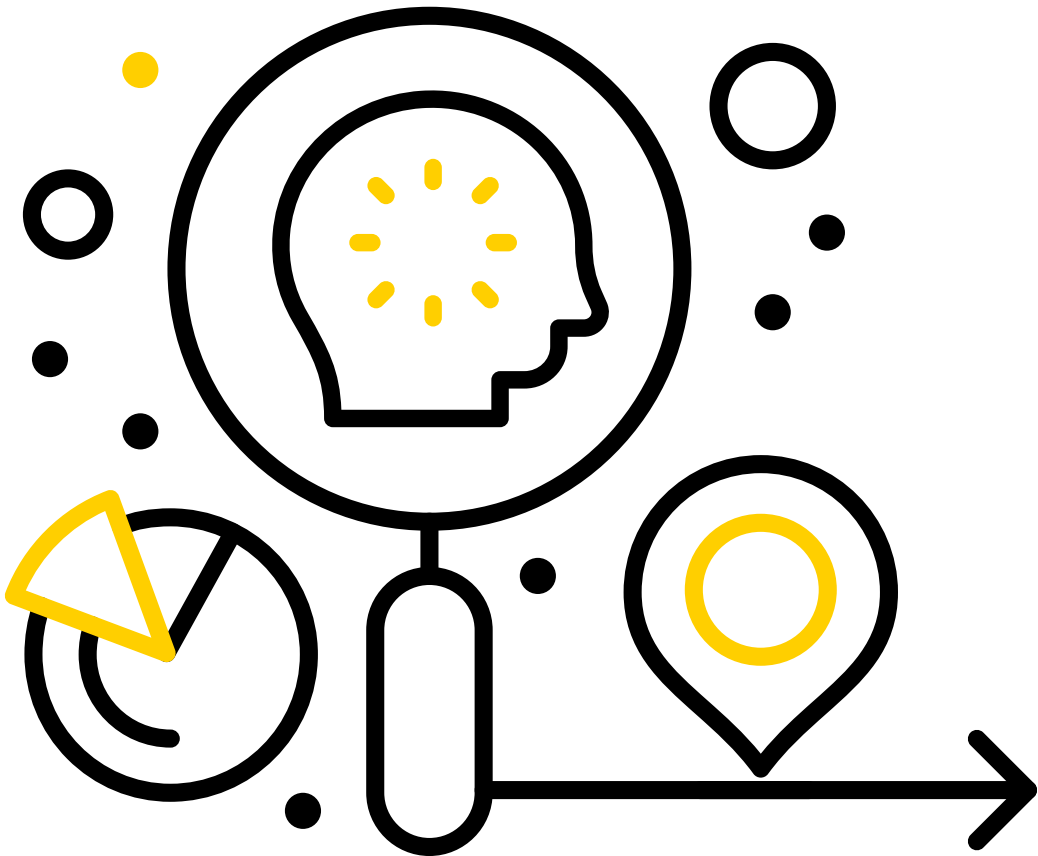















Quick Guide to the 2021 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)



Introduction

The National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) provides data on Australians' understanding of violence against women, their attitudes towards it, and whether there has been change over time. The NCAS also gauges attitudes towards gender inequality and people's willingness to intervene when witnessing abuse or disrespect towards women. The NCAS is the world's longest-running survey of community attitudes towards violence against women.

This Quick Guide supports individuals and organisations to understand and communicate the findings of the NCAS. It includes a brief overview of how the survey works and what it can (and cannot) tell us; the key messages from the 2021 survey with supporting data; how to use the findings; tips for sharing the NCAS results, and social media content.

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Fast facts about the NCAS

1. What is the NCAS?

The *National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey* (NCAS) is a large-scale survey that measures Australians' understanding and attitudes regarding the complex issue of violence against women. Running every four years, the survey provides us with a snapshot in time of Australia's progress in how well we understand violence against women as an issue; how much we support gender equality; and how strongly we condone or reject violence against women.

The NCAS is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (the National Plan 2022–2032). The NCAS provides a means of measuring progress against some of the key goals of the National Plan 2022–2032. The NCAS findings are consistent with the direction of the National Plan 2022–2032 and emphasise the importance of continuing action to prevent violence against women. See **“What are the NCAS findings used for?”** for more information on policy work currently underway.

The NCAS is aligned with the actions outlined in the [Change the Story](#) framework produced by Our Watch. The NCAS complements the Australian Bureau of Statistics' [Personal Safety Survey](#) (PSS), which measures the prevalence of violence by asking people about their experiences of violence.

2. What can the NCAS tell us?

The NCAS measures attitudes and understanding. It is designed to tell us how accurately Australians understand violence against women and how strongly Australians agree or disagree with a range of attitudes or opinions regarding violence against women and gender inequality at a particular point in time. In the NCAS, “understanding” refers to how accurately we recognise behaviours that constitute violence against women, and whether we recognise that domestic violence is gendered.

Attitudes – our beliefs and feelings towards something – are shaped by the world around us. Our individual attitudes are influenced by our families, friends and communities, and by our institutions: they reflect the norms that exist in schools, in the media, and in our policies and laws.

Attitudes also help to create those social norms. How strongly we feel about a particular idea and the ways in which we understand (or misunderstand) an issue will influence social norms and community expectations about what is acceptable behaviour.

Community-wide attitudes will impact, for example, how well we respond to victims and survivors of violence against women, and how we think about and demand accountability from perpetrators. If our population believes that women “lie” about sexual assault, then this will likely be reflected in the way we treat women who disclose experiences of sexual violence. Mistrusting women’s experiences of violence as a community will impact how services and professionals respond to victims and survivors.

Given that attitudes and understanding play a role in shaping social norms, the NCAS functions as a gauge for how Australia is progressing in changing the broader climate that facilitates a culture of violence against women. By highlighting problematic areas in the community’s understanding and attitudes towards violence against women, the NCAS provides valuable evidence to inform policy and practice in the prevention of this violence.

3. Can the NCAS tell us why attitudes have changed?

The NCAS data can tell us about Australians’ attitudes at a specific point in time. It can tell us whether these attitudes have changed over time by comparing the 2021 results with the results from past years. Although the data can show changes over time, it cannot tell us *why* the changes have occurred.

Further research can be used to explore the factors underlying particular attitudes or beliefs. For example, the 2017 NCAS found high levels of community mistrust in women’s reports of sexual assault victimisation in some contexts. ANROWS conducted an additional qualitative research study, [“Chuck her on a lie detector”: Investigating Australians’ mistrust in women’s reports of sexual assault](#), to develop an understanding of what drives these attitudes of mistrust.

4. How can the NCAS tell us about all Australians when only some people were surveyed?

The NCAS interviewed 19,100 Australians aged 16 years and over. The survey was available in 10 community languages, via translation and bilingual interviewers. Random sampling was used to achieve a sample of respondents who had similar demographics to the Australian population. The data was then weighted against data from the census to ensure that the NCAS sample matched the demographics of the population. We also used statistical tests to see if we could confidently generalise our findings to the population. These steps allowed us to make conclusions about the understanding and attitudes of Australians with a high degree of accuracy.

5. Can I compare results in the 2021 NCAS report with results in the 2017 NCAS report?

We made some changes to the data analysis in 2021. Results from the 2021 NCAS report and previous NCAS reports therefore cannot be compared to each other due to differences in the way that the data was analysed. However, we have applied the new analysis to data from previous years and have provided comparisons over time in the 2021 NCAS report. The 2021 NCAS report should therefore be used for the findings on changes over time. See the [2021 NCAS Technical report](#) for further details on methodology.

6. What do the scales and subscales used in the NCAS tell us?

The survey is made up of individual questions, referred to as “items”. These items are grouped into scales to measure a broad concept, such as understanding or attitudes regarding violence against women. Some of the scales are also subdivided into subscales which measure different aspects or themes within the broad concept.

All the scales and subscales work in the same direction, from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating more “advanced” understanding or attitudes. As a society, we are aiming to change the broader climate that facilitates and maintains violence against women and are therefore aiming for higher scores across all the NCAS scales (see also “**What are we aiming for?**”).

An overarching scale, the **Gendered Violence and Inequality Scale (GVIS)**, is used to measure our overall progress regarding Australians’ understanding of violence and rejection of gendered violence and inequality.

The GVIS is comprised of three main scales:

- The **Understanding of Violence against Women Scale (UVAWS)** which measures whether Australians recognise certain behaviours as violence and how well they understand the gendered nature of violence. Higher scores on this scale indicate better understanding of the diverse forms of violence against women. An example of an item in the UVAWS is one that asks respondents whether harassment via repeated emails or text messages is a form of violence against women.
- The **Attitudes towards Gender Inequality Scale (AGIS)** which tells us how strongly Australians reject gender inequality in its different forms. The higher the score, the stronger the rejection of gender inequality in different contexts. For example, one item in the AGIS asks whether respondents agree or disagree that men generally make more capable bosses than women.
- The **Attitudes towards Violence against Women Scale (AVAWS)** measures how strongly respondents reject problematic attitudes regarding violence against women. The higher the score on the AVAWS, the stronger the rejection of incorrect myths, or problematic beliefs concerning violence against women. For example, one item in this scale asks whether respondents agree or disagree that a woman can make a man so angry that he hits her when he didn’t mean to.

Each of these three main scales is made up of subscales which provide detail and nuance on different aspects of understanding or attitudes. For example, the AVAWS has three subscales which measure our attitudes towards specific mindsets and myths about violence against women. One of these subscales is the **Mistrust Women Subscale**, which explores how strongly Australians reject the concept of mistrusting victims and survivors. One item in this subscale asks whether respondents believe that it is common for sexual assault accusations to be used as a way of getting back at men.

Scores on the main scales were used to tell us where Australians’ understanding and attitudes sit *on average*. In addition, scores on each scale were categorised into two groups, one representing “advanced” understanding or attitudes and the other representing “developing” understanding or attitudes. For example, a respondent was categorised as having an “advanced” understanding of violence against women if they answered “yes, always” to at least 75 per cent of items that asked if a particular form of abuse counted as violence and “yes, usually” to the remaining items on that particular scale. Using this classification, we are able to identify how Australia is tracking against a nationwide goal that everyone holds “advanced” understanding and attitudes (see also “**What are we aiming for?**”).

7. What are we aiming for?

As a society committed to ending violence against women, we are aiming for higher scores on all NCAS scales. This will show that, over time, Australians have improved in their understanding of violence against women, rejection of gender inequality, and rejection of violence against women in its various forms.

While average scores show us overall improvement, they do not tell the whole story. To end violence against women, we need *most* Australians to recognise all forms of violence, and to reject problematic myths and attitudes regarding gender inequality and violence against women. People look to those around them to see what is acceptable and normal, so until a visible majority object to problematic behaviour and attitudes, these behaviours and attitudes are likely to persist. So, our short- to medium-term goal is for *most* Australians to have “advanced” understanding and attitudes rejecting violence against women, and for this majority to be reflected at all levels of society from the smallest clubs and organisations to Australia as a whole. Unfortunately, we are not there yet. Our long-term goal is for *all* Australians to reach “advanced” understanding of violence against women and rejection of problematic attitudes.

“Advanced” is an aspirational level that we believe all Australians can and should achieve if we are to end violence against women. People were categorised as having “advanced” rejection of problematic attitudes if they scored above a certain point. This point was the minimum score that people got if they strongly disagreed with 75 per cent (3 in every 4) of problematic attitudes and somewhat disagreed with the remainder of the items in the scale. The process was similar for categorising “advanced” understanding except that people had to answer “yes, always” to at least 75 per cent of items that asked if a particular form of abuse counted as violence, and “yes, usually” to the remaining items on that scale.

8. Are there any other ways to look at NCAS data?

This wave of the NCAS also analysed the data by breaking it down by different types of violence. The 2021 NCAS analysed the data to investigate Australians’ attitudes regarding domestic violence, sexual violence (including both sexual assault and sexual harassment), and technology-facilitated abuse. This helps us to get a clearer picture of which types of violence are more strongly rejected by the community (for more, see Chapter 8 of the [2021 NCAS report](#)).

9. What’s new in the 2021 NCAS?

As a long-running survey, it is important that each wave of the NCAS makes small changes to ensure that it continues to respond to emerging evidence and evolving social norms.

The 2021 NCAS was the first large-scale survey with a representative sample to implement the [2020 ABS Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables](#). This means the survey included demographic questions on sex recorded at birth, current gender identity, intersex status and sexuality. These additions allow for more inclusive reporting and, where possible, for non-binary respondents’ understanding and attitudes to be reported on separately. This change to the NCAS provides a unique addition to research on gender diversity and attitudes towards violence against women.

Additional items have also been added to the survey to allow for more detailed measurement of our understanding and attitudes about newer forms of violence, such as technology-facilitated abuse.

New items were introduced to examine Australians' understanding of the way perpetrators of domestic violence can leverage forms of intersectional discrimination and marginalisation to exert control. For example, respondents were asked whether threatening to deport a partner on a visa, or threatening to put a partner with disability into a home, was domestic violence (for more on this topic, see Section 1.2 of the 2021 NCAS report).

New scales were developed and reported on in the 2021 NCAS, specifically the overarching GVIS (see **“What do the scales and subscales used in the NCAS tell us?”**) and new type of violence scales (see **“Are there any other ways to look at NCAS data?”**).

In 2021, a new way to measure national progress was introduced. Each wave of the NCAS can tell us about Australians' average level of understanding and rejection of problematic attitudes at a point in time. However, these average scores on their own cannot tell us whether Australians have a high level of understanding or particularly progressive attitudes. For example, in 2021 Australians had an average score of 69 on the Understanding of Violence against Women Scale (UVAWS), up from 65 in 2017. This tells us Australians' understanding of violence has improved but not whether their understanding is good. To respond to this gap, the 2021 NCAS classified respondents into one of two categories, as having either “advanced” or “developing” understanding and attitudes. This classification will allow us to see what proportion of Australians hold “advanced” understanding and attitudes and to track progress over time (see also **“What are we aiming for?”**).

10. Did COVID-19 affect the 2021 NCAS results?

Australian research has shown that the COVID-19 pandemic coincided with the onset or escalation of violence for many women. The pandemic may have also influenced changes in Australian attitudes towards violence against women. However, while the NCAS can show us how much attitudes have changed since 2017, it cannot show us why, or at which specific point in those four years the attitudes changed. Chapter 2 of the [2021 NCAS report](#) provides some context for events that occurred during this four-year period.

11. Did the 2021 NCAS ask about coercive control?

The 2021 NCAS did not directly ask respondents about the relationship between domestic violence and coercive control because coercive control is a complex issue. It did however cover some of the behaviours that can constitute coercive control.

The complexity comes because coercive control refers to a *pattern* of behaviours that reduce someone's autonomy and agency. It involves a perpetrator employing abusive tactics, such as financial, psychological and physical abuse, that cumulatively work to exert dominance and control over another person. The tactics can be physical or non-physical, or combinations of both.

As coercive control is a pattern of behaviours, and not a singular act or behaviour, it is difficult to gauge knowledge or awareness with a single question. To uncover what Australians understand about coercive control, items relating to particular abusive behaviours were framed to draw out the controlling or abusive intent of the behaviour. You can read more about this in Chapter 5 of the [2021 NCAS report](#).

Improving how Australians understand coercive control is reflected in the National Plan 2022–2032 and in the work the Standing Council of Attorneys-General have undertaken on a set of *National Principles to Address Coercive Control*.

12. I work with a specific group/geographic area. What can NCAS tell me about their attitudes and understanding?

Our understanding of, and attitudes towards, gender equality and violence against women are related to multiple and complex factors. The 2021 NCAS data shows that demographics like age, education and location only explain a fraction of the picture when analysing what contributes to differences in attitudes and understanding. The modest effect of these factors should be kept in mind when considering these findings.

Chapter 9 of the [2021 NCAS report](#) discusses factors such as gender, age, sexuality, disability and country of birth. Implications stemming from the 2021 NCAS findings for different demographic groups can be found in Chapter 10.

A series of additional reports will provide in-depth analysis of 2021 NCAS results. These (forthcoming) reports will include a breakdown of NCAS results by state and territory, and three reports relating to population groups of interest identified in the National Plan 2022–2032:

- young Australians
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

13. How do Australians' attitudes and understanding of violence against women compare to the rest of the world?

Direct comparisons between Australia and other countries are difficult to make because different countries ask different questions relating to attitudes and understanding of violence against women in their national surveys.

The NCAS does establish a national benchmark that allows Australia's progress to be monitored over time. Part of this benchmark is establishing a goal for every Australian to have an "advanced" understanding of violence against women, and to strongly reject attitudes that are supportive of violence against women and gender inequality (see also "**What are we aiming for?**").

Key messages

The following key messages have been developed to assist in communication of the 2021 NCAS results.

Key message	Supporting messages and data
Changes over time	
<p>Over the last decade, Australians' understanding of violence against women has improved</p>	<p>The mean score on the Understanding Violence Against Women Scale was significantly higher in 2021 compared with 2009, 2013 and 2017.</p> <p>Understanding of diverse forms of violence has improved. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2013, 71% of respondents stated that harassment via repeated emails or text messages was always or usually a form of violence against women. This rose to 76% in 2017 and 84% in 2021 • In 2013, 54% of respondents stated that controlling a partner by denying them money was always or usually a form of domestic violence. This rose to 66% in 2017 and 81% in 2021
<p>Over the last decade, there has been a slow increase in Australians' rejection of problematic beliefs and attitudes about violence against women</p>	<p>The mean score on the Attitudes towards Violence against Women Scale was significantly higher in 2021 compared with both 2009 and 2013, but there was no significant difference in the mean scores between 2017 and 2021.</p> <p>This plateau in people's attitudes towards violence against women between 2017 and 2021 is largely due to a plateau in some attitudes towards domestic violence. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 85% disagreed that domestic violence can be excused if the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done. This rose from 71% in 2009 and 74% in 2013, but was similar to the percentage in 2017 • 84% disagreed that domestic violence can be excused if it results from someone getting so angry that they temporarily lose control. This rose from 76% in 2013 but was similar to the percentage in 2017 <p>On the other hand, attitudes towards sexual violence in particular have seen improvement since 2017. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2017, 68% of people disagreed that women find it flattering to be persistently pursued, even if they are not interested. This rose to 81% in 2021

Key message	Supporting messages and data
<p>Since 2013, Australians have increasingly rejected problematic beliefs and attitudes related to gender inequality</p>	<p>The mean score on the Attitudes towards Gender Inequality Scale was significantly higher in 2021 compared with 2009, 2013 and 2017.</p> <p>Australians are increasingly rejecting attitudes that support gender inequality. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2013, 67% of respondents disagreed that men make better political leaders than women. This rose to 80% in 2017 and 85% in 2021 • In 2013, 78% of respondents rejected the idea that men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household. This rose to 80% in 2017 and 87% in 2021
<p>Supporting the goal to end violence against women in one generation</p>	
<p>The NCAS findings support the direction that the Australian Government has taken in the National Plan, and the work already underway on key issues such as coercive control, gender inequality, sexual harassment and respectful relationships</p>	<p>The NCAS highlighted that there is work to be done in a number of key areas, which supports the government's focus under the National Plan. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coercive control: 1 in 10 respondents agreed that it's easy for a woman to leave an abusive relationship • Gender inequality: 1 in 3 respondents agreed that women exaggerate the unequal treatment of women in Australia • Sexual harassment: 1 in 10 respondents agreed with the statement "Since some women are so sexual in public, it's understandable that some men think they can touch women without permission" • Respectful relationships: 1 in 10 respondents agreed that women often say "no" when they mean "yes"
<p>Understanding of, and attitudes towards, violence against women and gender inequality are improving. However, we still have a long way to go before a visible majority of Australians have a good understanding of violence against women and are objecting to problematic attitudes</p>	<p>In the 2021 NCAS, only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44% of respondents demonstrated an "advanced" understanding of violence against women • 34% of respondents demonstrated an "advanced" rejection of violence against women • 28% demonstrated an "advanced" rejection of gender inequality
<p>Understanding of violence against women – work to be done</p>	
<p>A majority of Australians do not think that violence against women occurs in all communities, including one's own community</p>	<p>Even though 91% of respondents agreed that violence against women is a problem in Australia, only 47% agreed that it is a problem in their own suburb or town</p>
<p>Many Australians don't understand that domestic violence is predominantly perpetrated by men against women</p>	<p>41% of respondents believed that domestic violence is equally committed by both men and women, contrary to the evidence that men are the main perpetrators of this violence.</p> <p>In 2021 compared to 2009 and 2013, significantly fewer respondents recognised that men are more likely to commit domestic violence: 57% in 2021 compared to 74% in 2009 and 71% in 2013.</p>

Key message	Supporting messages and data
<p>Australians are less likely to recognise non-physical abuse as domestic violence</p>	<p>Behaviours involving or threatening physical injury were most frequently recognised as “always” being forms of domestic violence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 82% of respondents recognised that slapping or pushing a partner to cause harm or fear is “always” domestic violence • 92% of respondents recognised that scaring or controlling a partner by threatening family members is “always” domestic violence <p>Tactics of coercive control, including behaviours involving emotional abuse or financial abuse and behaviours that target aspects of a partner’s identity, beliefs or experience, are less frequently recognised as “always” being forms of domestic violence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 66% of respondents recognised that controlling a partner by forcing them to hide that they are transgender is “always” a form of domestic violence • Only 66% of respondents believed that repeatedly criticising a partner to make them feel bad or useless is “always” domestic violence
<p>Attitudes towards gender inequality – work to be done</p>	
<p>Some Australians hold attitudes that contribute to a broader climate of gender inequality. These include attitudes that condone limiting women’s personal autonomy in relationships, undermining women’s leadership in public life, normalising sexism, reinforcing rigid gender roles and denying women’s experiences of inequality</p>	<p>Attitudes that limit women’s personal autonomy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19% of respondents agreed that women prefer men to be in charge of relationships <p>Attitudes that undermine women’s leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% agreed that men make more capable bosses <p>Attitudes that normalise sexism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15% agreed that there is no harm in sexist jokes <p>Attitudes that reinforce rigid gender roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6% agreed that women should not initiate sex when a couple starts dating <p>Attitudes that deny experiences of gender inequality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41% of respondents agreed that many women mistakenly interpret innocent remarks as sexist
<p>Attitudes towards violence against women – work to be done</p>	
<p>Harmful myths and stereotypes about violence against women persist. Women are still being blamed for causing their own victimisation or for lying about their experiences, while men are being excused for their violent behaviour</p>	<p>Attitudes that minimise violence and shift blame:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19% of respondents agreed that sometimes a woman can make a man so angry that he hits her when he didn’t mean to • 23% of respondents agreed that much of what is called domestic violence is a normal reaction to day-to-day stress and frustration <p>Attitudes that mistrust women’s reports of violence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34% of respondents agreed that it is common for sexual assault accusations to be used as a way of getting back at men • 37% of respondents agreed that women going through custody battles often make up or exaggerate claims of domestic violence to gain tactical advantage in their case

Key message	Supporting messages and data
<p>Concerning amounts of Australians hold attitudes that objectify women, disregard women’s consent, and perceive sexual harassment as “flattering”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24% of respondents agreed that a lot of times, women who say they were raped had led the man on and had regrets • 1 in 10 respondents agreed that when a man is very sexually aroused, he may not even realise that the woman doesn’t want to have sex • 21% of respondents agreed that if a woman sends a naked picture to her partner, then she is partly responsible if he shares it without her permission • 10% of respondents agreed that women often say “no” when they mean “yes” • 10% of respondents agreed that a woman who is drunk or on drugs is partly responsible if she is raped • 20% of respondents either incorrectly thought that rape in marriage is not a criminal offence or were unsure if it is a criminal offence • