

# Attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality among people from non-English speaking countries

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



ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH  
ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY  
*to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children*

In partnership with:



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## Acknowledgement of Country

ANROWS acknowledges the traditional owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders past, present and future, and we value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and knowledge.

## Acknowledgement of lived experiences of violence

It is also important to acknowledge the lives and experiences of the women and children affected by domestic violence and sexual assault.

Caution: Some people may find parts of this content confronting or distressing.

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1800 RESPECT – 1800 737 732 and Lifeline – 13 11 14.

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# About this report

This report presents key findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey focusing on results for survey respondents who were born in a country where English is not the main language spoken (referred to as N-MESC)<sup>1</sup>. It draws on other existing research to better understand the findings.

Findings for the community as a whole, young people and Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are explored in other dedicated reports. These, along with further detailed findings and methodological information, can be found on the ANROWS website [www.ncas.anrows.org.au](http://www.ncas.anrows.org.au).

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'culturally and linguistically diverse' (CALD) is commonly used in research, practice and policy discourse to refer to all of Australia's non-Indigenous ethnic groups other than the English-speaking Anglo-Saxon majority. In this report, the term 'people from non-main English-speaking countries' (N-MESC) is used (except when making references to other reports in which the term CALD is used). This is because this is a factually accurate description of the sample formed for most analyses in this report. The rationale for this and its strengths and weaknesses are discussed in the report.

# 1 Executive summary

## Violence against women and N-MESC communities

Intimate partner violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment and stalking are prevalent problems with serious consequences for women, their children and wider society (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), 2014; Webster, 2016). While affecting women across the population, this violence has a particular impact upon women from non-main English-speaking countries (N-MESCs), their families and their communities.

Many factors contribute to violence against women and these arise at the individual, relationship, community, organisational and societal levels. Gender inequality and the disrespect of women increase the likelihood of this violence occurring (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2011; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015). There is evidence that violence against women can be prevented before it occurs by addressing the underlying factors that cause the problem. Prevention action complements, but is separate from, responses after violence has occurred. However, both forms of action are required to reduce the prevalence of violence over time.

Some factors that contribute to violence against women particularly affect people from N-MESCs. Discussed in greater detail later in this report, these include influences encountered by people in their countries of origin and as part of their migration experiences (e.g. war and civil conflict), as well as in the course of their settlement in Australia (e.g. reduced access to community supports). There are also conditions in minority ethnic communities that protect against violence.

Violence affecting women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds has been identified as a particular focus in *The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (the *National Plan*) (COAG, 2011), as well as in *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia* (*Change the story*) (Our Watch, ANROWS & VicHealth, 2015).

Attitudes towards gender inequality and violence against women are among the many factors that contribute to this violence. Indirectly, they can influence the responses of service providers, as well as those of family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues of those affected. Attitudes can also influence perpetrators and women subject to violence. Since attitudes reflect the world around us, measuring these over time is one way to monitor progress towards addressing the problem.

## The NCAS

The National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) is a periodic telephone survey (mobile and landline) of a representative sample. In 2017 more than 17,500 Australians aged 16 years and over, 2926 of whom identified as being born in a N-MESC, were surveyed about their:

- knowledge of violence against women;
- attitudes towards this violence and gender equality; and
- intentions if they were to witness abuse or disrespect towards women.

The NCAS is one of the main mechanisms for measuring progress against the six National Outcomes outlined in the *National Plan* (COAG, 2011). Another is the *Personal Safety Survey* (PSS), which measures experiences of violence (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2017). Previous waves of the NCAS were conducted in 1995, 2009 and 2013.

## The 2017 NCAS

Although as many questions as possible from the 2013 questionnaire were retained, a substantial redevelopment was undertaken for the 2017 NCAS, with key outcomes being:

- the capacity to measure and understand the ways Australians think about violence against women and gender equality, recognising that attitudinal support for these concepts can take many different forms;
- the use of composite measures (made up of groups of questions) to gauge understanding, attitudes and people's intention to act as overall concepts;
- new measures used to increase understanding of factors shaping knowledge, attitudes and intention to act, including measures of (a) the gender composition of a person's social network, (b) prejudice on the basis of disability, sexuality, ethnicity, and Aboriginality, and (c) attitudes towards violence in general; and
- better alignment with the *National Plan* (COAG, 2011) and *Change the story* (Our Watch et al., 2015).



## Box 1-1: Overall findings for the non-main English speaking countries sample

The overall pattern of findings for the N-MESC sample is very similar to that found among the Australian-born sample in that:

- the differences between N-MESC respondents and the Australian-born respondents was small for many of the measures – that is, there was more overlap in responses in both samples than there were differences; and
- the patterns of responses were very similar – for example, attitudes towards violence against women were measured in four themes, and the relative levels of support for attitudes in each of the themes were similar in both samples.

### Encouraging findings

Overall, people born overseas in a N-MESC have good knowledge of violence against women, support gender equality and do not endorse violence against women (Tables 4-1 to 4-3). Most would also be concerned if they witnessed abuse and disrespect of women and would take, or would like to take, action (Figure 4-5).

There are three composite (or overall) measures in the survey, measuring people's understanding that violence against women involves more than physical violence; their attitudes to gender equality, and their attitudes to violence against women.

Understanding of violence against women strengthens and attitudes towards this violence and gender equality become more positive over the length of time spent in Australia, over generations and with improved proficiency in English (Box 4-10 and Figures 4-10 to 4-12).

### Specific areas of concern

Despite the similarities between the N-MESC and Australian-born samples, people from N-MESCs are more likely to have a low level of understanding of violence against women and attitudinal support for gender equality and are more likely to endorse attitudes supportive of violence against women (Figures 4-6 to 4-8). This is particularly the case for men from N-MESCs.

Further, there remain some areas in which knowledge, and attitudes towards gender equality and violence against women are of concern. Most of these are similar to areas of concern in the community as a whole (see discussion in section below).

Of the five themes of gender equality measured, similar to the national sample, people in the N-MESC sample are most likely to support the idea that gender inequality is not a problem in Australia (Figure 4-1). Of the four themes of

attitudinal support for violence against women they are most likely to support the idea that women make claims of violence to gain tactical advantage in their relationships with men (Figure 4-4), again mirroring the pattern in the national sample.

People from N-MESCs are more likely than those born in Australia to excuse violence against women when alcohol is involved (although those doing so are still a minority).

Although people from N-MESCs are no less likely than Australian-born people to feel uncomfortable about verbal abuse and disrespect of women, or to support action being taken, they are significantly less likely to say that they would have the support of their friends if they did so (Figure 4-5, Box 4-8).

Demographic differences in understanding and attitudes in the N-MESC sample are generally small. However, people within the sample that are most likely to have a low level of understanding of violence against women, a low level of support for gender equality and/or a high level of endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women are:

- recent arrivals;
- people with low levels of proficiency in English;
- men;
- people in low-skilled and male-dominated occupations;
- people experiencing disadvantage; and
- people 65 years and older (Box 4-9).

### Predictors of attitudes among people from N-MESCs

The strongest predictors of attitudes supportive of violence against women among people from N-MESCs are shown in Figures 4-13a and 4-13b and include:

- having attitudes that endorse gender inequality. The strongest predictor among the five themes of gender equality measured in the survey was the theme of 'denying gender equality is a problem';
- having a low level of understanding of violence against women;
- holding prejudicial attitudes towards others on the basis of their disability, ethnicity, Aboriginality or sexual orientation; and
- lower English-language proficiency.

## Implications for policy and practice

Attitudes are one way to measure progress in addressing the factors leading to violence against women. Results for the community as a whole (Webster et al., 2018a) show that there have been positive changes in the three composite measures of understanding of violence against women, attitudes to gender equality and attitudes to violence against women since 2013. This suggests that Australia is 'on track' to achieve changes in factors contributing to violence against women.

### A multi-level, multi-strategy approach

A range of factors influence violence against women, not just attitudes. Further, attitudes themselves are shaped by influences in people's day-to-day environments (Pease

& Flood, 2008). Recognising that action to address these influences is needed, expert bodies propose an approach that incorporates multiple strategies, implemented across different sectors and settings and targeted to individuals and families, as well as communities, organisations and society-wide institutions (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015; Heise, 1998; Michau, Horn, Bank, Dutt, & Zimmerman, 2015; Our Watch et al., 2015; VicHealth, 2007; 2011; 2017b; UN Women, 2015; World Health Organization (WHO), 2002). Plans to implement such an approach and support primary prevention of violence against women can be found in the *National Plan* (COAG, 2011) and its successive Action Plans (Australian Department of Social Services, 2014; 2016) and in the *Change the story* framework (Our Watch et al., 2015).

The NCAS can tell us what attitudes people hold, but not why they hold them or why they are changing. However, it does provide some clues. The similarity in findings between the N-MESC and Australian-born samples suggests that similar factors are likely to influence people in both samples. For this reason, many of the implications discussed in the report of the findings for the community as a whole (Webster et al., 2018a) are also likely to be relevant to minority ethnic groups.

Further, attitudes, norms and practices among N-MESC communities are not the only ones requiring attention. The attitudes of the community as whole towards violence against women and towards people in minority ethnic communities also play a key role. The NCAS report for the community as a whole (Webster et al., 2018a) found that people who hold attitudes of prejudice towards others, including on the basis of ethnic difference, are also more likely to hold attitudes supporting violence against women and gender inequality. International research shows that people are more likely to hold attitudes supportive of violence against women from minority ethnic or racial groups than against women who are members of the dominant group (Sokoloff, 2005; 2008). This highlights the importance of tackling these other forms of prejudice in the wider community in efforts to reduce violence against women, especially women in minority ethnic communities.

Knowledge and attitudes are not the only factors to consider when assessing the need to target action. However, findings that show people from N-MESCs have a lower level of understanding, and are more likely to endorse attitudes supportive of, violence against women and gender inequality, suggest that a focus on minority ethnic communities in policies and programs to prevent violence against women is warranted.

## Priority issues

Many of the particular areas of concern identified in the N-MESC sample are similar to those in the community as a whole. When prioritising efforts to strengthen knowledge, attitudes and bystander intentions<sup>2</sup> in minority ethnic communities, there would be benefits in:

- addressing identified gaps in knowledge of violence against women, particularly in relation to help seeking, the gendered nature and dynamics of intimate partner violence, and the greater risk of sexual assault by a known person compared to sexual assault by a stranger;
- addressing all aspects of gender equality with a focus on challenging rigid gender roles and identities and the idea that gender inequality is no longer a problem;
- promoting attitudes that foster a mutually respectful approach to gender relations and challenging the idea that women use claims of violence for tactical advantage;
- addressing barriers to bystander action by informing people that they are likely to be supported by more of their friends than they might think, by strengthening their knowledge and positive attitudes, and by focusing on people who feel uncomfortable and would like to act but say they would not know how;
- addressing excuses for violence against women, particularly excuses involving alcohol; and
- promoting the importance of police and support services for families in which violence reoccurs.

## Focusing on strengths

The NCAS pattern of positive change in knowledge and attitudes over time in Australia, as well as over the generations and increasing proficiency in English, confirms the findings of international research (Bhanot & Senn, 2007; Phinney & Flores, 2002; Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005) and is likely to be due to the process of acculturation in a new society. It is important to note, however, that as well as having norms that support violence against women, the societies from which people migrate can also have other norms that protect against this violence. Further, some norms do not inevitably lead to attitudes supportive of violence against women. Rather, they do so when used as part of a script for justifying, excusing or minimising violence against women (Medros, 2013). An example of this is the greater normative support for collectivism found among some groups. This may manifest in greater collective responsibility for the welfare of others, more collective activity among women and greater respect for elders (Yoshihama, 2009), all of which may protect against violence. However, collectivism may also manifest in pressure upon women to tolerate violence perpetrated against them by men in their communities in the interests of family and community harmony (Yoshihama, 2009). Together, these patterns suggest that the focus in prevention may need to be on addressing the way norms are used as part of a script for either supporting or rejecting violence (Medros, 2013), rather than exclusively on changing norms.

## The importance of settlement support

New arrivals may be exposed to new cultural norms in Australia, which may increase the likelihood of holding violence-supportive attitudes and possibly the risk of violence against women itself (e.g. norms supporting the sexualisation of women in the Australian media and some sporting cultures). This makes it important that prevention efforts among new arrival communities take into account both the norms new arrivals bring with them and those they encounter as they settle in Australia.

New arrivals can be supported in the tasks of settlement so that they accomplish them more quickly and experience fewer barriers. Australian settlement policy reflects the consensus in the literature that this support is best provided in the years immediately following arrival to optimise settlement and ensure that any problems are addressed before they become enduring barriers. Longitudinal research conducted in Australia shows that although migrants and refugees settling in Australia are at higher risk of disadvantage and social and economic exclusion in the years immediately following arrival, over time they tend to do as well, if not better, than the Australian-born population (Community Relations Commission, 2011; Khoo, 2012; Lau et al, 2018). While there are many reasons to provide settlement support, the findings of the NCAS survey suggest that such support may help to strengthen knowledge of, and improve attitudes towards, violence against women. The improvement in attitudes with increasing proficiency in English suggests that support to acquire skills in English is especially important.

2 Noting the strengths and limitations of bystander approaches as discussed in Chapter 4.

## Strengthening support for gender equality is key

The influence that understanding and attitudes towards gender equality have on attitudes towards violence against women suggests that improving understanding and building support for gender equality should be emphasised in prevention. An emphasis on attitudes towards gender equality in prevention work is also indicated in international research that finds that positive change in attitudes towards violence against women among minority ethnic groups is largely driven by changes in attitudes towards gender equality (Bhanot & Senn, 2007; Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005). Benefits are also likely in interventions addressing attitudinal support for violence in general, as well as prejudice towards people on the basis of ethnicity, sexuality, Aboriginality and disability, as these have an influence on attitudes towards violence against women.

## Whole community and targeted approaches

The fact that differences between people based on demographic characteristics are not large suggests the need for prevention strategies that reach minority ethnic communities as a whole. However, the survey findings show grounds for targeting:

- communities with a large proportion of new arrivals and/or people with lower levels of proficiency in English;
- men and boys, noting the gender differences found in this sample – men are also the majority perpetrators of violence and certain male peer group cultures have been implicated (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013). Importantly, the majority of men do not perpetrate violence and are potential allies in violence prevention;
- elders;
- people living in disadvantaged communities; and
- people in labouring, technical trades, and machinery operating and driving occupations – as discussed in the report of findings for the sample as a whole (Webster et al., 2018a), this may reflect the skill level of these occupations or the fact they are male dominated.

Although young people (aged 16-24 years) did not vary in significant ways from people aged 25-64 years in their attitudes to violence against women and gender equality, they were more likely to have a lower level of understanding of violence against women. This pattern was also found in the national sample. A focus on young people, including young people from N-MESCs, is warranted given these findings, along with evidence that violence has a particular impact when occurring at this life cycle stage, and data showing that young women are especially vulnerable to violence.<sup>3</sup>

## Further research

Further research is needed, particularly qualitative research, to better understand attitudes in minority ethnic communities and how change is best supported.

Strengthening pro-social responses of those who witness abuse and disrespect of women, often referred to as 'bystanders', has been identified as a promising strategy to prevent violence (Powell, 2011). A barrier to such action is the lack of confidence that one will have the support of one's friends if taking action (Powell, 2011). There are many possible reasons why people from N-MESCs are less likely to say they would have such support. For example, it may be because people from N-MESCs do not feel secure in their social networks owing to experiences of racism and exclusion. Further qualitative research is required to better understand this finding so that programs can be better tailored to support bystander interventions among minority ethnic communities.

There would also be benefits in strengthening the capacity of the NCAS to understand the impact of attitudes in minority ethnic communities in future surveys through:

- investigating areas of specific relevance to them through tailored questions (as was the case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents in 2017);
- including further questions administered in the whole sample to investigate attitudes towards violence affecting minority ethnic communities; and
- assessing other factors that may correlate with violence against women in minority ethnic communities (e.g. satisfaction with settlement in Australia).



<sup>3</sup> Findings for the NCAS sample of people aged 16-24 and particular issues of concern to young people are discussed in a separate report (Politoff et al., 2019).



## 2 Introduction

### About the NCAS

The National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) tells us:

- about people's understanding of, and attitudes towards, violence against women;
- about attitudes towards gender equality;
- what influences attitudes;
- if there has been a change over time in knowledge or attitudes; and
- whether people are prepared to intervene when witnessing abuse or disrespect towards women.

The 2017 NCAS collected information through mobile and landline telephone interviews with a representative sample of approximately 17,500 Australians aged 16 years and over, 2,926 of whom were born in a N-MESC.

The Australian Department of Social Services (DSS) funds the NCAS as part of *The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (the *National Plan*) (COAG, 2011).

The 2017 NCAS is closely aligned with *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia* (Change the story) (Our Watch, et al., 2015), which was developed to support achievement of the *National Plan* goals. The NCAS also complements the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey (PSS), which asks people about their experiences of violence. The PSS monitors change over time in the prevalence of interpersonal violence in Australia, and is also funded under the *National Plan* (COAG, 2011).

The NCAS is the world's longest-running survey of community attitudes towards violence against women. It was initially developed on behalf of the Australian Government in 1995, drawing on an earlier 1987 survey. The past two national surveys took place in 2009 and 2013 (led by VicHealth). Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) is proud to be leading the 2017 NCAS in collaboration with our research partners.

The NCAS is a resource for anyone wanting to understand and prevent violence against women. It can be used, for example, by educators, policymakers, program planners, researchers, journalists and students.

### Violence against women from N-MESCs – nature, prevalence and impacts

Violence against women is a prevalent problem with significant health, social and economic costs for women and their children, as well as society as a whole (VicHealth, 2014; Webster, 2016). Gender inequality and disrespect of women increases the likelihood of this violence occurring (COAG, 2011; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015).<sup>4</sup>

Violence against women is defined by the United Nations (1993) as:

*any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.*

Although violence against women can take many forms, the NCAS survey focuses on four forms: sexual assault, partner violence, sexual harassment and stalking. This is because they are the most prevalent forms of violence against women in Australia.

Australian governments have made significant efforts to reduce violence against women and promote gender equality and respect. However, approximately one in four Australian women over the age of 18 have experienced intimate partner violence<sup>5</sup> since the age of 15, and one in five have experienced sexual violence (Cox, 2015; ABS, 2017). Also, one in six Australian women have experienced stalking and more than half have experienced sexual harassment (ABS, 2017; Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017; 2018).

Historically, Australia has been a country of migration, settling people from many different countries, speaking many different languages, practising different faiths and identifying with different ethnicities. Migrants in Australia have settled over different periods of time, and have varying migration and settlement experiences (ABS, 2014). As is the case among people from any birthplace, there is also diversity within groups settling in Australia.

