalf of local government on gender equality and prevention of violence against women issues, the vast majority of respondents indicated that it was very important.

Participants were asked to rank the importance of the MAV's advocacy and liaison role on a scale from 1-5, where 1 was not important at all, 3 was moderately important, and 5 was very important. 78.5% of participants ranked the importance of this role at 5, very important. 12.5% ranked this at 4; 3.5% at 3, moderately important; 3.5% at 2; and 2% at 1, not important at all.

Comments around the importance of this role largely centred around opportunities that the MAV has to advocate for councils as a collective – and to amplify the voice of local government, the capacity of the MAV to be 'heard' across levels of government, the leadership role that the MAV plays, and the capacity for MAV to both participate in and foster partnerships.

MAV Prevention of Violence Against Women Network

75% of survey participants indicated that their council participated in the MAV PVAW Network. The remaining 25% of respondents were asked why they did not participate. In interpreting these statistics, it is important to note that a higher proportion of metropolitan councils for whom the meetings (held in Melbourne CBD) are more accessible responded to the survey. Due to this, the rate of participation suggested by the survey may appear higher. The most common barrier to participation in the network cited was distance, and the logistics of arranging travel from rural and regional councils.

Councils who did participate in the network were asked to rank how effective the coordination of the MAV PVAW network has been; to what extent the network has increased their understanding of how councils can contribute to gender equality and prevention of violence against women efforts; the extent to which the PVAW network has increased their confidence in advocating for greater attention to improving gender equality and the prevention of violence against women; and, the extent to which the network has enhanced their capacity to implement gender equality and prevention of violence against women activities tailored to their local community context. Respondents were asked to rank this on a scale of 1-5, where 5 was very effective, 3 was moderately effective; and 1 was not effective at all.

In response to how effective the coordination of the PVAW network has been, 64% ranked effectiveness 5, very effective; 24% at 4; and, 12% at 3, moderately effective.

Of participants in the MAV PVAW Network who completed the survey, 58% ranked it at 5, very effective, in increasing their understanding of how councils can contribute to gender equality and PVAW efforts; 32% ranked it at 4; and 10% ranked it at 3, moderately effective, in increasing their understanding.

41% of respondents ranked the extent to which the PVAW network had increased their confidence in advocating for greater attention to improving gender equality and the prevention of violence against women at 5, very effective; 37% at 4; and, 22% at 3, moderately effective.

34% of councils ranked the extent to which the PVAW network has enhanced their capacity to implement gender equality and prevention of violence against women activities tailored to their local community context at 5, very effective; 29% at 4; 34% at 3, moderately effective; and 2% at 2.

Peer-to-peer advice

Collaboration is central to preventing violence against women and promoting gender equality work. Networking and the sharing of knowledge and learnings amongst councils in Victoria have developed and enhanced the capacity of the local government sector to embed PVAW and gender equality work. Councils who completed the MAV survey were asked to share any words of wisdom for other councils regarding their prevention of violence against women and promotion of gender equality efforts.

Advice for other councils ranged from the broad to the specific. Some key pieces of advice shared by respondents are listed below:

- Understand the importance of strong and supportive leadership, and foster this from the beginning
- Adjust your language for particular audiences and settings
- Be persistent and just keep going
- Utilise the MAV PVAW Network and policy advisory
- Be patient: it can take time to go from initial conversations and advocacy to action
- Utilise resources from other councils to avoid starting from scratch
- Begin by making quick wins and market your work across the organisation to build its profile
- Remember the progress we have made to date