The term 'culturally and linguistically diverse' (CALD) is commonly used in research, practice and policy discourse to refer to all of Australia's non-Indigenous ethnic groups other than the English speaking Anglo-Saxon majority (Sawrikar & Katz, 2009). However, this report uses the term 'people from non-main English speaking countries' (N-MESC). This is because this is a factually accurate description of the sample formed for the report. The rationale for this and its strengths and weaknesses are discussed further in Box 2-1.

<sup>4</sup> Exploration of the complex range of factors contributing to violence against women is beyond the scope of this report. A number of reviews of the international evidence have been conducted. For a list of these and factors to consider in drawing on the evidence base, see Webster & Flood (2015).

<sup>5</sup> Includes current and former co-habiting partners and people in dating relationships.



### Domestic violence, partner violence and violence against women

The terminology used to describe violence against women has been the subject of debate in the community and among service providers and researchers. Some people have argued that gender neutral terminology (e.g. domestic violence) should be avoided in favour of terms like 'violence against women' and 'woman abuse', which more accurately describe and 'name' the gendered nature of the problem (see, for example, DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013).

However, many of the questions in the NCAS survey use the term domestic violence because this is the term used when they were first asked nationally in 1995. In this wave of data collection, the terminology of domestic violence was retained in the questions in which it was used in 2013, to enable the 2017 results to be compared with previous NCAS waves. For accuracy, this term is used in this report when referring to the questions or findings.

The terms intimate partner violence and family violence are now commonly used in policy and research. 'Intimate partner violence' is used to distinguish violence occurring between people who are or were in an intimate relationship. 'Family violence' encompasses violence between intimate partners but also includes violence involving other family members (e.g. violence between siblings). The term 'intimate partner violence' is used in this report except when referring to NCAS questions and findings that use the terminology of domestic violence.

The NCAS encompasses four forms of violence: intimate partner violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment and stalking. As these are all forms of violence against women, this terminology is used when referring to two or more of these forms of violence.

### Terminology used to describe diversity

Culture refers to the distinctive patterns of values, beliefs and ways of life of a group of people. This can be on the basis of sharing a common ethnicity or race but can also apply to other shared characteristics such as gender, as well as to other social entities such as organisations (e.g. a football club) or communities or groups with a common interest or shared geographic origin. Culture is a dynamic concept influenced by environmental, historical, political, geographical, linguistic, spiritual and social factors (Paradies et al., 2009).

The term ethnicity describes a social group whose members share a sense of common origins, claim common and distinctive history and destiny, possess one or more dimensions of collective individuality and feel a sense of unique collective identity (Paradies et al., 2009).

Having a 'culture' and an 'ethnicity' is not just true of people born overseas; it applies to all of us.

N-MESC is used in this report because N-MESC is the key indicator on the basis of which data are presented (i.e. it is technically accurate). However, minority ethnic group is used when referring in a general sense to groups with an ethnic identity distinct from the dominant Anglo-Australian identity. This approach (avoiding the use of birthplace) recognises that people from the same birthplace may have different ethnicities.

Cultural diversity or culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) are terms commonly used in Australia to refer to racial and ethnic diversity, despite culture having a much wider meaning beyond race or ethnicity, as indicated in the definition above. For factual accuracy (as indicated above) and to avoid confusion with the term 'culture', these terms are not used in this report. This is important given the particular role played by cultural norms – present in all groups – in the perpetration of, and responses to, violence against women. An exception is when referring to other sources that do use the terms cultural diversity or CALD (e.g. the *National Plan* (COAG, 2011)).

Acculturation is a term used to describe the psychological and socio-cultural processes involved when people from one group adjust to the beliefs and practices of another group. It is commonly used when referring to the processes involved following migration of individuals and groups from one country to another. The term 'acculturation' is often confused with the term 'assimilation'. Assimilation is an approach to acculturation that involves one group (usually the minority) adopting the beliefs of another (usually that of the dominant culture). However, it is only one approach. An alternative approach to acculturation is 'integration', whereby individuals and groups settling into a new country maintain their connections with their culture of origin, while also participating in the dominant culture (Berry, 1997). This approach to acculturation has been found to result in better adaptation than assimilation (Berry, 1997; 2005). While Australian government policies to support settlement and diversity have varied in their emphasis, assimilation was abandoned as a policy goal in the 1970s. Since that time policies have been underpinned by the principles of either integration or multiculturalism (the latter involving embracing diversity, tackling racism and discrimination, and promoting equitable participation of all within a commitment to shared values of respect, equality and freedom) (Australian Government, 2017; Millbank, Phillips & Bohm, 2006).

Settlement is a term commonly used in the Australian policy context to describe the process of adjustment as migrants and new arrivals seek to become oriented, established, integrated and independent in their communities (Australian Department of Social Services, 2006). Similar to 'acculturation', settlement can be supported through different policy approaches.

## Prevalence of violence in different birthplace groups

Research from countries comparable to Australia on the prevalence of violence against women among those born overseas suggests a mixed picture. Some studies indicate a higher prevalence among migrant women than locally born women (Fernbrant et al., 2011), along with a higher rate of mortality (Fernbrant et al., 2016; Prozman, Jansen, Lo Fo Wong, & Lagro-Janssen, 2011), while others show no difference (Vatnar & Bjørkly, 2010) or a lower prevalence (Ahmad, Ali, & Stewart, 2005; Du Mont & Forte, 2012). There is evidence of diversity among overseas-born settlers, with a higher prevalence among women from 'developing' countries than those from 'developed' countries (Brownridge & Halli, 2002) and prevalence increasing with years of settlement in a country (Hyman, Forte, Mont, Romans & Cohen, 2006). The latter, however, may be due to increased awareness of what constitutes violence with years of settlement and/or to greater confidence to disclose adverse experiences, rather than an actual increase in the experience of violence.

There is no Australian data on the prevalence of violence within individual birthplace groups. International research shows marked variation in the prevalence of violence against women between countries (Fulu, Jewkes, Roselli, & Garcia-Moreno, 2013; Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2006; Garcia-Moreno, Watts, Ellsberg, Heise, & Jansen, 2005). In some countries the rates are higher than in Australia and in others they are lower. It is probable that this variation is also reflected in differences in prevalence between birthplace groups in Australia.

The PSS reports the prevalence of violence against women from N-MESCs as an aggregate. It suggests that, overall, women born in N-MESCs are less likely to report having experienced violence since age 15 than those born in Australia (Cox, 2015). However, it is not known whether this reflects actual experience of violence or is due to methodological or situational factors (Mitchell, 2011).

Qualitative research conducted with N-MESC communities in Australia suggests particular issues that need to be taken into account when seeking to prevent violence against women. In particular, women in this group may face greater barriers to seeking safety from violence and this may in turn result in them experiencing more severe and frequent violence (Fisher, 2009; Ghafournia, 2011; Rees & Pease, 2006; Satyen, Piedra, Ranganathan, & Golluccio, 2018; Vaughan et al., 2016; Zannettino, 2012).

## Factors associated with violence against women

Many factors contribute to violence against women (Our Watch et al., 2015). People born in N-MESCs may have a higher level of exposure to some of these factors in their countries of origin, as part of their migration experiences and in the course of their settlement in Australia. In countries of origin and asylum, these factors may include exposure to:

- war and civil conflict, with prior experience of other forms of violence being linked to the likelihood of men perpetrating violence against women (Hecker, Fetz, Ainamani, & Elbert, 2015; Zannettino, 2012) – war and conflict also disrupt systems that may otherwise protect against violence (e.g. strong communities, law enforcement) (Wachter et al., 2018);
- formal and informal norms that support violence against women or fail to protect against it (Gould & Agnich, 2016; Montesanti & Thurston, 2015; Sardinha & Catalán, 2018) – exposure to violence-supportive norms may continue after arrival in Australia due to increased global connectivity

through the internet and the relative ease of international travel (Wahid & Kamaruzzaman, 2018);

- colonising and globalising forces, which may undermine traditional protections against violence and introduce new risk factors (Fulu & Miedema, 2015; Gould & Agnich, 2016; Krishnan, 2018);
- gender inequality, which is present in most societies but varies in form and degree across the globe (Abramsky et al., 2011; Jewkes, 2002; Montesanti & Thurston, 2015); and
- the economic and social transition from a developing to developed economy – such transitions may be associated with increasing empowerment of women, and violence against them may be used to restore traditional gender hierarchies (Fernbrant et al., 2013; Fisher, 2013; Mose & Gillum, 2016; Vaughan et al., 2016; Zannettino, 2012).

In the course of settlement in Australia there may be:

- challenges to traditional gender hierarchies because women may have relatively greater power and freedom – at the same time, settlement may also be associated with a loss of power for men both in the family and in the public world of work (Fisher, 2013; Rees & Pease, 2006; Vaughan et al., 2016; Zannettino, 2012);
- exposure to racism and exclusion (Pittaway, Muli, & Shteir, 2009; Vaughan et al., 2016);
- reduced access to traditional community supports and protections (Vaughan et al., 2016);
- exposure to new expressions of support for gender inequality and violence against women in Australia and associated risk factors (e.g. the increasing presence of pornographic imagery in mainstream media) (Horvath, Alys, Massey, Pina, Scally, & Adler, 2013); and
- for some women, temporary visa status involving limited eligibility for income and other support programs, which increases women's dependency on their partners and their vulnerability to control, abuse and violence (Ghafournia, 2011; Seagrave, 2017; Vaughan et al., 2016).

As noted above, violence against women has a negative impact on the health, wellbeing and economic security of affected women and their children, families and communities. While important across the community, preventing such violence is especially so among N-MESC communities to ensure that violence and its consequences do not impede the successful settlement of individual women and their families or the development of strong minority ethnic communities.

For these reasons, preventing violence against women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds has been identified as a focus in the National Plan (COAG, 2011).

## Attitudes that are violence supportive and undermine gender equality

Attitudes that endorse violence and disrespect of women and gender inequality are outlined in greater detail in Box 2-2. As discussed further in chapter 4, they are among many factors associated with violence against women, and are also important for monitoring progress in preventing the problem.<sup>6</sup>

6 Further evidence of the link between attitudes and violence against women can also be found in the report of findings for the national sample on the ANROWS website.



## What are attitudes supportive of violence against women?

These are attitudes that:



**Excuse the perpetrator and hold women responsible** by shifting responsibility for violence from the perpetrator to the victim by holding women responsible for the violence occurring, or for not preventing it. Attitudes excusing the perpetrator suggest that there are factors that make some men unable to control their behaviour, and that these make the violence excusable.



**Disregard the need to gain consent** by denying the requirement for sexual relations to be based on the presence and ongoing negotiation of consent. These attitudes rationalise men's failure to actively gain consent as a 'natural' aspect of masculinity (e.g. men's uncontrollable sexual drive), or are based on stereotypes of female sexuality (e.g. that women are passive or submissive in sexual matters).



**Minimise violence against women** by denying its seriousness, downplaying the impact on the victim or making the violence and its consequences seem less significant or complex than they really are.



**Mistrust women's reports of violence** by suggesting women lie about or exaggerate reports of violence in order to 'get back at' men or gain tactical advantage in their relationships with men. Such attitudes have been referred to as part of a 'backlash'.

Individuals who hold such attitudes are not necessarily violence prone or would openly condone violence against women. However, when such attitudes are expressed by influential individuals or are held by a large number of people, they can contribute to a culture in which violence is at best not clearly condemned, or at worst, is actively condoned or encouraged.

Attitudes that support violence against women (themes)



## What are attitudes that undermine gender equality?

These are attitudes that:



**Undermine women's independence and decision-making in public life** by suggesting men make better leaders, decision-makers or are more suited to holding positions of power and responsibility.



**Undermine women's independence and decision-making in private life** by agreeing that men should have greater authority to make decisions and control in the private realm of intimate relationships, family life and household affairs.



**Promote rigid gender roles, stereotypes and expressions** by reflecting the idea that men and women are naturally suited to different tasks and responsibilities, and have naturally distinctive – often oppositional – personal characteristics (e.g. 'women are emotional and are therefore better childcarers', while 'men are rational and are therefore better politicians').



**Condone male peer relations involving aggression and disrespect towards women** by accepting it as normal or harmless for men to encourage negative aspects of masculinity among one another (e.g. aggression and not showing one's feelings) and to talk about women in ways that are sexist and disrespectful (e.g. 'locker room talk').



**Deny gender inequality is a problem** through denial that gender inequality, sexism or discrimination against women continue to be problems in society. These attitudes often reflect hostility towards women and are sometimes referred to as reflecting a 'backlash' towards women's advancement.

Attitudes that undermine gender equality (themes)

## Why a focus on attitudes to violence against women and gender equality among Australians born in N-MESCs?

Attitudes held by the wider community are relevant to understanding violence against women born overseas, particularly those from minority ethnic and racial groups. International research shows that people are more likely to hold attitudes supportive of violence against women from minority ethnic or racial groups than against women who are members of the dominant group (Esqueda & Harrison, 2005; Sokoloff, 2005; 2008). Further, people who hold racial and ethnic prejudice have been found to be more likely to also hold attitudes supportive of violence against women (Fiske, 2012; Whitehead & Stokoe, 2015).

The attitudes of the community as a whole have been documented in other NCAS reports, available on the ANROWS website. This summary complements this data by exploring knowledge and attitudes among people who were born in N-MESCs.

People born in N-MESCs are exposed to many of the same factors contributing to negative attitudes towards gender equality and violence against women as people born in Australia. These are documented in the NCAS report of findings for the national sample as a whole (see VicHealth, 2014; Webster et al., 2014; 2018a). In summary, there are three interrelated clusters of influences, including those associated with:

- gender and the way we understand gender roles, relationships and identities (i.e. what it means to be a man or a woman);
- the use of violence as a practice (e.g. the adequacy of legal sanctions against violence, how violence is represented in the media. At an individual level people who have a history of exposure to violence as witness, victim or perpetrator are more likely to hold attitudes supporting violence against women); and
- other conditions that intersect or interact with factors related to gender and violence to shape or magnify their influence (e.g. entrenched social and economic inequality, prejudice and discrimination on the grounds of other attributes, or particular cultural influences).

There is some variability in the nature and extent of these conditions between Australia and N-MESCs, as suggested in assessments of international indicators of gender equality, human and economic development (United Nations Human Development Program, 2018), human rights protections (Cingranelli, Richards, & Clay, 2014), safety and security, and state protection (Kaufman & Kraay, 2017). Prior research also shows variation in attitudes between countries (Gracia, Herrero, & Lila, 2008; Lee et al., 2005; Pierotti, 2013; Pradubmook-Sherer & Sherer, 2011; Vandello et al., 2009; Waltermaurer, 2012; Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005), as well as between people from different birthplace groups in countries of settlement (e.g. Canada, Australia and the United States) (McGregor, 2009; Koo et al., 2012; Phinney & Flores, 2002; Taylor & Mouzos, 2006). There is also evidence that attitudes among people from N-MESC backgrounds change over time in a new country (Phinney & Flores, 2002; Taylor & Mouzos, 2006; VicHealth, 2006).

This means it is important to monitor and understand attitudes of people from N-MESCs. The reasons for focusing on people from N-MESCs, rather than all people born overseas, are discussed in Box 3-1 in the next chapter.



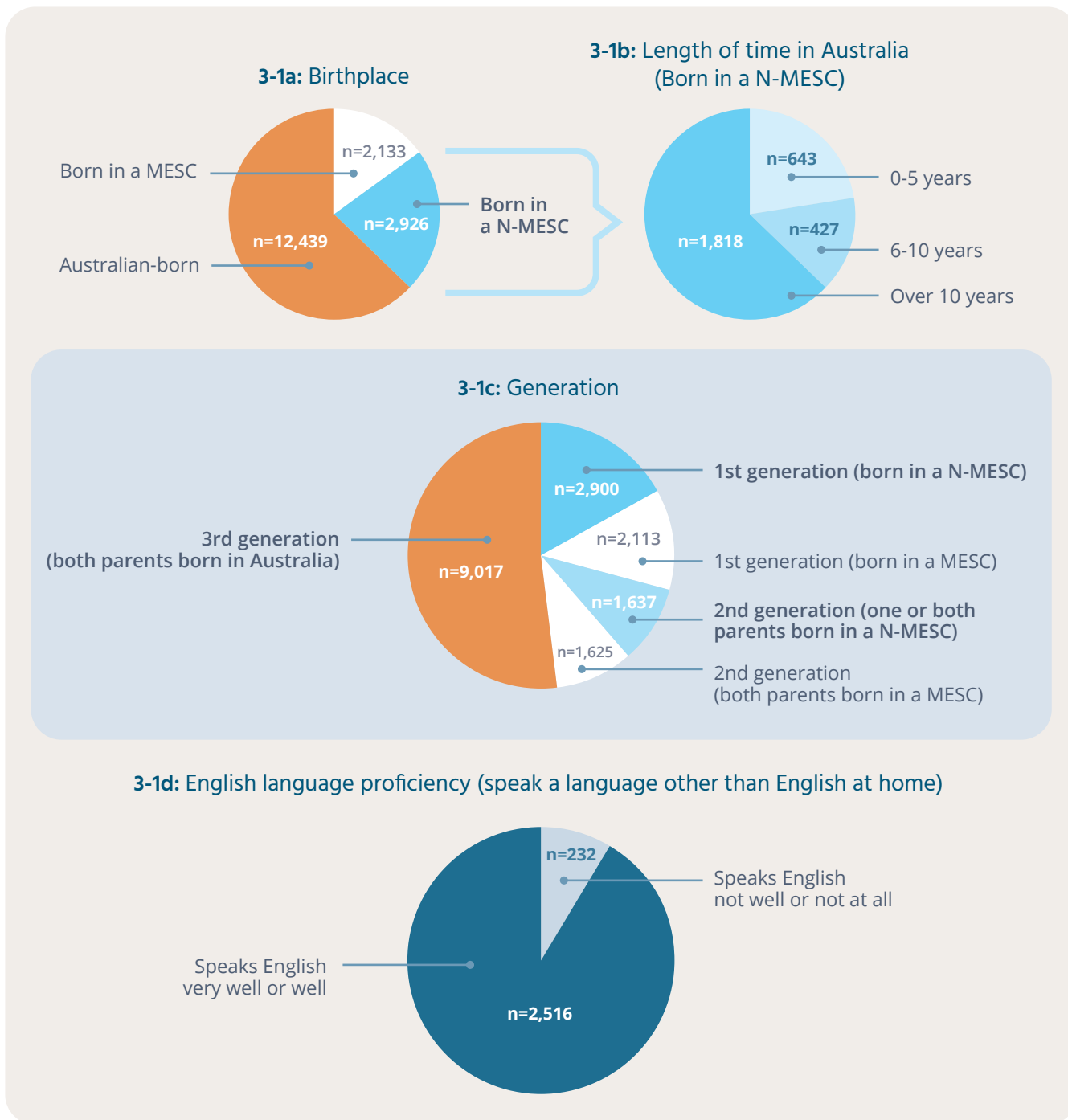
# 3 Methodology

## About the NCAS N-MESC sample

A number of indicators of cultural and linguistic diversity are commonly used in research and data collection in Australia. Among these are country of birth, year of arrival, language proficiency, language spoken at home, religion, ancestry and generation (ABS, 1999). There is also diversity within and between birthplace groups on the basis of ethnicity and culture.

Unfortunately, no single satisfactory indicator of diversity could be used as a basis for analysis in this report; each has its strengths and limitations, and these are discussed in greater detail in Box 3-1. The approach taken in this report is summarised in Figure 3-1(a-d) and explained in further detail following.

**Figure 3-1: Approach to analysing by diversity indicators**



Each of the sample totals above is based on responses to different questions or combinations of questions. Any differences between the Figures in numbers or totals that should be comparable on conceptual grounds, are due to some respondents having not answered the question or questions used to form the sample.

A sample of people who were born overseas in a country in which English is not the main language spoken (referred to as the N-MESC sample) was formed. The N-MESC sample includes all overseas-born people except those born in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States and New Zealand (referred to as main English-speaking countries, or MESC). The N-MESC sample is shown in the blue portion in Figure 3-1a and is an aggregate of many different birthplaces. When a comparison is needed, the N-MESC sample is compared to a sample comprising all people born in Australia.<sup>7</sup> This is shaded in orange in Figure 3-1a. Results for the MESC sample are not shown in this report, for reasons discussed in Box 3-1.

There were 2926 respondents in the 2017 survey identifying as having been born in a N-MESC, including 1519 men and 1405 women. The sample included a cross-section of men and women of different ages and walks of life and from all Australian states and territories.<sup>8</sup>

As in almost all surveys, the number of people in various groups does not match exactly their proportions in the population. There is a risk that this will result in a bias towards the views of a particular group. To make sure that appropriate weight was given to the views of all groups (e.g. men and women, young people and old people, people in different states), a procedure called weighting was applied. The weighting procedure is described in greater detail in the NCAS methodology report (Webster et al., 2018b) and used benchmarks for the general population. This included a weighting for country of birth (Australia, N-MESC and MESC). The N-MESC sample was not separately weighted against the N-MESC population. Rather, the N-MESC sample described in this report was derived from the whole sample after the whole sample had been weighted.

The N-MESC sample is used for most analyses in this report, including an exploration of the influence of various demographic factors (e.g. education level, age). It is also used to explore the influence of **length of time in Australia**. Respondents born overseas are asked what year they first arrived in Australia. Using this data the N-MESC sample is divided into three groups or periods: 0-5 years, 6-10 years and more than 10 years (Figure 3-1b).

Selected analyses are also undertaken by **generation** in Australia. As well as being asked about their own birthplace, each NCAS respondent is also asked about the birthplace of their mother and father. To see if knowledge and attitudes vary across generations, three samples (formed as follows) are compared with one another:

- first generation Australians – people born overseas in a N-MESC (first generation Australians born in a MESC are not included in the analyses);
- second generation Australians – these are people who are themselves born in Australia but have one or more parents born overseas in a N-MESC; and
- third generation Australians – these are people who are themselves born in Australia and have both parents born in Australia (see Figure 3-1c).

All respondents born overseas are asked if they speak a language other than English at home. If they indicate they do, they are then asked how well they speak English. To explore the **influence of proficiency in English**, selected analyses are

presented in which people indicating they speak English 'well' or 'very well' are compared with those indicating they 'do not speak English well' or 'not at all' (Figure 3-1d).

Many factors influence settlement in a new country. However, proficiency in the dominant language and time since arrival are key among these (Blake, McLeod, Verdon & Fuller, 2018; Lee, Nguyen & Tsui, 2011). In Australia, proficiency in English influences access to resources (e.g. mainstream media, social connections outside of one's own language group). In turn these may influence one's knowledge and attitudes (whether positively or negatively).

## Approach to analysing data

The diversity indicators introduced above are helpful for identifying groups that may require more intensive support to engage with national efforts to prevent violence against women. For example, if it is found that a large proportion of people with low proficiency in English and those recently arrived in Australia have poor violence-related knowledge, census data could be reviewed to identify groups with a large proportion of new arrivals and/or low English proficiency in order to develop targeted prevention interventions with those communities. These indicators could be used in addition to other demographic indicators (e.g. occupation, education).

Data for the N-MESC sample are presented for individual questions and statements, as well as for the composite measures described in Box 3-1.

In most analyses findings are given for men and women in the sample, as well as for the sample as a whole. As is the case for all NCAS reporting, differences between groups noted in this report:

- Have been tested for statistical significance at the  $p \leq 0.01$  level. Significance testing makes sure that any differences are not occurring due to chance.<sup>9</sup>
- Have been assessed to make sure that only differences that are both statistically significant and notable in size are reported. This is because a difference between groups can be statistically significant but trivial in size. This was achieved using a Cohen's test of effect size. A Cohen's threshold of 0.2 has been applied. Difference between variables that are both significant and notable in size are denoted in tables and figures using symbols.
- Are based on a base size of at least 30. Results based on base sizes smaller than this are not reported. This is because findings from small numbers have a higher probability of being due to chance. Findings from sample sizes greater than 30 but less than 100 are noted with the  $\Delta$  symbol when given in either the text or a table and should be treated with caution.<sup>10</sup>

Where there are no differences that meet the thresholds for significance and effect presented above, but a trend is apparent in the data, this may be noted.

The exception to the above are data exploring change with years of settlement in Australia at the overall level (measured using the composite measures). Here, significance testing at the  $p \leq 0.05$  level is used and the Cohen's threshold is not applied. This is because attitudes change slowly such that even small changes between groups arriving at different time periods are important.

7 This is a similar approach to that taken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in analysis of the PSS.

8 The difference between the sum of men and women and the total is accounted for by people who did not identify a gender or who did not respond to the question on gender.

9 A threshold for statistical significance of  $p \leq 0.05$  is commonly used in social science research. The level  $p \leq 0.01$  used in this report is a more stringent threshold (i.e. one providing a higher level of certainty that results are not due to chance) and is particularly helpful with large samples where small changes can be significant but not necessarily meaningful.

10 To maximise the number of questions asked in the NCAS 2017, selected questions were asked of only one half or one quarter of the sample. These were mainly in the 'knowledge' and 'bystander' components. This was not a barrier to analysis for the national sample as a whole, given the overall sample size. However, a disadvantage is that sample sizes were insufficient for some questions for some of the smaller groups within the sample. This affected a small number of analyses in the N-MESC sample.



### Box 3-1: The strengths and weaknesses of the approach to analysis in this report

Many factors are identified in prior research as influencing violence against women and attitudes towards violence against women. In selecting an approach to analysis for this report, four considerations were taken into account:

- Are relevant data currently collected in the NCAS (or could they be collected in future waves)?
- Do the data measure a concept of interest accurately?
- Are there methodological barriers to collecting and analysing data by a given indicator? This is a key consideration since the Australian population is made up of people from a diverse range of birthplaces, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and language groups.
- Are there ethical barriers to collecting data on, or analysing by, a given indicator?
- Is the indicator policy relevant? For example, does it help us identify groups requiring more intensive support? Does it provide clues as to what actions are most likely to help improve knowledge and foster positive attitudes?

As indicated above, the sample used as a basis for this report comprises people born in N-MESCs. People from these countries are treated as an aggregate, with analyses then being conducted by key indicators of diversity, as well as by other demographic factors. The diversity indicators can help in identifying groups requiring targeted interventions and provide some insight into the factors likely to support positive change in attitudes.

There is some evidence that attitudes may vary with culture and/or ethnicity or individual country of birth (as indicated above). A key reason for not conducting analysis by such indicators in this report is methodological. While analysis by birthplace may assist with targeting actions to prevent violence against women and in deepening understanding of pre-arrival influences, in the dataset available there would be an insufficient sample size for most groups to enable statistically valid conclusions to be drawn. Also, adequate data to distinguish cultural and ethnic variation are not currently collected in the NCAS. These are complex concepts. Whether it would be possible and appropriate to collect such data requires further investigation. A risk in analysing by birthplace

is that birthplace will be conflated with culture or ethnicity, when, in practice, people can have the same birthplace but identify with different ethnicities or be subject to very different cultural influences.

**As the findings in this report are based on an aggregate of many birthplace groups, they cannot be said to apply to any particular group.** The sample includes people from all N-MESCs, some of which share many of the characteristics of people from MESCs (e.g. high levels of social and economic development).

The 'Australian-born' category also includes people who have one or more parents born overseas and hence includes people who may have been exposed, through their families, to many similar conditions as people born elsewhere. This issue is addressed to some extent through the analysis by generation, in which Australian-born people with parents born in a N-MESC are compared with those whose parents were born in Australia (discussed above and represented in Figure 3-1a-d).

#### Why aren't all overseas-born people included in the sample and the analysis?

People settling in Australia from overseas share in common the experiences of migration, acculturation and settlement. However, these processes are generally less complex and stressful for people settling from countries in which English is the main language spoken. This is because people from these countries speak Australia's official language, share in common the ethnic identity of the dominant group and have been subject to similar cultural influences (e.g. a high level of human and economic development, freedom from war and civil conflict, the rule of law, parliamentary democracy, universal education and policies supporting equality between the sexes). They also face fewer barriers to having their prior education and qualifications recognised in Australia (and therefore can more readily access employment), and are less likely to report being subject to racism and discrimination (Forrest & Dunn, 2006). These similarities between the Australian-born community and people from MESCs are supported in the NCAS data, which show very little difference in findings between these two samples.





## The 2017 NCAS questionnaire

The questionnaire from the 2013 survey was redeveloped for 2017, retaining as many questions as possible to measure changes over time. More detail on survey design and construction of the measures used in analysis in this report can be found in the NCAS methodology report (Webster et al., 2018b) on the ANROWS website. The NCAS Questionnaire Framework (Figure 3-2) provides an overview of the questionnaire.

The core of the 2017 survey (represented in the centre cells in Figure 3-2) involves four **components**.<sup>11</sup> The first is made up of questions designed to find out about people's knowledge of violence against women (25 questions). The second is concerned with attitudes toward gender equality (19 questions), the third with attitudes towards violence against women (35 questions and two scenarios) and the fourth with intentions if witnessing abuse or disrespect towards women (two scenarios).

Each component is further divided into **themes**. These themes reflect different aspects of knowledge and different ways attitudinal support for gender equality and violence against women can be expressed. The themes can be seen in Figure 3-2 and are described in greater detail in Figure 4-1. The themes in the 'Bystander action' component reflect the conditions known to increase the chances that people will take positive action as bystanders to violence and disrespect.<sup>12</sup>

As well as measuring people's responses to individual questions, overall concepts are gauged using 15 **composite measures** (these may be referred to as scales or constructs). These are made up from selected questions using statistical methods (Rasch and factor analysis) to ensure they measure the concept accurately.<sup>13</sup>

The first component in the NCAS Questionnaire Framework, the knowledge component, has one composite measure that gauges people's overall understanding that violence against women extends beyond physical violence and forced sex to also include psychological, social and financial means of control and intimidation.<sup>14</sup> There are composite measures to gauge attitudes towards gender equality and violence against women overall, as well as the themes in each of these components. Drawing on questions from the bystander component ('Bystander action'), there is a composite measure of people's overall intention to take positive action if they witness abuse or disrespect towards women.<sup>15</sup>

Many factors influence knowledge and attitudes. Increasing understanding of these factors is an aim of the NCAS. The factors included in the 2017 NCAS are shown in the far left cells in Figure 3-2. Information is collected from survey participants to measure each factor. This is then used in the analysis of their responses to the questions in the four core survey components. This includes questions about the people, such as their age, occupation, education and whether they have a disability.

Questions of particular relevance to the N-MESC sample are:

- year of arrival in Australia;
- country of birth of the respondent and their parents;
- whether a person speaks a language other than English at home; and
- proficiency in English.

Among the new factors measured in the 2017 NCAS are:

- people's levels of prejudice on the basis of other attributes (sexual orientation, Aboriginality, ethnicity and disability);
- their support for violence in general; and
- the gender composition of their friendship networks and workplaces.

Composite measures are used to measure prejudice and support for violence in general.



11 The fifth component listed in the NCAS Questionnaire Framework, 'Social norms', was not measured in the 2017 NCAS. Measurement of social norms is subject to future development in the NCAS.

12 For reasons outlined in Chapter 4, the NCAS focuses on bystander responses to precursors to/risk factors for physical violence, rather than physical violence itself.

13 Further information on the methodology can be found in the 2017 NCAS methodology report (Webster et al., 2018b).

14 Noting the strengths and limitations of bystander approaches as discussed on page 32.

15 There are strengths and limitations of approaches to improve the responses of bystanders. These are discussed in 'Bystander action' in Chapter 4.



### Box 3-2: How are composite measures used in NCAS?

The strength of a composite measure is that it can measure a complex overall topic or concept (such as support for gender equality) that would be difficult to measure with a single question or even several questions considered separately. They are used in the NCAS to:

- ensure overall understanding and attitudinal support measures are as valid as possible;
- measure change in overall concepts over time;
- find out how widely supported particular attitudinal concepts are held, so that greater focus can be placed on more troubling concepts in prevention work;
- explore factors that are related to knowledge, attitudes and action (e.g. whether a person's age influences whether they are more likely to endorse gender equality overall); and
- explore relationships between concepts (e.g. to find out whether some aspects of attitudes towards gender equality are more strongly related to attitudinal support for violence against women than others).

### Calculating and comparing outcomes for the composite measures

There are two approaches to using the composite measures in this report. In the first approach, each person in the sample is given a score based on their answers to all the questions that make up the composite measure. An average score is then calculated for each group being compared. Scores range from 1 to 100. In the case of the measures of understanding violence against women, attitudes to gender equality and intention to act, a higher score indicates a greater level of understanding, more favourable attitudes towards gender equality and a greater intent to act respectively. In contrast, for the measure of attitudes towards violence against women, a higher score indicates less favourable attitudes.

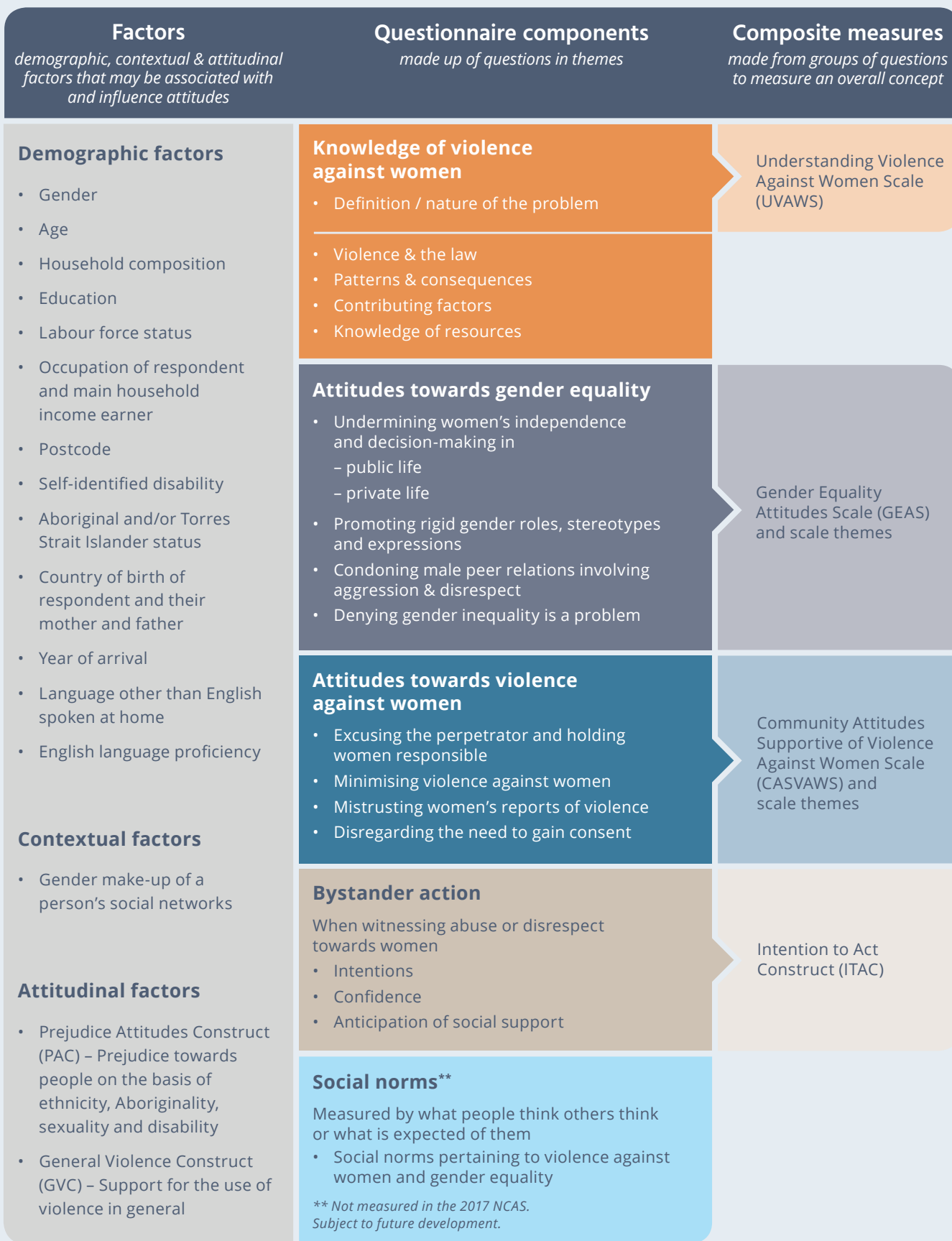
In the second approach the person's score is used to allocate them to one of three categories – high, medium or low understanding (or endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women or gender equality, as the case may

be). The proportion in each category is compared between samples. The larger the proportion of people in the high category for understanding and attitudes to gender equality, the more favourable the result. In contrast, a favourable outcome for the measure of attitudes towards violence against women is to have a relatively smaller proportion of people in the high category. Since most of the variation occurs in the high and low categories, data for the medium category are not given in this report.

It is important to note that where mean scores or the proportions in each category are given, this is not the same as absolute percentages. The approach is used to compare findings (in this case findings between samples or groups within the N-MESC sample) relative to one another, rather than to measure concepts of concern in an absolute sense.



**Figure 3-2: NCAS Questionnaire Framework**



# 4 Findings

## Knowledge of violence against women

Knowledge of violence against women is among the factors influencing attitudes (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2004; Chaiken & Trope, 1999; Fazio, 1990) and is an important resource for affected individuals and those around them to identify and respond constructively to the problem (Carlson & Worden, 2005; Powell, 2011). Knowledge of the law is important in encouraging individuals to report violence when it occurs and can play a role in shaping positive social norms that take violence seriously (Salazar, Baker, Price, & Carlin, 2003).

Awareness of the causes, dynamics, patterns and prevalence of violence against women is important to ensure appropriate responses by and towards those affected by violence (Flood & Pease, 2006; 2009). Also, a well-informed community is better able to help prevent the problem (Carlson & Worden, 2005; McMahon & Baker, 2011; O'Neil & Morgan, 2010).

**Table 4-1: Knowledge of violence against women by birthplace and gender, 2017**

	Australian born	N-MESC		
	Total n=12,439	Total n=2,926	Men n=1,519	Women n=1,405
<b>Understanding that certain behaviours are a form of domestic violence/violence against women (% always, usually or sometimes violence)</b>				
<b>Physical forms of violence</b>				
Slaps or pushes to cause harm or fear	98	94 <sup>†</sup>	92	95
Forces the other partner to have sex**	98	93 <sup>†</sup>	92	93
Tries to scare or control by threatening to hurt other family members**	99	96	95	98
Throws or smashes objects to frighten or threaten**	97	93	92	95
<b>Non-physical forms of violence</b>				
Repeatedly criticises to make partner feel bad or useless <sup>#</sup>	93	89	84 <sup>^</sup>	93
Controls the social life by preventing them from seeing family and friends <sup>#</sup>	92	88	86	92
Controls the other partner by denying them money	82	77	72 <sup>^</sup>	82
Repeatedly keeps track of location, calls or activities through mobile phone or other devices without consent**	86	79	73 <sup>^</sup>	85
Stalking by repeatedly following/watching at home/work	94	83 <sup>†</sup>	80	85
Harassment via repeated emails, text messages	92	85 <sup>†</sup>	85	85
<b>Knowledge of the prevalence of violence against women (% agree)</b>				
Violence against women is common**	75	61 <sup>†</sup>	52 <sup>^</sup>	68
<b>Understanding of sexual violence (% agree)</b>				
If a woman doesn't physically resist –even if protesting verbally – then it isn't really rape**	5	16 <sup>†</sup>	16	17
Many allegations of sexual assault made by women are false**	15	23 <sup>†</sup>	28	18
It a criminal offence for a man to have sex with his wife without her consent**	83	72 <sup>†</sup>	76	68
Women are more likely to be raped by someone they know than by a stranger**	65	61	61	62
<b>Patterns and consequences of partner violence (% agree)</b>				
Men mainly or more often commit acts of domestic violence**	64	60	51 <sup>^</sup>	68
Women are more likely to suffer physical harm from domestic violence**	82	76	78	75
Levels of fear from domestic violence is worse for women**	49	48	46	51
<b>Knowledge of resources (% agree)</b>				
If I needed to get outside advice or support for someone about a domestic violence issue, I would know where to go**	60	60	58	61

\*\* Asked of a quarter of the sample in 2017.

<sup>#</sup> Asked of half the sample in 2017.

<sup>^</sup> Difference between men and women born in a N-MESC is statistically significant,  $p \leq 0.01$  and reaches the 0.2 Cohen's threshold.

<sup>†</sup> Difference between the Australian born and those born in a N-MESC is statistically significant,  $p \leq 0.01$  and reaches the 0.2 Cohen's threshold.



## Box 4-1: Key findings

### Knowledge of violence against women

**Understanding:** Overall, people born overseas in a N-MESC have a good understanding that violence against women includes both physical and non-physical forms of violence, with a majority in the sample accurately recognising each of the behaviours put to them as domestic violence or violence against women.

- Most people from N-MESCs recognise physical behaviours as forms violence of against women (between 93% and 96% depending on the behaviour). They are less likely to recognise non-physical behaviours (between 77% and 89%, again depending on the behaviour).
- The behaviours least likely to be recognised in the N-MESC sample as violence are denying a partner access to money (recognised by 77%) and keeping track of a partner by electronic means without their consent (recognised by 79%).
- Australian-born respondents are more likely than the N-MESC sample to recognise four of the behaviours as violence: slapping and pushing (98% compared with 94%), forced sex (98% compared with 93%), stalking (94% compared with 83%) and harassment by electronic means (92% compared with 85%). A smaller proportion in the N-MESC sample recognise the remaining behaviours; however, the differences between the samples for these behaviours do not meet the thresholds for statistical significance and effect size used in this report.
- There are no differences between men and women from N-MESCs in recognition of physical behaviours. However, women from N-MESCs are more likely than men from N-MESCs to recognise three of the non-physical behaviours – repeatedly criticising a partner (93% compared with 84%), controlling a partner by denying them money (82% compared with 72%) and keeping track of a partner through electronic means without their consent (85% compared with 73%).
- A larger proportion of women than men also recognise the remaining behaviours as violence, although again the differences between men and women do not meet thresholds for statistical significance and effect size.

**Prevalence:** Three in five (61%) of the N-MESC sample agree that violence against women is common, a lower proportion than among Australian-born respondents (75% agree that violence against women is common). While more than two-thirds (68%) of women from N-MESCs agree that violence against women is common, just over half (52%) of N-MESC men do.

**Resources:** As is the case among the Australian-born respondents, only three-fifths (60%) of the N-MESC sample would know where to seek advice and support about a domestic violence matter.

**Sexual violence:** A minority (16%) of the N-MESC sample agrees that 'If a woman doesn't physically resist – even if protesting verbally – then it isn't really rape'; this is more than three times higher than among the Australian-born sample (5%).

Nearly one-quarter (23%) of the N-MESC sample agrees that many allegations of sexual assault are false, higher than among the Australian-born sample (15%). This is contrary to evidence showing that false allegations of sexual assault are rare, in the order of between 1.2 and 10 percent of all reports made to police (Ferguson & Malouff, 2016; Heenan & Murray, 2006; Kelly, 2010; Levitt & the Crown Prosecution Service Equality and Diversity Unit, 2013; Lisak, Gardinier, Nicksa, & Cote, 2010; Lonsway, Cortina & Magley, 2008; Patton & Snyder-Yuly, 2007; Spohn, White, & Tellis, 2014; Weiser, 2017).

A majority of the N-MESC sample recognises that forced sex in a marital relationship is against the law (72%), although this is lower than among the Australian-born sample (83%).

Women are three times more likely to be sexually assaulted by a known person than by a stranger (ABS, 2013a). However, similar to the Australian-born sample, only 61 percent of the N-MESC sample agree that 'Women are more likely to be raped by someone they know than by a stranger'.

**Patterns and consequences:** Research shows that partner violence follows a gendered pattern. Men are more likely than women to perpetrate this violence, while women are more likely than men to be victims (ABS, 2017). Among those who have experienced this violence, women are more likely to suffer physical injury (Belknap & Melton, 2005; Myhill, 2015) and to report feeling fearful than men (ABS, 2017; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2018; Bagshaw, Chung, Council, Lilburn, & Wadham, 2000; Caldwell, Swan, & Woodbrown, 2012; Headey, Scott, & De Vaus, 1999; National Crime Prevention, 2001).

Awareness of these patterns is important because it reflects knowledge of the nature, severity and dynamics of violence itself. The response to intimate partner violence from someone who believes this form of violence tends to be mutual violence between two people with equal power is likely to be very different to someone who understands that a large proportion of intimate partner violence involves unequal, gendered power dynamics. As well as impacting individuals' responses to intimate partner violence, this understanding may influence the level of policy attention and resourcing given to address intimate partner violence affecting women, relative to that affecting men.

The NCAS shows that a majority of the N-MESC sample (60%) agree, consistent with the evidence, that domestic violence is perpetrated by men or mainly by men although men in the sample (51%) are less likely to agree than women (68%). Likewise, a majority (76%) agrees that women are more likely to experience physical harm from domestic violence. However, contrary to the evidence less than half (48%) agrees that levels of fear from domestic violence are worse for women.

No differences between the N-MESC sample and the Australian-born sample on these questions met the thresholds for statistical significance and effect size.

## Attitudes to gender equality among N-MESC respondents

Promoting gender equality is pivotal to reducing violence against women. Gender inequality, and attitudes supporting gender inequality, provide the social conditions in which violence against women is more likely to occur (for a review see Webster & Flood, 2015). This is a position supported by many expert bodies (Michau et al., 2015; UN Women, 2015; WHO, 2010; ) and which underpins the *National Plan* (COAG, 2011) and *Change the story* (Our Watch et al., 2015). Monitoring changes in attitudes to gender equality over time is an important way of tracking the conditions that increase the likelihood of violence against women.

Achieving gender equality is also important for other reasons, including its link to the wellbeing of women, men and their families, the protection and promotion of human rights, and its benefits for wider society, including improved productivity, creativity and economic development (VicHealth, 2017a; 2017b).

Attitudes contribute to violence against women because they influence expectations of what is acceptable behaviour. Our understanding of these expectations has a strong influence on our behaviour (Flood & Pease, 2006; 2009).

Community attitudes influence how people respond to violence, from victims and their friends and family to law enforcement professionals, employers and policy-makers. This means that attitudes are an important barometer of how we fare generally as a society in relation to violence and gender relations.

Our attitudes are shaped by the world around us – for instance, through how we see gender roles and relationships in families and organisations, and how women and men are portrayed in the media and popular culture (Flood & Pease, 2006; 2009). As a result, preventing violence against women is not simply a matter of changing attitudes but will also involve challenging the social factors that shape those beliefs (Pease & Flood, 2008).

The aspects of gender equality found to be linked to violence against women have been identified in research compiled for *Change the story* and are represented in five themes in this report (see Box2-2). Table 4-2 shows results for the N-MESC born and Australian-born samples for the questions asked in the NCAS to measure these attitudes, which were adapted from existing studies.

**Table 4-2: Attitudes to gender inequality by birthplace and gender, 2017**

	Australian born	N-MESC		
	Total n=12,439	Total n=2,926	Men n=1,519	Women n=1,405
<b>Promoting rigid gender roles, stereotypes and expressions (% agree)</b>				
If a woman earns more than her male partner, it is not good for the relationship <sup>#</sup>	6	13 <sup>†</sup>	13	14
A man should never admit when others have hurt his feelings	5	10 <sup>†</sup>	13	8
When a couple start dating, the woman should not be the one to initiate sex <sup>#</sup>	8	17 <sup>†</sup>	16	19
I think it is embarrassing for a man to have a job that is usually filled by a woman <sup>#</sup>	5	10 <sup>†</sup>	11	9
A woman has to have children to be fulfilled <sup>#</sup>	5	19 <sup>†</sup>	23	15
<b>Undermining women's independence and decision-making in public life (% agree)</b>				
In the workplace, men generally make more capable bosses than women <sup>#</sup>	12	23 <sup>†</sup>	29 <sup>^</sup>	17
Men, rather than women, should hold positions of responsibility in the community <sup>#</sup>	8	18 <sup>†</sup>	21	14
On the whole, men make better political leaders than women	12	22 <sup>†</sup>	26	18
Women are less capable than men of thinking logically	5	11 <sup>†</sup>	14 <sup>^</sup>	7
<b>Undermining women's independence and decision-making in private-life (% agree)</b>				
Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household	14	26 <sup>†</sup>	30	21
Women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship	23	37 <sup>†</sup>	43 <sup>^</sup>	30
<b>Condoned male peer relations involving aggression and disrespect towards women (% agree)</b>				
I think there is no harm in men making sexist jokes about women when they are among their male friends <sup>#</sup>	25	22	26 <sup>^</sup>	17
I think it's ok for men to joke with their male friends about being violent towards women	2	4	5	2
I think it's natural for a man to want to appear in control of his partner in front of his male friends <sup>#</sup>	34	38	38	37

Table 4-2 continued on next page

Table 4-2 continued from previous page

	Australian born	N-MESC		
	Total n=12,439	Total n=2,926	Men n=1,519	Women n=1,405
<b>Denying gender inequality is a problem (% agree)</b>				
Many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia <sup>#</sup>	41	40	44	35
Many women mistakenly interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist	52	44	48	41
Many women fail to fully appreciate all that men do for them <sup>#</sup>	34	44 <sup>†</sup>	47	41
Women often flirt with men just to be hurtful	21	20	23	17
Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the workplace in Australia	8	19 <sup>†</sup>	21	16

<sup>^</sup> Difference between men and women born in a N-MESC is statistically significant,  $p \leq .01$  and reaches the 0.2 Cohen's threshold.

<sup>†</sup> Difference between the Australian born and those born in a N-MESC is statistically significant,  $p \leq .01$  and reaches the 0.2 Cohen's threshold.

<sup>#</sup> Asked of half the sample in 2017.



### Box 4-2: Key findings Attitudes to gender inequality

A small percentage of the N-MESC sample holds attitudes supportive of **rigid gender roles and stereotypes**. For each of the statements this is a larger percentage than among the Australian-born sample. For example:

- one in ten in the N-MESC sample (10%) agrees that 'A man should never admit when others have hurt his feelings' compared with one in 20 (5%) among the Australian-born; and
- people in the N-MESC sample (13%) are more than twice as likely than Australian-born respondents (6%) to agree that 'If a woman earns more than her male partner, it is not good for the relationship' and are nearly four times as likely to agree that 'A woman has to have children to be fulfilled' (19% compared with 5%).

A sizeable minority of the N-MESC sample holds attitudes **undermining women's independence and decision-making in public life**. For example, nearly one-quarter (23%) agrees that 'In the workplace, men generally make more capable bosses than women' and more than one in five (22%) agrees that 'On the whole, men make better political leaders than women'.

People in the N-MESC sample are more likely than people in the Australian-born sample to support all of the statements in the theme relating to undermining women's independence and decision-making in public life.

Within the N-MESC sample, men are more inclined than women to support two of the statements in this theme: 'In the workplace, men generally make more capable bosses than women' (29% of men compared with 17% of women) and 'Women are less capable than men of thinking logically' (14% compared with 7%).

The proportion of the N-MESC sample supporting attitudes **undermining women's independence and decision-making in private life** is somewhat higher than that supporting attitudes in the first two themes. More than a quarter of the sample (26%) agree that 'Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household' and more than a third (37%) agree that women prefer it this way.

People in the N-MESC sample are more likely to agree with both of these statements than Australian-born respondents. In the N-MESC sample, 43 percent of men support the statement that 'Women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship', significantly more than women from a N-MESC (30%).

A sizeable proportion in the sample endorses **attitudes condoning male peer relations involving aggression and disrespect towards women**. Just over one in five (22%) thinks 'There is no harm in men making sexist jokes about women when they are among their male friends' and nearly four in ten (38%) think 'It's natural for a man to want to appear in control of his partner in front of his male friends'. These patterns were very similar to the Australian-born sample. As is the case among Australian-born respondents, very few (4%) in the N-MESC sample support the idea that 'It's okay for men to joke with their male friends about being violent towards women'. While more than one in four (26%) men in the N-MESC sample agree that sexist jokes about women are harmless, only 17 percent of women in the sample does so.

Compared with the other themes, the proportion in the N-MESC sample agreeing with statements that **deny gender inequality is a problem** was high, a pattern very similar to that seen in the Australian-born sample. For example, 44 percent agree that 'Many women fail to fully appreciate all that men do for them' and the same proportion agrees that 'Many women mistakenly interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist'.

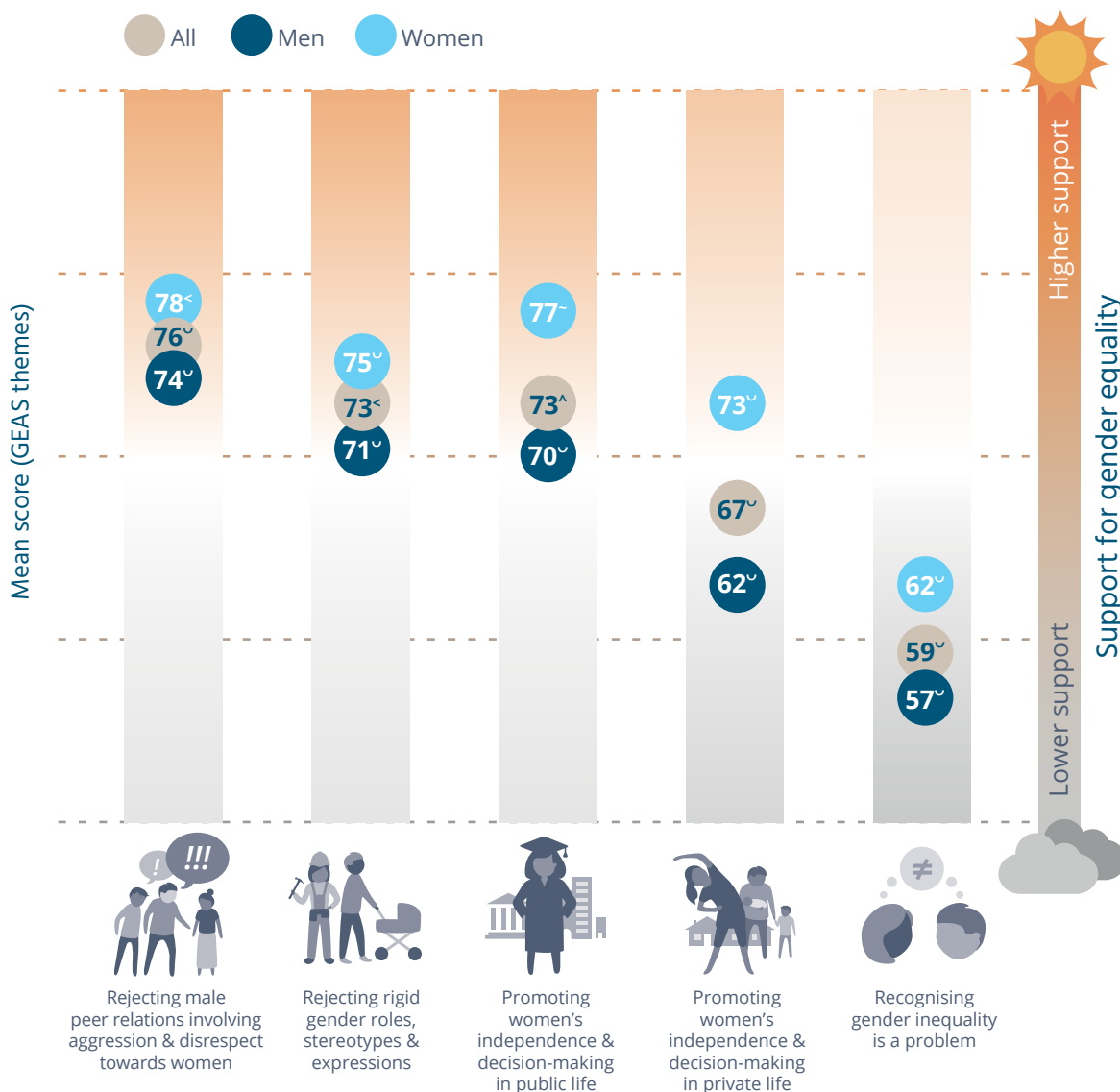
Indeed, a slightly smaller proportion of the N-MESC sample than the Australian-born sample agrees with three of the five questions in this theme (i.e. a smaller proportion in the N-MESC sample gave an unfavourable response). However, these differences did not meet thresholds for statistical significance and effect size. People in the N-MESC sample are more likely than in the Australian-born sample to agree to the remaining two questions – 'Many women fail to fully appreciate all that men do for them' (44% compared with 34%) and 'Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the workplace in Australia' (19% compared with 8%).

## Which aspects of gender equality are most likely to be supported by people born in N-MESCs?

To find out which aspects of gender equality are more or less likely to be supported by people from N-MESCs overall, each respondent was given a score based on answers to questions in each theme. An average for the N-MESC sample was then calculated and the results are shown in Figure 4-1.

The NCAS questions are framed to ask about gender inequality, but the scores for the composite measures have been calculated to indicate the level of support for gender equality. Scores range from 1 to 100, with 1 signifying the lowest level of support for gender equality (an unfavourable result). This information is useful because it tells us which aspects of attitudes to gender equality most need to be addressed in prevention programs and interventions.

**Figure 4-1: Relative levels of support for gender equality by theme and gender+ in the N-MESC sample, by themes, 2017 (means)**



Note: the data used in this figure are means, not percentages. They rank the themes relative to one another, rather than showing an absolute level of attitudinal support for each theme in the population.

- ^ All differences between men and women are statistically significant,  $p \leq .01$ .
- ~ Differences between this theme and all other themes in this sample is statistically significant,  $p \leq .01$ .
- < Difference between this theme and all other themes in this sample, with the exception of 'Promoting women's independence and decision-making in public life' is statistically significant,  $p \leq .01$ .
- ~ Difference between this theme and all other themes in this sample, with the exception of 'Male peer relations involving aggression & disrespect towards women' is statistically significant,  $p \leq .01$ .
- + Difference between this theme and all other themes in this sample, with the exception of 'Rejecting rigid gender roles, stereotypes and expressions' is statistically significant,  $p \leq .01$ .



**Box 4-3: Key findings**

**Key** Relative levels of attitudinal support among people born in N-MESCs for the gender equality themes

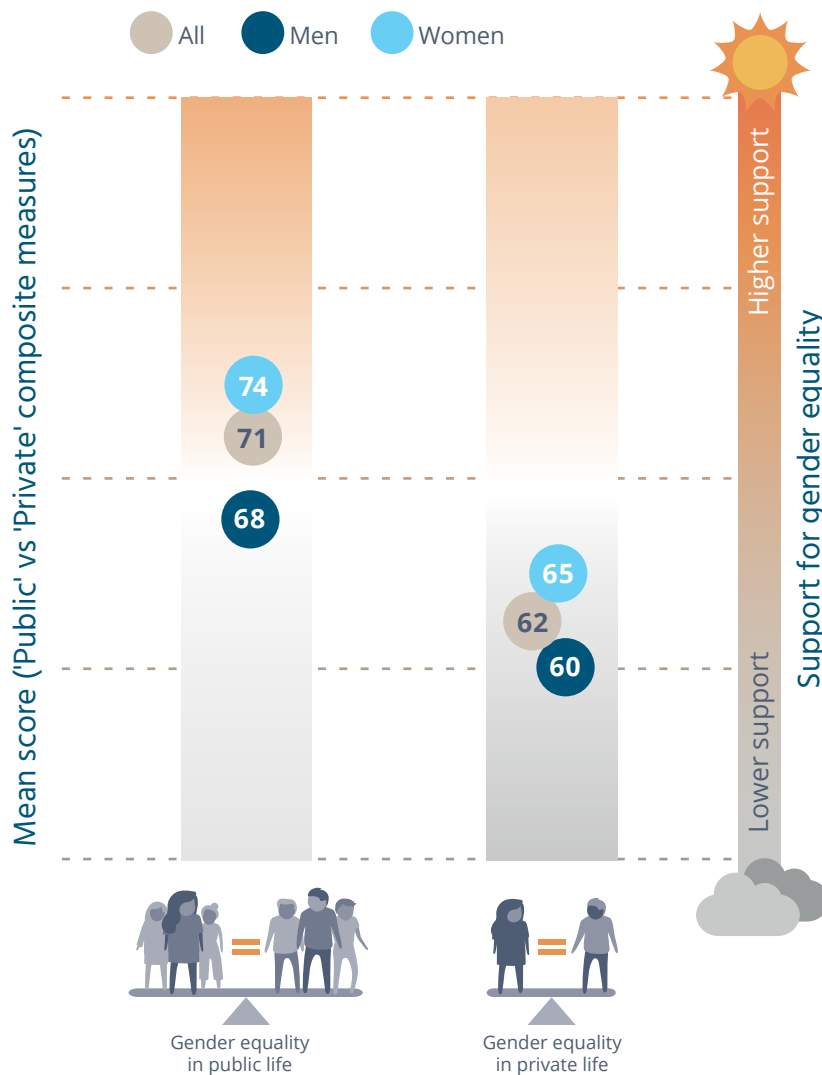
Among the five themes, people in the N-MESC sample are least likely to support the idea that gender inequality is a problem. Women in the N-MESC sample are more likely than men to support gender equality across all five themes.

People in the N-MESC sample show a greater level of support for women's independence in decision-making in public life than in private life. These patterns are similar to those in the NCAS sample as whole.

Given the higher level of support for women's decision-making in public life compared with gender equality in decision-making in private life, this distinction was explored by creating two new themes using all the questions measuring attitudinal support for gender equality (rather than just those looking at decision-making). Questions were divided into those concerned with public life and those concerned with private life. This distinction between

people from N-MESC's attitudes towards gender equality in public life and gender equality in private life was confirmed (Figure 4-3). That is, people from N-MESCs were found to have higher levels of attitudinal support for gender equality in public life overall than for gender equality in private life, such as in intimate relationships, households and families. This pattern is similar to that found in the NCAS sample as a whole (Webster et al., 2018a).

**Figure 4-2: Relative levels of support for gender equality in the N-MESC sample, in public and private<sup>a</sup> life, 2017 (means)**



Note: the data used in this figure are means, not percentages. They rank the themes relative to one another, rather than showing an absolute level of attitudinal support for each theme in the population.

<sup>^</sup> All differences between men and women are statistically significant,  $p \leq .01$ .

<sup>Ω</sup> Difference between public and private in each sample is statistically significant,  $p \leq .01$ .

## Attitudes to violence against women among those from N-MESCs

As explained above, attitudes can be used to monitor progress. Attitudes may also contribute to violence against women indirectly because they influence social norms or expectations of what is acceptable behaviour. These expectations in turn influence behaviour itself (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2004). In this way, community attitudes can influence how professionals respond to violence against women, as well as the responses of neighbours, friends, family members and work colleagues. Holding violence-supportive attitudes can influence whether women experiencing violence seek help. Such attitudes may be adopted by men who use violence to excuse their behaviour.<sup>16</sup>

The four themes in this component were formed by synthesising hundreds of prior studies on attitudes towards violence against women, selecting groups of questions that reflect them, and then confirming through the NCAS that these themes are similar to the way the Australian public thinks about violence against women (Table 4-3).<sup>17</sup>

**Table 4-3: Attitudes to violence against women by birthplace and gender, 2017**

	Australian born	N-MESC		
	Total n=12,439	Total n=2,926	Men n=1,519	Women n=1,405
<b>Excusing the perpetrator and holding women responsible (% agree)</b>				
<b>Attitudes excusing the perpetrator and holding women responsible for abuse or managing its consequences</b>				
A lot of what is called domestic violence is really just a normal reaction to day-to-day stress and frustration	18	30 <sup>†</sup>	36 <sup>^</sup>	24
Domestic violence can be excused if it results from people getting so angry that they temporarily lose control	9	23 <sup>†</sup>	26	20
Domestic violence can be excused if the violent person was themselves abused as a child	5	17 <sup>†</sup>	19	16
Domestic violence can be excused if, afterwards, the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done	11	29 <sup>†</sup>	33	24
Sometimes a woman can make a man so angry that he hits her when he didn't mean to	20	27	31	23
Women who flirt all the time are somewhat to blame if their partner gets jealous and hits them	12	21 <sup>†</sup>	24	17
<b>Attitudes concerning the family and partner violence</b>				
Domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family	10	25 <sup>†</sup>	30 <sup>^</sup>	20
It's a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship in order to keep the family together	2	9 <sup>†</sup>	12	6
<b>The role of alcohol in excusing the perpetrator or holding women responsible</b>				
Domestic violence can be excused if the victim is heavily affected by alcohol	4	12 <sup>†</sup>	14	11
Domestic violence can be excused if the offender is heavily affected by alcohol	4	12 <sup>†</sup>	13	11
A man is less responsible for rape if he is drunk or affected by drugs at the time**	7	13 <sup>†</sup>	13	15
If a woman is raped while she is drunk or affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible	10	25 <sup>†</sup>	24	26

Table 4-3 continued on next page

<sup>16</sup> See the report of findings for the national sample (Webster et al., 2018a) on the ANROWS website for a more detailed discussion of the influence of attitudes supportive of violence against women, and relevant evidence.

<sup>17</sup> This was achieved using Rasch and factor analysis, described in greater detail in the NCAS methodology report (Webster et al., 2018b) and in summary in the report of findings for the national sample (Webster et al., 2018a). Both documents are available on the ANROWS website. As a result of these analyses there are some differences between the reporting themes used in 2013 and those in 2017.

Table 4-3 continued from previous page

	Australian born	N-MESC		
	Total n=12,439	Total n=2,926	Men n=1,519	Women n=1,405
<b>Minimising violence against women (% agree)</b>				
<b>Minimising the impacts and consequences of recurring intimate partner violence</b>				
A female victim who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing	28	48 <sup>†</sup>	49	47
I don't believe it's as hard as people say it is for women to leave an abusive relationship	13	26 <sup>†</sup>	29	23
If a woman keeps going back to her abusive partner then the violence can't be very serious	10	24 <sup>†</sup>	27	21
It's acceptable for police to give lower priority to domestic violence cases they've attended many times before	9	21 <sup>†</sup>	22	19
Women who stay in abusive relationships should be entitled to less help from counselling and support services than women who end the relationship	7	26 <sup>†</sup>	29	24
In domestic situations where one partner is physically violent towards the other it is entirely reasonable for the violent person to be made to leave the family home**	90	77 <sup>†</sup>	71 <sup>^</sup>	85
<b>Minimising sexual violence by claiming that women lie</b>				
If a woman claims to have been sexually assaulted but has no other physical injuries she probably shouldn't be taken too seriously	5	10 <sup>†</sup>	12	9
Women who wait weeks or months to report sexual harassment are probably lying**	8	16 <sup>†</sup>	18	12
Women who wait weeks or months to report sexual assault are probably lying	9	18 <sup>†</sup>	22 <sup>^</sup>	14
<b>Minimising violence against women by placing it beyond the law</b>				
Women who are sexually harassed should sort it out themselves rather than report it**	6	11	12	11
In my opinion, if a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders it is shameful for her family	10	22 <sup>†</sup>	24	20
It is a serious problem when a man tries to control his partner by refusing her access to their money**	83	71 <sup>†</sup>	67	76
<b>Mistrusting women's reports of violence (% agree)</b>				
Many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence	21	34 <sup>†</sup>	40 <sup>^</sup>	27
Women going through custody battles often make up or exaggerate claims of domestic violence in order to improve their case**	44	40	44	34
A lot of times, women who say they were raped had led the man on and then had regrets	31	33	36	30
It is common for sexual assault accusations to be used, as a way of getting back at men	43	35	40 <sup>^</sup>	30
<b>Disregard women's right to consent (% agree)</b>				
Women find it flattering to be persistently pursued, even if they are not interested**	22	28	30	24
If a woman sends a nude image to her partner, then she is partly responsible if he shares it without her permission**	28	37	39	35
Women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes'	10	22 <sup>†</sup>	24	21
Since some women are so sexual in public, it's not surprising that some men think they can touch women without permission	22	19	18	21
If a woman is drunk and starts having sex with a man, but then falls asleep, it is understandable if he continues having sex with her anyway	10	12	13	12
When a man is very sexually aroused, he may not even realize that the woman doesn't want to have sex	27	35	34	36
Rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex**	33	34	33	36

<sup>^</sup> Difference between men and women born in a N-MESC is statistically significant,  $p \leq 0.01$  and reaches the 0.2 Cohen's threshold.

<sup>†</sup> Difference between Australian born and those born in a N-MESC is statistically significant,  $p \leq 0.01$  and reaches the 0.2 Cohen's threshold.

\*\* Asked of a quarter of the sample in 2017.



#### Box 4-4: Key findings

### Attitudes towards violence against women among those from N-MESCs

A minority of the N-MESC sample is prepared to **excuse the perpetrator and hold women responsible for the violence** they experience. However, the proportion prepared to do so is notable for some statements, and is larger than among the Australian-born sample for every statement except one in this theme. For example, people in the N-MESC sample (23%) are two-and-a-half times more likely than people in the Australian-born sample (9%) to agree that 'Domestic violence can be excused if it results from people getting so angry that they temporarily lose control', and they are more than three times as likely to agree that 'Domestic violence can be excused if the violent person was themselves abused as a child' (17% compared with 5%).

People in the N-MESC sample are also more likely than Australian-born people to endorse statements supporting family privacy and unity:

- Respondents from a N-MESC (25%) are two-and-a-half times more likely to agree that 'Domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family' (10% in the Australian-born sample).
- Although the proportion of the N-MESC sample agreeing that 'It is a woman's duty to remain in a violent relationship in order to keep the family together' is small (9%), it is more than four times higher than in the Australian-born sample (2%).

The proportion of the Australian-born sample prepared to excuse violence against women when alcohol is involved is small (between 4% and 10% of this sample depending on the statement). In contrast, it is somewhat higher in the N-MESC sample (ranging from 12% to 25%). People in the N-MESC sample (25%) are nearly twice as likely to attribute some responsibility to a woman if she is raped when affected by alcohol or drugs than they are to agree that a man is less responsible for perpetrating rape if he is affected by alcohol or drugs (13%).

Although more men than women endorse statements in the theme of excusing violence, the differences met the thresholds for statistical significance and effect size on only two statements:

- 'A lot of what is called domestic violence is really just a normal reaction to day-to-day stress and frustration' (36% of men compared with 24% of women); and
- 'Domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family' (30% of men compared with 20% of women).

A relatively large proportion of the N-MESC sample **minimises** the impacts and consequences of recurring partner violence, and respondents in the N-MESC sample are more likely to agree with all statements in this theme than in the Australian-born sample. Nearly half (48%) of the N-MESC sample agrees that if a woman does not leave a violent relationship she is at

least partly responsible for the abuse continuing, more than one in five (21%) agrees that it's acceptable for police to give such circumstances a lower priority, and more than one in four (26%) agrees that 'Women who stay in abusive relationships should be entitled to less help from counselling and support services than women who end the relationship'.

A majority in the N-MESC sample agrees that it is entirely reasonable for a violent person to be made to leave the family home, and this is higher among women in the sample (85%) than men (71%), although lower than among Australian-born respondents (90%).

The proportion in the N-MESC sample **minimising** sexual violence by claiming that women lie is modest, but it is higher than among the Australian-born respondents. For example, people in the N-MESC sample (16%) are twice as likely as people in the Australian-born sample (8%) to agree a woman is probably lying if she waits weeks or months to report sexual harassment or sexual assault (18% compared with 9%). Men in the N-MESC sample (22%) are more likely than women (14%) to agree that women waiting weeks or months before reporting sexual assault are probably lying.

People in the N-MESC sample (11%) are also more likely than the Australian-born respondents (6%) to agree that 'Women who are sexually harassed should sort it out themselves rather than report it' and are more than twice as likely to state that, in their opinion, 'If a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders it is shameful for her family' (22% compared with 10%). They are also less likely to agree that 'It is a serious problem when a man tries to control his partner by refusing her access to their money' (71% compared with 83%).

Between one-third and two-fifths (33%-40%) of the N-MESC sample endorses attitudes **mistrusting women's reports of violence**. This is similar to the Australian-born sample, with the exception that there is a higher likelihood of a person from a N-MESC agreeing that 'Many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence' (34% compared with 21%). Again, a larger proportion of men than women in the N-MESC sample is inclined to endorse these statements. However, the difference meets the thresholds for statistical significance and effect size for only two of the four statements.

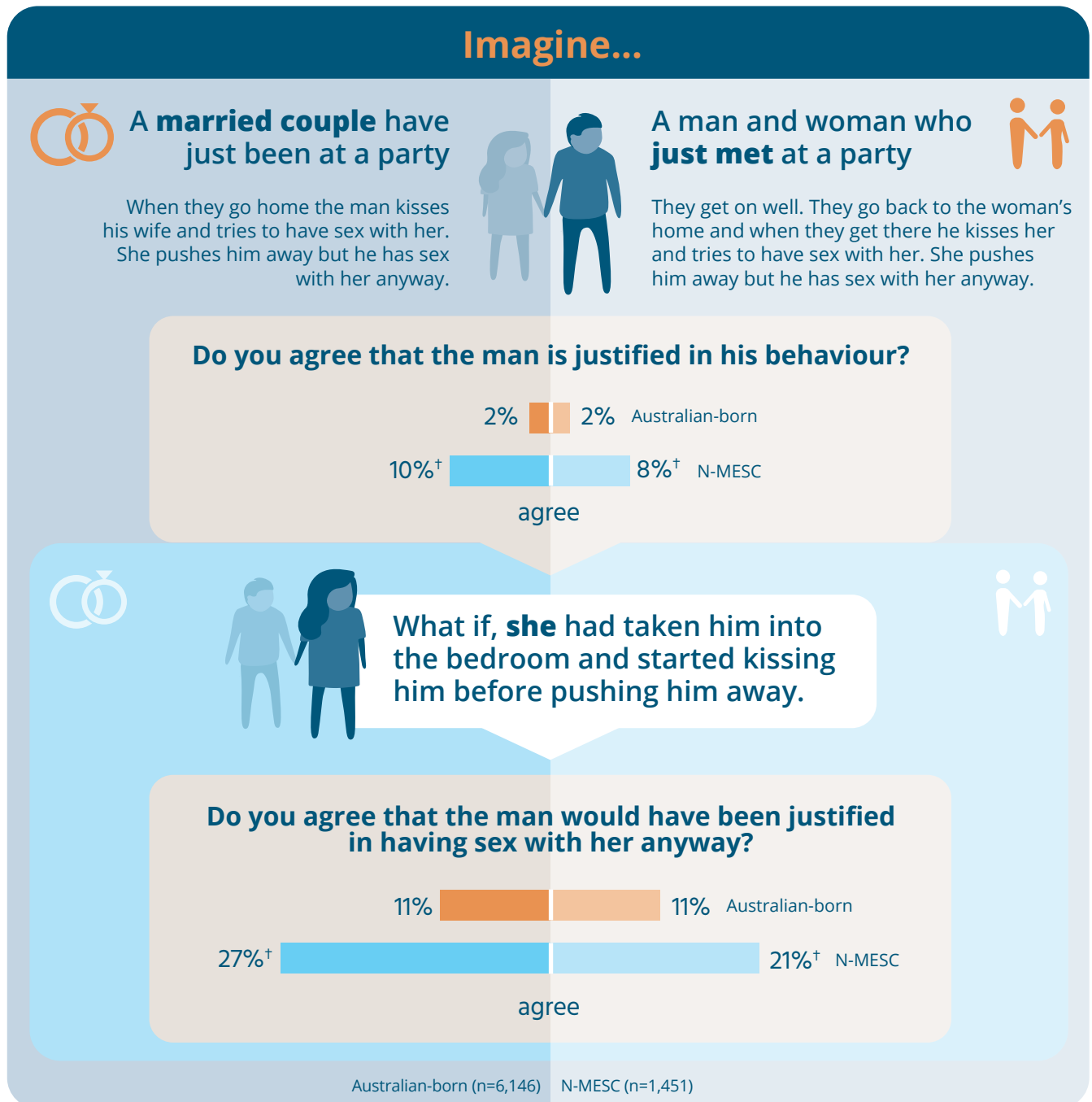
Similar to the Australian-born sample, a notable proportion of the N-MESC sample endorses statements **disregarding the need for consent**. There is a significant difference between the N-MESC and Australian-born samples on only one of the statements: 'Women often say "no" when they mean "yes"' (22% compared with 10%). There are no differences between men and women in the N-MESC sample, and no clear trend in the data. That is, the proportion of women endorsing some statements is higher than the proportion of men, while, in others, the proportion of men endorsing is higher than it is for women from a N-MESC.

## Circumstances in which people from a N-MESC justify non-consensual sex

In the 2017 NCAS two scenarios were introduced to investigate whether or not Australians would justify non-consensual sex in different circumstances. Scenarios were used to test two questions:

1. Are Australians more likely to justify non-consensual sex among a married couple (a context in which people sometimes believe women forgo their sexual autonomy), as opposed to people that had just met?
2. Are Australians more likely to justify non-consensual sex in a circumstance where a woman had initiated intimacy as opposed to when she did not? This tests the belief that once a woman consents to one element of sexual expression, she is automatically consenting to further sexual activity.

**Figure 4-3: Impact of situational factors on attitudes towards consent in the N-MESC and Australian-born samples, 2017**



<sup>†</sup> Difference between Australian born and those born in a N-MESC is statistically significant,  $p \leq 0.01$  and reaches the 0.2 Cohen's threshold.



#### Box 4-5: Key findings

### Responses to two scenarios related to non-consensual sex among people from N-MESCs

Only a small proportion of the N-MESC sample is prepared to justify a man forcing sex, regardless of whether the couple is married (10%) or has just met (8%).

Similar to the pattern among the Australian-born sample, people in the N-MESC sample are more likely to justify non-consensual sex if the woman initiates intimacy (27% in the scenario involving the married couple and 21% in the scenario involving a man and a woman who had just met).

Among the Australian-born sample, there is no difference between the acquaintance and marital scenarios in the proportion agreeing that the man would be justified in forcing sex if the woman initiated intimacy (11% in both scenarios). However, in the N-MESC sample, people were more likely to feel the man was justified if the couple were married (27%) than if the woman was an acquaintance (21%).

People in the N-MESC sample are more likely than those in the Australian-born sample to justify forced sex in all the scenarios put to respondents.

Both scenarios describe criminal offences. These findings are of concern because they indicate that some people from N-MESCs – as is the case in the NCAS sample as a whole – are unclear about what constitutes consent and about the line between consensual sex and coercion (Muehlenhard, Humphreys, Jozkowski, & Peterson, 2016; Warren, Swan, & Allen, 2015).

Non-consensual sex can range from rape or coerced sex to non-consensual acts within an initially consensual sexual encounter. Gendered power dynamics, expectations and stereotypes related to sexuality influence how consent is

understood and negotiated (e.g. men are seen as sexually aggressive or 'in control', while women are often portrayed as passive or submissive in sexual matters) (Hust, Rodgers, & Bayly, 2017). These dynamics and expectations can contribute to some people failing to see the need to gain consent or to assuming that if a person consents to one thing, they are consenting to any sexual contact, rather than recognising that consent must always be an ongoing and respectful process of negotiation. Ensuring ongoing positive consent is important as people have the right to change their minds, or the situation may change to one where they are no longer comfortable.



#### Box 4-6: What does consent mean and why is it important?

Many attitudes about sex reinforce the idea that men should want and actively pursue sex, while women should be passive and not show an active desire for sex (e.g. the attitude that 'the woman should not be the one to initiate sex'). Such attitudes reinforce gender stereotypes where women, in particular, are judged as 'sluts' if they show too much sexual interest. These stereotypes are often described as a 'sexual double standard' that permits sexual freedom and promiscuity for men but not for women (Tharp, DeGue, Valle, Brookmeyer, Massetti, & Matjasko, 2013). Such attitudes position heterosexual encounters as adversarial (with men's and women's interests in conflict with one another) and have been linked to increased risk for men's perpetration of sexual violence (Tharp et al., 2013).

When men are seen as the 'natural' or the more socially acceptable pursuers of sexual encounters, it can mean that women's assertion of desire is less socially acceptable (Allen, 2005; Powell, 2010; Tolman, 2009).

Sexuality education internationally has increasingly moved away from a 'no means no' model of teaching about sex and consent towards an 'active and continuing consent model' (see Carmody, 2015; Coy, Kelly, Vera-Gray, Garner, & Kanyeredzi, 2016). Such sexuality education is more in line with legislation in many Australian states and territories, in which it is the absence of active consent that defines sexual assault, and increasingly there is a legal responsibility for individuals to take active steps to ascertain consent (Burgin, 2019; Larcombe, Fileborn, Powell, Hanley, & Henry, 2016).

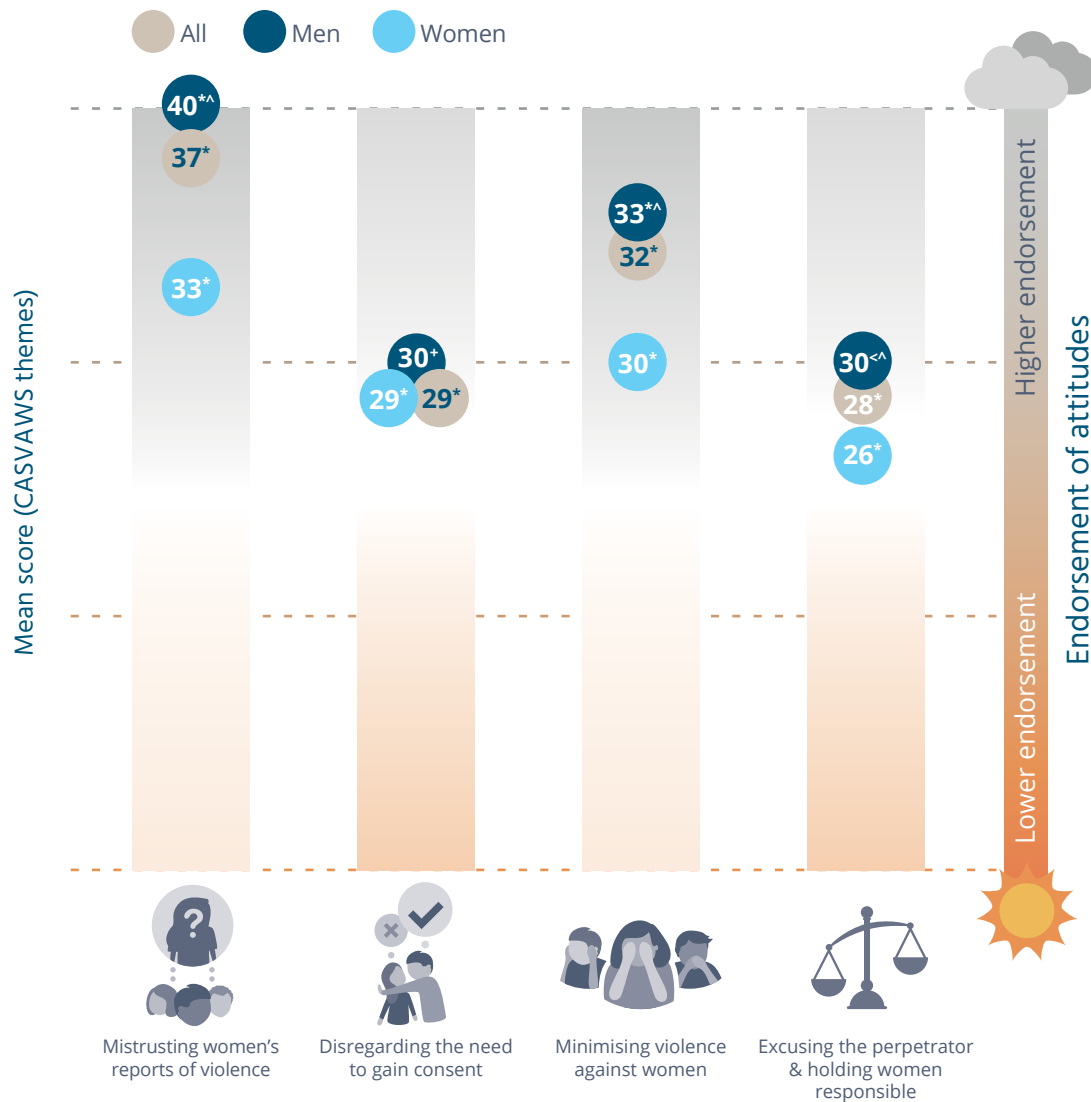
In short, we need to be making clear to all that anything short of active consent for sex by a partner means that a person should stop and check-in about consent before going any further.

## Which aspects of attitudinal support for violence against women are most widely supported by those born in N-MESCs?

To investigate the aspects of attitudinal support for violence against women that are more or less likely to be adhered to by people from N-MESCs overall, an average score for the sample was developed for each theme using the same approach as described above for the gender equality themes.

Scores range from 1 to 100, with 1 signifying the lowest level of endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women (a favourable result). This information is useful because it tells us which aspects of violence-supportive attitudes most need to be addressed in prevention programs and interventions.

**Figure 4-4: Relative endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women by theme and gender in the N-MESC sample, 2017 (means)**



Note: the data used in this figure are means, not percentages. They rank the themes relative to one another, rather than showing an absolute level of attitudinal support for each theme in the population.

^ Difference between men and women is statistically significant,  $p \leq .01$ .

\* Difference between this theme and all other themes in this sample is statistically significant,  $p \leq .01$ .

+ Difference between this theme and all other themes in this sample, with the exception of 'excusing the perpetrators and holding women responsible' is statistically significant,  $p \leq .01$ .

< Difference between this theme and all other themes in this sample, with the exception of 'disregarding the need to gain consent', is statistically significant,  $p \leq .01$ .

#### Box 4-7: Key findings

### Relative levels of attitudinal support among people born in N-MESCs for violence against women by theme

Of the four themes, people from N-MESCs are most likely to support the idea that women's reports of violence cannot be trusted.

Of the four themes, people in the N-MESC sample are least likely to endorse the idea that violence against women can be excused.

Among respondents from a N-MESC, women are less likely than men to endorse attitudes supportive of violence against women across all themes except in relation to disregarding the need to gain consent (in which there are no differences between men and women).

These patterns are similar to those in the NCAS sample as a whole (Webster et al., 2018a).

## Bystander action

There are limitations to the role that the community can play in addressing physical violence against women in the course of this violence occurring. There are two reasons for this:

- Much of this violence occurs in private, beyond the gaze of the public, family and friends.
- There may be risks for all involved in intervening in physical violence.

However, there may be promise in encouraging the community to take action in response to witnessing abuse and disrespect towards women.<sup>18</sup> There are three main reasons for this. First, these may be precursors to, or risk factors for, physical violence. Second, many of the precursors to violence are

not in themselves able to be officially sanctioned and, third, disapproval shown by those around us has been found to be one of the most effective forces to prevent abuse and disrespect, and thereby violence, against women (Powell, 2011). Interventions to increase bystander interventions are especially indicated among men, for whom peer influences have been found to be particularly influential (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013).

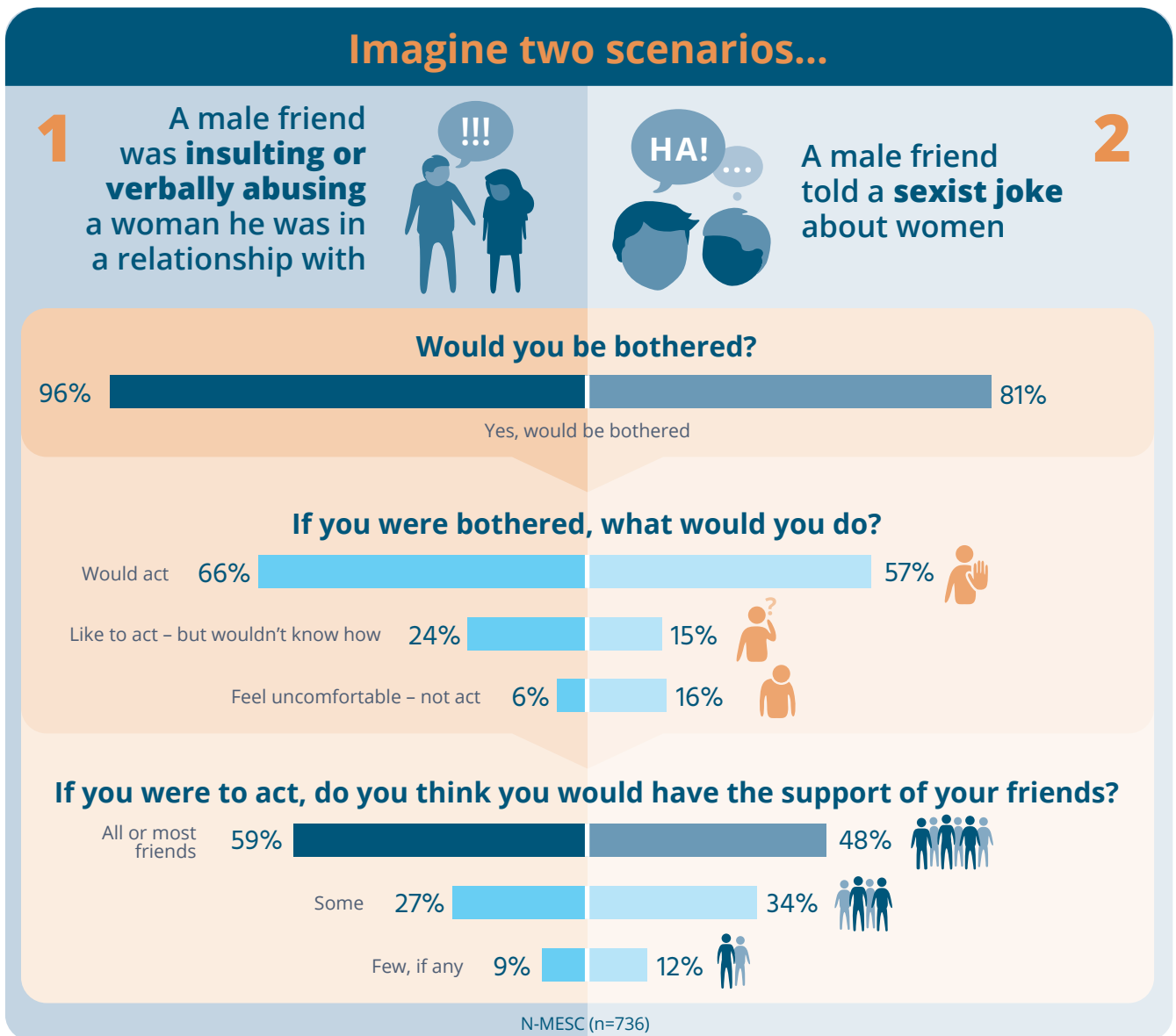
The 2017 NCAS included questions on respondents' anticipated responses should they witness two scenarios in a social setting: a male friend telling a sexist joke and a male friend verbally abusing his partner. For reasons discussed above, these deliberately do not focus on physical violence.



<sup>18</sup> The term 'promising' is used in this context because more research and evaluation are required to explore whether positive changes achieved through bystander programs in the short term are sustained. There has also been some debate in the literature about the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary bystander programs. For further discussion, see DeKeseredy (2018) and contributions to the December 2018 issue of *Violence Against Women* (Volume 24, Number 15).



Figure 4-5: Reactions among the N-MESC sample to scenarios involving the telling of a sexist joke and the verbal abuse of a partner in a social setting, 2017



Note: percentages may vary from totals due to rounding and do not add to 100% due to a small proportion of respondents who did not respond to the question.

#### Box 4-8: Key findings Bystander intentions

Most people from N-MESCs say they would act or would like to act when witnessing abuse or disrespect towards women.

Nearly all respondents in the N-MESC sample would be bothered if they heard a male friend insulting or verbally abusing their partner.

People from N-MESCs appear to underestimate the support that they are likely to receive from their friends (i.e. more people in the N-MESC sample said they would be bothered than those who felt they would have the support of all or most of their friends).

Australian-born respondents (22%) are more likely to report feeling 'not bothered' about a sexist joke being told compared with people in the N-MESC sample (14%) (data not shown). However, people from N-MESCs (59%) are substantially less likely than the Australian-born people (71%) to report that they would have the support of all or most of their friends if taking action when witnessing verbal abuse (data not shown).

Although there are no gender differences within the N-MESC sample for the verbal abuse scenario, women in the sample (87%) are more likely than men (75%) to be bothered by the sexist joke, to say they would act (57% compared with 42%) and to support action being taken (73% compared with 56%) (data not shown).

## Overall differences between respondents from N-MESCs and Australian-born respondents

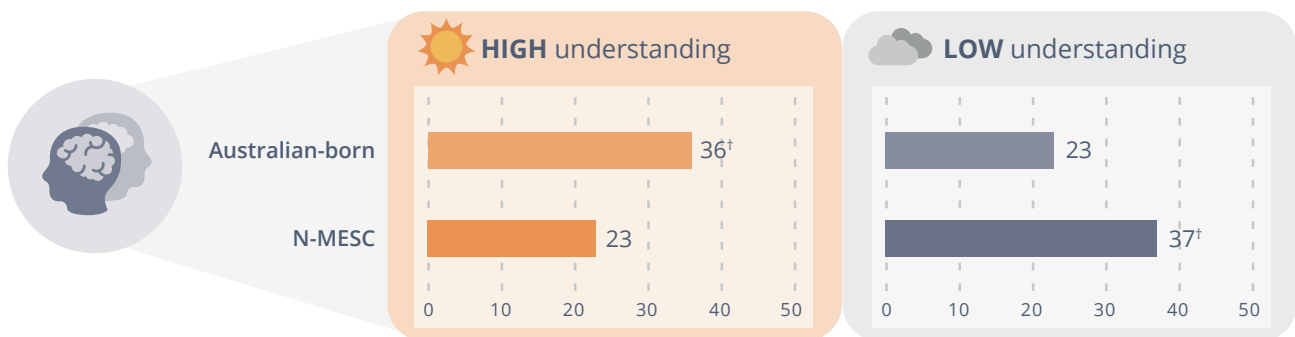
So far, comparisons have been made between the N-MESC and Australian-born samples for each individual question. In this section overall differences between the samples are investigated using the composite measures. The two samples are compared by dividing them into three categories based on their scale scores – people with high, medium and low levels of understanding (or endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence, or gender equality or intention to act, as the case may be) – and comparing the proportions in the categories between the two samples. Figures are given for the high and low categories because this is where most of the variation occurs.

Not surprisingly, given the patterns for individual NCAS statements, people in the N-MESC sample were more likely than the Australian-born respondents to be classified as having:

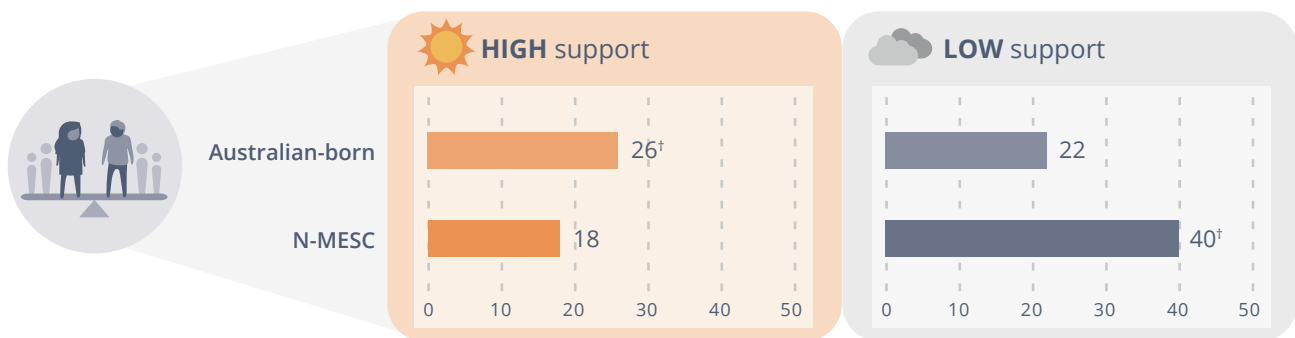
- a low level of understanding of violence against women (Figure 4-6);
- a low level of support for gender equality (Figure 4-7); and
- a high level of endorsement of attitudes supporting violence against women (Figure 4-8).

Reflecting the similarity in the two samples in responses to the bystander scenarios, there were no significant differences between the two samples in their overall intention to act (Figure 4-9).

**Figure 4-6: Relative understanding of violence against women in the N-MESC and Australian-born samples, 2017 (%)**

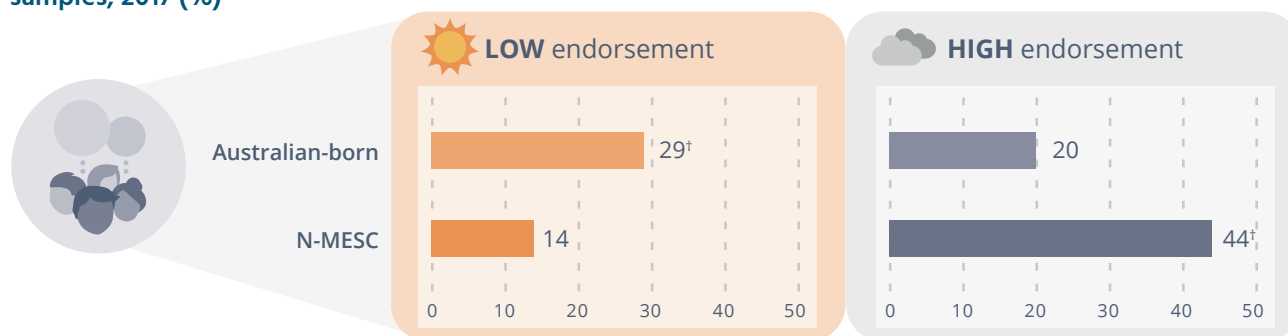


**Figure 4-7: Relative attitudinal support for gender equality in the N-MESC and Australian-born samples, 2017 (%)**

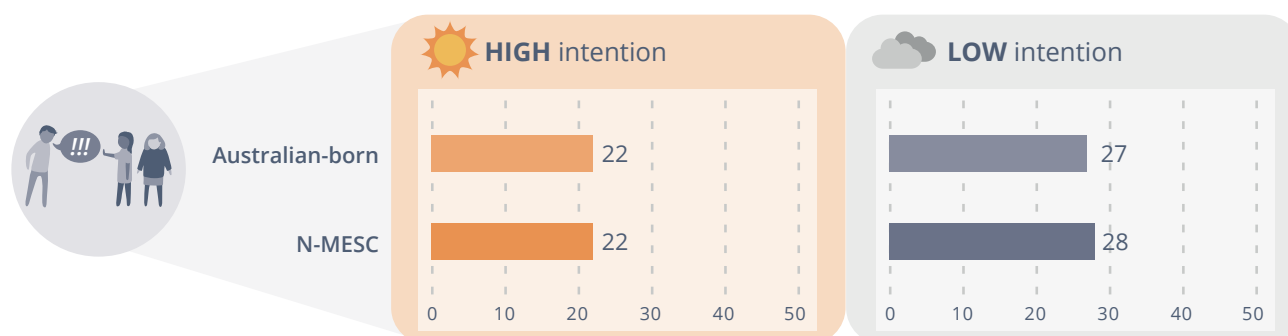


*See figures over page*

**Figure 4-8: Relative attitudinal support for violence against women in the N-MESC and Australian-born samples, 2017 (%)**



**Figure 4-9: Relative levels of intention to act in the N-MESC and Australian-born samples,\*\* 2017 (%)**



Australian-born respondents (n = 12,439) N-MESC respondents (n = 2,926)

<sup>†</sup> Difference between Australian-born and N-MESC response is statistically significant,  $p \leq 0.01$ , and reaches the 0.2 Cohen's threshold.

\*\* Asked of a quarter of the sample.

## Demographic factors influencing understanding and attitudes of people from N-MESCs

The previous sections of this chapter explore knowledge and attitudes in the N-MESC sample as a whole. This section examines the differences among particular groups and contexts, as well as by the key indicators of diversity (introduced in Chapter 3). Again this is done by comparing the proportion of people in the high and low categories. This information is useful because it can help to assess whether efforts to prevent violence against women need to be targeted to particular groups.<sup>19</sup>

Differences are reported for factors listed in the NCAS Questionnaire Framework (Figure 3-2) that are relevant to the N-MESC sample and where sample sizes were sufficient to do so (i.e. sufficient to enable base sizes 30 or more for each variable being compared). This included comparing respondents within the N-MESC sample by:

- age, (in three categories (16-24 years, 25-64 years, and 65 years and older);
- the respondent's occupation;
- education level measured in three categories (university level, trade certificate or diploma, and secondary education or less);

- the degree of social and economic disadvantage of the area the respondent lives in;<sup>20</sup>
- proficiency in English;
- length of time in Australia analysed in three periods (0-5 years, 6-10 years and more than 10 years); and
- generation – this variable is described in Figure 3-1c.

It is important to note that not all factors that have been identified as potentially influencing attitudes in N-MESC communities are included in the NCAS. For example, respondents are not asked whether they arrived in Australia as refugees (an indicator that they may have had prior exposure to violence in the course of war and civil conflict).

<sup>19</sup> 'High' and 'low' classify respondents relative to one another. It would be wrong to say that any group has a high or low level of support in absolute terms.

<sup>20</sup> The Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage is one of the indices provided as part of the ABS Socioeconomic Index for Areas (SEIFA) range of products. This index summarises information about the economic and social conditions of people and households within an area, including both relative advantage and disadvantage measures.



### Box 4-9: Key findings Demographic Factors

**Age:** Although young people (16-24 years) from N-MESCs are more inclined to be categorised as having a low level of understanding of violence against women than people older than them, they do not vary from other age groups in their attitudes to gender equality and violence against women. People aged 65 years and older are less likely than those aged 25-64 years to be classified as having high support for gender equality and more likely to have a high endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women.

**Education:** There is no variation by level of education among N-MESC respondents in understanding of violence against women. However, those with secondary education or less are more likely than people with post-secondary education to have a low level of endorsement of gender equality or a high level of endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women.

**Occupation:** People from N-MESCs who are in machinery operating and driving<sup>Δ</sup>, labouring<sup>Δ</sup> and trade occupations tend to be more likely to be classified as having a low level

of endorsement of gender equality and a higher level of endorsement of attitudes supporting violence against women than respondents in most other occupations. People in labouring<sup>Δ</sup> and technician and trade occupations are more likely than people in professional and clerical and administrative occupations<sup>Δ</sup> to be classified as having a lower level of understanding of violence against women. People in management occupations are more likely to have a low level of understanding than those in clerical and administrative occupations.<sup>Δ</sup>

**Area disadvantage:** Although there is no variation among N-MESC respondents in their understanding of violence against women by area disadvantage, the likelihood of being classified as having a low level of support for gender equality and a high level of endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women is highest among the most disadvantaged and lowest among the most advantaged.

Demographic differences in the N-MESC sample are similar to those in the national NCAS sample (Webster et al., 2018a).

<sup>Δ</sup> These results should be treated with caution because they are based on a small number of responses (i.e. between 30 and 100). See 'Approach to analysis' in Chapter 3 for further explanation.



### Box 4-10: Key findings The influence of diversity indicators

**Generation:** First-generation Australians born in a N-MESC are more likely than second- and third-generation Australians to be classified as having a low level of understanding of violence against women, a low level of support for gender equality and a high level of endorsement of violence against women.

**Proficiency in English:** When compared with people in the N-MESC sample who speak English well, those who do not speak English well are more likely to be classified as having a low level of understanding of violence against women, a low level of support for gender equality and a high level of endorsement of violence against women.

**Length of time in Australia:** When people in the N-MESC sample are compared based on their time in Australia, those

who have been in Australia five or less years are more likely than those who have been in Australia more than 10 years to be classified as having a low level of understanding of violence against women, a low level of support for gender equality and a high level of endorsement of violence against women.

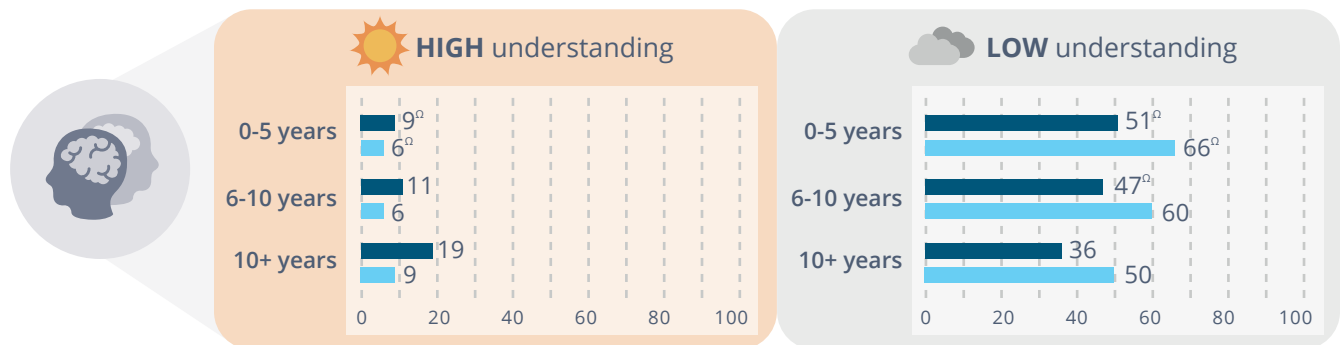
The data suggests that attitudes improve across the three time periods (0-5 years, 6-10 years and more than 10 years). However, other than the differences between 0-5 years and more than 10 years, the differences do not meet the thresholds of statistical significance and effect size. The same pattern applies to understanding of violence against women. However, the difference between people in Australia 6-10 years and those in Australia more than 10 years does meet the thresholds for significance and effect size.

## Length of time in Australia

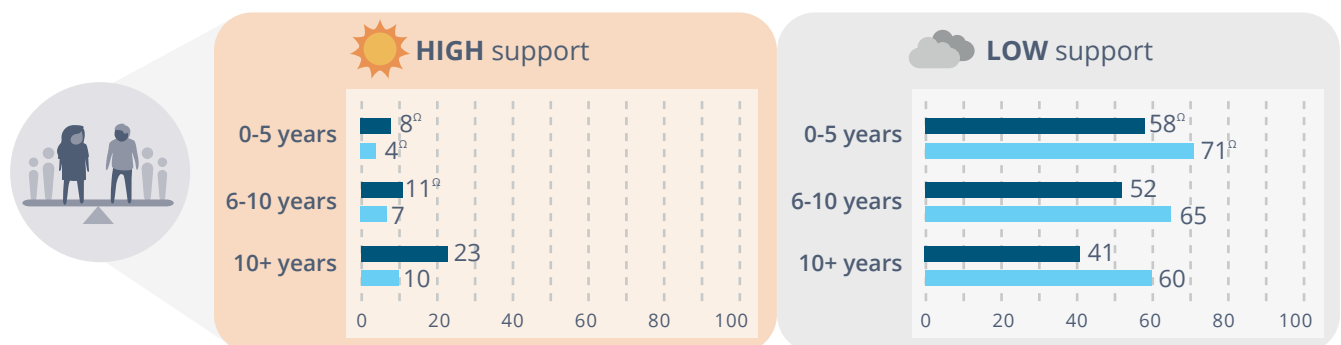
As shown in Box 4-10, understanding and attitudes improve with length of time since arrival. However, since Australia has tended to have 'waves' of migration from different world regions, it is possible that the findings above are influenced by differences in the composition of Australia's immigrant population at different time periods. To account for this possibility, the analysis for time in Australia was repeated by combining NCAS data from 2009, 2013 and 2017. This enabled viable samples to be formed for two birthplaces. As Figures 4-10 to 4-12 show, the data trend for both countries shows a statistically significant increase in the proportion of people being classified as having high

understanding of violence against women, high support for gender equality and low endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women (or, alternatively, a decrease in the proportion with low understanding of violence against women, low support for gender equality or a high level of endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women) between people in Australia 0-5 years and those settled for more than 10 years. There was also an improvement between those in Australia 6-10 years and those in Australia more than 10 years in either the high or low category on all three measures.

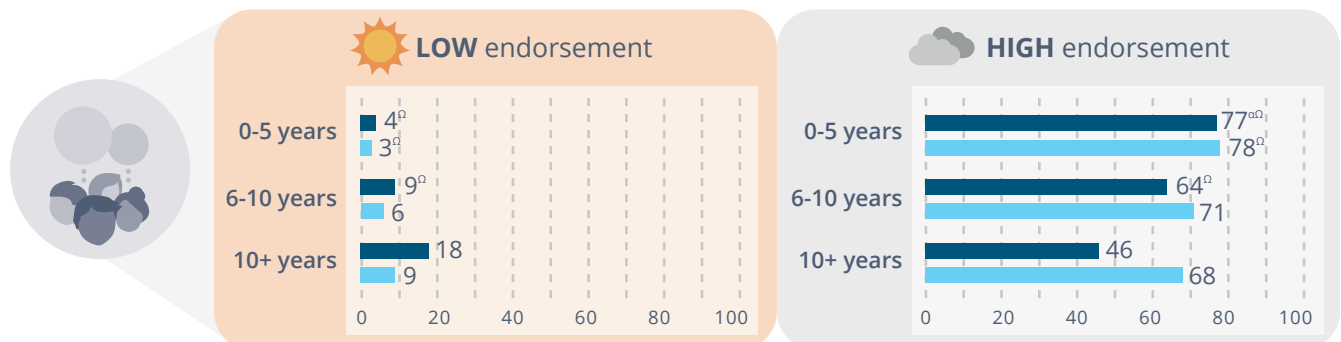
**Figure 4-10: The influence of length of time in Australia on understanding of violence against women (UVAWS), 2009, 2013, 2017 (%)**



**Figure 4-11: The influence of length of time in Australia on attitudes towards gender equality (GEAS), 2009, 2013, 2017 (%)**



**Figure 4-12: The influence of length of time in Australia on attitudes towards violence against women (CASVAWS), 2009, 2013, 2017 (%)**



■ Birthplace A 0-5 years (n=324) 6-10 years (n=229) More than 10 years (n=306)

■ Birthplace B 0-5 years (n=268) 6-10 years (n=180) More than 10 years (n=316)

Ω Difference between this length of time and 'More than 10 years' is statistically significant,  $p \leq 0.05$ .

α Difference between this length of time and '6-10 years of stay' is statistically significant,  $p \leq 0.05$ .

## Predictors of attitudinal support for violence

A statistical technique (multiple linear regression analysis) was used to assess which factors measured in the 2017 NCAS are the strongest predictors of attitudinal support for violence against women among those born in a N-MESC. This technique measures the strength of influence of each factor after the influence of other factors has been taken into account. All of the demographic, contextual and attitudinal factors in the survey were included in the analysis.

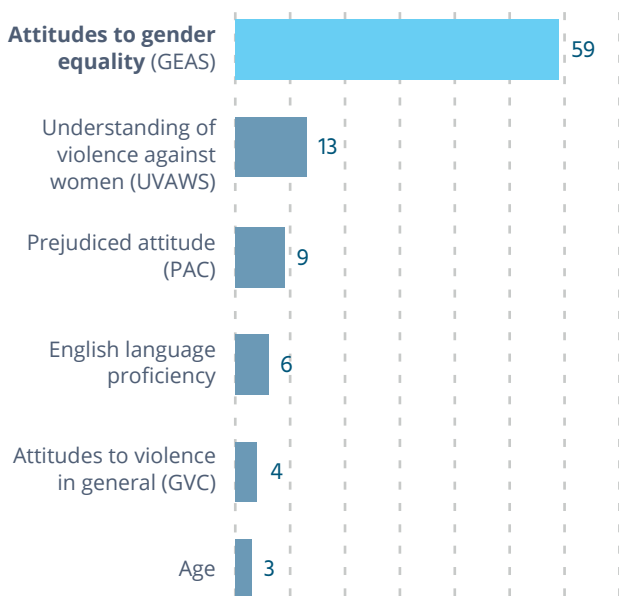
Figure 4-13a shows the six strongest predictors of attitudes supportive of violence against women among people born in a N-MESC. Having a low level of support for gender equality is the strongest predictor of attitudinal support for violence among people from N-MESCs, followed by having a low level of understanding of violence against women, holding prejudicial attitudes towards people based on other attributes, having a low level of proficiency in English, holding attitudes supportive

of violence in general and being aged 65 years or older. The remaining variance is contributed by country of birth, area disadvantage and education level, each contributing 2 percent (data not shown).

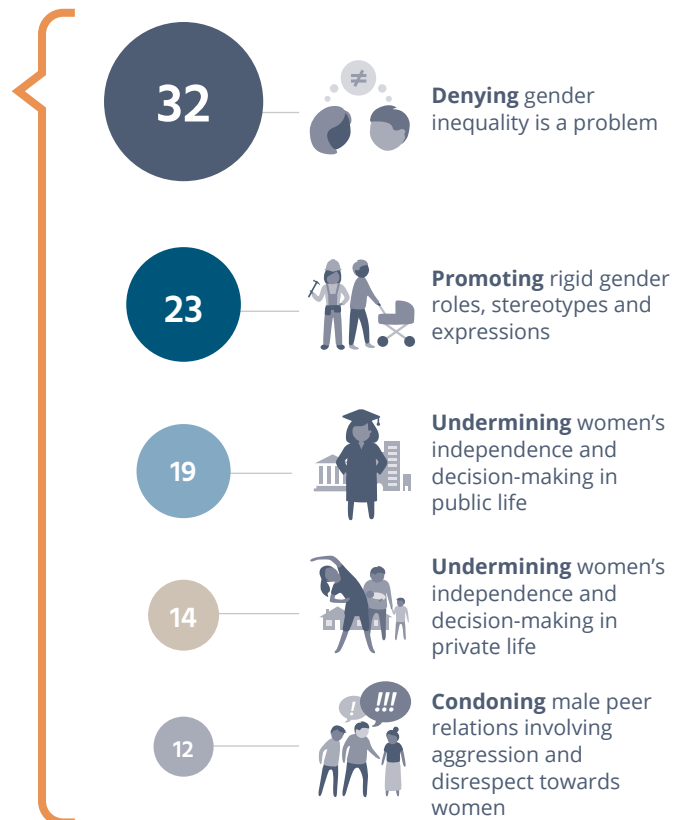
This was very similar to the pattern in the sample as a whole, with the exception of proficiency in English as discussed below. In the national sample education was in the top 6 predictors.

The analysis also investigated the extent to which attitudes in each of the gender equality themes predict whether people born in a N-MESC hold attitudes supportive of violence against women. Attitudes 'Denying gender inequality is a problem' and 'Promoting rigid gender roles, stereotypes and expressions' have the first- and second-strongest influence on attitudes towards violence against women, after the influence of the other themes are taken into account (Figure 4-13b).

**Figure 4-13a: Top 6 predictors of attitudinal support for violence in the N-MESC sample, 2017<sup>§</sup>**



**Figure 4-13b: Influence of gender equality themes in predicting attitudinal support for violence, 2017<sup>¶</sup>**



<sup>§</sup> These figures indicate the percentage of variance explained as a percentage of all variance within the model. The percentage of variance explained by the model overall is 54%.

<sup>¶</sup> These figures indicate the percentage of variance explained as a percentage of all variance within the model. The percentage of variance explained by the model overall is 44%. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

The analyses in Figures 4-13a and 4-13b involved examining factors *within* the N-MESC sample. In the report for the national sample as a whole, multivariate analysis was also undertaken. Country of birth and proficiency in English were included in that model, along with other factors such as gender, education, area

disadvantage, and occupation. In the national sample country of birth and proficiency in English were not among the top six contributors (Webster et al., 2018a). This means that at the population level these factors do not have a strong influence on attitudes towards violence against women.

# 5 Conclusion

## The findings: Factors to keep in mind

The 2017 NCAS was developed, implemented and analysed using rigorous, well-accepted methods and procedures. It has a large sample size and includes both mobile and landline interviewing. This helps ensure the sample is as diverse and representative as possible. As a periodic survey, the NCAS is able to measure changes in knowledge and attitudes over time. However, as is the case with all research, the NCAS has some limitations, as follows:

- Well-established statistical modelling was used to investigate some of the more complex questions. As with any statistical modelling, some assumptions were made
- Although cognitive testing of the questions was undertaken with participants from non-English-speaking backgrounds to ensure they were well understood, responses to surveys on complex social issues can be influenced by language proficiency or cultural differences. Special statistical analysis was undertaken to assess the likely impact of poor proficiency in English on comprehension. Described in greater detail on pages 141-144 of the NCAS methodology report (Webster et al., 2018b), this showed that the influence of poor proficiency in English was likely to have been minimal, especially on findings based on the analyses using composite measures.
- Some people may give an answer based on what they believe is socially acceptable, rather than what they really think, referred to as 'social desirability bias'. Socially desirable responding is less likely when research participants and researchers do not share a common culture and life experience, since giving socially desirable responses depends on an understanding of aspects of the research context and process that are not necessarily made explicit to research participants. This can result in differences between the N-MESC and Australian-born samples being magnified.
- When a relationship is found between two variables (e.g. attitudes and education), it is important to be aware that this does not necessarily mean that one causes the other. The relationship could be the other way around, the factors may influence each other, or there may be a third factor that is common to both but not included in the study.
- A range of factors can distort results when survey researchers and participants do not share a common social experience.

It is not possible to reach everyone contacted by the randomly generated telephone numbers. Approximately half (49%) of those reached agreed to participate. The technical term for this is the 'cooperation rate'. The response rate is a more exacting standard and takes into account all randomly generated numbers that were called and could have resulted in an interview.<sup>21</sup> That is, it includes all numbers that were never answered, not just those where someone answered. The response rate for the NCAS was 17 percent. This is comparable, if not better than, other similar surveys across the world (Dutwin & Lavrakas; 2016; Keeter, Hatley, Kennedy, & Lau, 2017; Kohut, Keeter, Doherty, Dimock, & Christian, 2012; Riggle, Rostosky & Reedy, 2005; Shih & Fan, 2008). Response rates are challenging to interpret in a rapidly changing telecommunications era where many people screen unknown phone numbers and never answer the calls made. Sample weighting was used to correct the impact of any known imbalances in the sample.

There is diversity among people from N-MESCs in terms of place of birth, linguistic and ethnic associations, and social and economic conditions experienced prior to and following arrival in Australia. Where possible these factors are considered in the analysis (e.g. by comparing responses between people who have recently arrived and those who have been in Australia for some time). However, data were not collected on all possible aspects of diversity within and between N-MESC communities. Further, sample sizes were not sufficient to investigate some differences between groups in the sample, even if they could be distinguished.

More information on methodological details can be found in the NCAS methodology report (Webster et al., 2018b) on the ANROWS website.



<sup>21</sup> The American Association for Public Research (AAPOR, 2016) holds the industry standard for calculating response rates and is the formula used for this study. There are four possible AAPOR response rates that can be used to measure the performance of a project. The AAPOR3 calculation is used in NCAS, consistent with previous years.

## Implications for policy and practice

Attitudes are one way to measure progress in addressing the factors leading to violence against women. Results for the community as a whole reported elsewhere (Webster et al., 2018a) show positive changes in people's understanding of violence against women, attitudes to gender equality and attitudes to violence against women. This suggests that Australia is 'on track' to achieving changes in factors contributing to violence against women.

### A multi-level, multi-strategy approach

A range of factors influence violence against women, not just attitudes (for a review of these factors, see Webster & Flood, 2015). Further, attitudes themselves are shaped by influences in people's day-to-day environments (Pease & Flood, 2009). Action to address these influences will be needed to change attitudes and behaviours. Recognising this, expert bodies propose an approach that incorporates multiple strategies, implemented across different sectors and settings and targeted to individuals and families, as well as communities, organisations and society-wide institutions (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015; Heise, 1998; Michau et al., 2015; Our Watch et al., 2015; VicHealth, 2007; 2011; 2017b; UN Women, 2015; WHO, 2002). Plans for implementing such an approach can be found in the National Plan (COAG, 2011) and its successive Action Plans (Australia. Department of Social Services, 2014; 2016) and in the *Change the story* framework to support primary prevention of violence against women (Our Watch et al., 2015).

The NCAS can tell us the attitudes that people hold but not why they hold them or why they are changing. However, it does provide some clues. **Overall, people born overseas in a N-MESC have a good knowledge of violence against women, support gender equality, do not endorse violence against women and are willing to intervene as bystanders.** The overall pattern of findings for the N-MESC sample is very similar to that found among Australian-born respondents in that:

- differences between N-MESC respondents and Australian-born respondents are small for most measures – that is, there is more overlap in responses in both samples than there are differences; and
- the patterns of responses are similar – for example, the rank order of the scores for themes in attitudes towards gender equality and attitudes supportive of violence against women are the same in both samples. Likewise, there is a similar pattern of recognition of both physical and non-physical forms of domestic violence.

This suggests that many of the factors influencing attitudes in the community as a whole also influence attitudes of the overseas-born population. For this reason many of the implications discussed in the report of the findings for the community as a whole (see Webster et al., 2018a) are also likely to be relevant to minority ethnic groups.

### Focusing on strengths

Further, attitudes, norms and practices in minority ethnic communities are not the only ones requiring attention. The attitudes of the community as whole towards violence against women and towards people in minority ethnic communities also play a key role. The NCAS report for the community as a whole found that people who hold attitudes of prejudice towards others, including on the basis of ethnic difference, are also more likely to hold attitudes supporting violence against women and gender inequality.

Other research shows that people are more likely to hold negative attitudes towards violence affecting a woman from a minority ethnic group than a woman from the dominant group (Esqueda & Harrison, 2004; Sokoloff, 2005; 2008). This suggests the importance of tackling other forms of prejudice in the wider community in efforts to reduce violence affecting women, especially women in minority ethnic communities.

### Priority issues

Nevertheless, people in the N-MESC sample are more likely than in the Australian-born sample to have poor knowledge of violence against women, a low level of support for gender equality and a high level of endorsement of attitudes supporting violence against women. Although knowledge and attitudes are not the only factors to consider when assessing the need for targeting, these findings suggest that a focus on minority ethnic communities in policies and programs to prevent violence against women is warranted.

Many of the particular areas of concern are similar to those in the community as a whole. In prioritising effort to strengthen knowledge, attitudes and bystander interventions<sup>22</sup> in minority ethnic communities, there would be benefits in:

- addressing the gaps in knowledge of violence against women, particularly in relation to help seeking, the gendered nature and dynamics of intimate partner violence, and the greater risk of sexual assault by a known person compared to sexual assault by a stranger;
- addressing all aspects of gender equality, with a focus on challenging rigid gender roles and identities and the idea that gender inequality is no longer a problem (the latter is important because, of the five gender equality themes, it was the strongest predictor of attitudes supportive of violence against women);
- promoting attitudes that foster a mutually respectful approach to gender relations and challenging the idea that women use claims of violence for tactical advantage;
- addressing barriers to bystander action by informing people that they are likely to be supported by more of their friends than they might think, by strengthening their knowledge and positive attitudes, and by focusing on people who feel uncomfortable and would like to act but say they would not know how;
- addressing excuses for violence against women, particularly excuses involving alcohol – this is especially important in light of research demonstrating that holding attitudes that excuse violence can prevent individuals from accepting responsibility for their use of violence: accordingly, working to address the legitimisation of excuses for violence against women can work to reduce the use of violence (Morrison et al., 2018); and
- promoting the importance of police and support services continuing to respond to families in which violence reoccurs – this is especially important given that research shows that intimate partner homicides 'rarely occur without warning', and often involve a history of family violence (Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network, 2018). The barriers to women securing safety from violence are now well documented (for a summary of the literature, see Webster et al., 2018a) and are particularly acute for women in some minority ethnic communities (Vaughan et al., 2016).

22 Noting the strengths and limitations of bystander approaches as discussed on p 32.



## The importance of settlement support

The NCAS findings suggest that knowledge strengthens and attitudes change for the better over time in Australia, as well as over the generations and with increasing proficiency in English. This pattern has also been found among immigrants in international research (Bhanot & Senn, 2007; Phinney & Flores, 2002; Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005), and is likely to be due to the process of acculturation in a new society. It is important to note, however, that as well as having norms that support violence against women, the societies from which people migrate can also have other norms that protect against it. Further, some norms do not inevitably lead to attitudes supportive of violence against women. Rather they do so when used as part of a script to justify, excuse or minimise violence against women (Medros, 2013). An example of this is the greater normative support for collectivism found among some groups. This may manifest in greater collective responsibility for the welfare of others, more collective activity among women and greater respect for elders (Yoshihama, 2009), all of which may protect against violence (Heise, 1998). However, collectivism may also manifest in pressure upon women to tolerate violence perpetrated against them by men in their communities in the interests of family and community harmony (Yoshihama, 2009). Together, these patterns suggest that the focus in prevention may need to be on the way norms are used as part of a script to either support or reject violence (Medros, 2013), rather than exclusively on norms change. Further, new arrivals may be exposed to new cultural norms in Australia that may increase the likelihood of attitudes supportive of violence against women, as well as the risk of violence itself (e.g. norms supporting the sexualisation of women in the Australian media and some sporting cultures). This makes it important that prevention efforts among new arrival communities take into account both the norms new arrivals bring with them and those they encounter as they settle in Australia.

New arrivals can be supported in the tasks of settlement so that they accomplish them more quickly and experience fewer barriers. Australian settlement policy reflects the consensus in the literature that this support is best provided in the years immediately following arrival to optimise settlement and ensure that any problems are addressed before they become enduring barriers (Segrave, 2017; O'Sullivan & Olliff, 2006; Valtonen, 2004). Longitudinal research conducted in Australia shows that although migrants and refugees settling in Australia are at higher risk of disadvantage and social and economic exclusion in the years immediately following arrival, over time they tend to do as well, if not better than, the Australian-born population (Community Relations Commission, 2011; Khoo, 2012; Lau et al 2018). While there are many reasons to provide settlement support, the findings of the survey suggest that it may also help to strengthen knowledge of, and improve attitudes towards, violence against women, thus helping to prevent the problem. The improvement in attitudes with increasing proficiency in English suggests that support to acquire skills in English is especially important.

## Strengthening support for gender equality is key

As for the sample as a whole, the strongest predictors of attitudinal support for violence against women in the N-MESC sample are having a low level of support for gender equality and a low level of understanding of the nature of violence against women. This suggests that strengthening understanding and building support for gender equality should be emphasised in prevention as they are more important than a person's demographic characteristics, such as their age or gender. The need for an emphasis on attitudes towards gender equality in prevention work undertaken with minority ethnic communities is also indicated in international research showing that positive change in attitudes towards violence against women is largely driven by changes in attitudes towards gender equality (Bhanot & Senn, 2007; Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005). There are also likely to be benefits in interventions addressing attitudinal support for violence in general, as well as prejudice towards people on the basis of ethnicity, sexuality, Aboriginality and disability, as these also featured among the stronger predictors.

## Whole community and targeted approaches

The fact that differences between people based on their demographic characteristics are not large suggests the need for prevention strategies that reach minority ethnic communities as a whole. However, the survey does show grounds for targeting to:

- communities with large proportions of new arrivals and people with poor proficiency in English;
- men and boys, noting the gender differences found in this sample – men are also the majority of perpetrators of violence and certain male peer group cultures have been implicated (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013), although, importantly, the majority of men do not perpetrate violence and are potential allies in violence prevention;
- elders;
- people living in disadvantaged communities; and
- people in labouring, technical trades, and machinery operating and driving occupations – as discussed in the report of findings for the sample as a whole, this may reflect the skill level of these occupations or the fact they are male dominated.

Although young people from N-MESCs did not vary in significant ways from people in older age groups (other than those 65 years and older as noted in Chapter 4), in their attitudes to violence against women and gender equality they were more likely to have a lower level of understanding of violence against women. A focus on young people is warranted given this finding, along with evidence that violence has a particular impact when occurring at this life cycle stage and data showing that young women are especially vulnerable to violence.<sup>23</sup>

Other factors that may potentially be associated with violence against women and/or attitudes supportive of gender inequality and violence are noted in Chapter 1 (e.g. exposure to war and civil conflict prior to migration). Although these factors were not explored in the NCAS, there are likely to be benefits in providing more intensive support to communities affected by them.

23 Findings for the NCAS sample of people aged 16-24 and particular issues of concern to young people are discussed in a separate report (Politoff et al., 2019).

## A global challenge

Violence against women is a global problem and there is international consensus that there is a need to prevent it (United Nations, 1999). Australia contributes to these efforts through its international aid programs (Dickers, 2017). While this contribution is important for the countries in which this work is supported, in a world increasingly connected through international travel and the world wide web, strengthening global cultures to prevent violence against women and promote gender equality is also likely to have benefits for diaspora communities in countries such as Australia.

## Further research

There is a need for further research, in particular qualitative research, to better understand attitudes in minority ethnic communities and how change is best supported.

One aim of the NCAS is to monitor change over time and this is investigated in the main NCAS report (Webster et al., 2018a) for the sample as a whole. This analysis has not been undertaken in this report for the N-MESC sample. This is because the composition of Australia's migration program changes rapidly and analyses would be required to determine whether any patterns were due to the changing composition of the N-MESC sample or actual change in knowledge and attitudes among people from N-MESCs over time. This would need to be the focus of further research.

Future research could also explore differences in attitudes by different country 'types' – for example, people from low-income countries could be compared with those from middle-income countries to better understand the influence of development on attitudes. Likewise, the responses of people born in countries with high levels of gender equality could be compared with people from countries with low levels of gender equality to increase understanding of how gender relations in a person's country of origin influences their attitudes as they settle in Australia.

Strengthening pro-social responses of those who witness abuse and disrespect of women, often referred to as bystanders, has been identified as a promising strategy to prevent violence (Powell, 2011). A barrier to such action is the lack of confidence that one will have the support of one's friends if taking action (Powell, 2011). The survey found that people from N-MESCs are no less likely than Australian-born people to feel uncomfortable about verbal abuse and disrespect of women, or to support action being taken. Indeed, they are more likely than the Australian-born sample to report feeling bothered by the telling of a sexist joke about a woman in a social context. However, they were significantly less likely to say that they would have the support of their friends if they took action as bystanders. There are many possible reasons for this assessment (e.g. it may be because people from N-MESCs do not feel secure in their social networks owing to experiences of racism and exclusion). Further qualitative research is required to better understand this finding so that programs can be better tailored to support bystander interventions among minority ethnic communities.

There would also be benefits in strengthening the capacity of NCAS to understand the impact of attitudes in minority ethnic communities in future surveys by:

- investigating areas of specific relevance through tailored questions (as was the case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents in 2017);
- including further questions administered in the whole sample to investigate attitudes towards violence affecting minority ethnic communities; and
- assessing other factors that may correlate with violence against women in minority ethnic communities (e.g. satisfaction with settlement in Australia).





# Appendix 1: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Expert Subgroup

Name	Position/organisation
Maria Dimopoulos	Consultant, Myriad Consulting
Wendy Lobwein	Manager, Prevention of Violence Against Women Program, AMES Australia
Pino Migliorino	Managing Director, Cultural Perspectives Group
Dr Cathy Vaughan	Senior Lecturer in Gender and Women's Health, Centre for Health Equity, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, The University of Melbourne

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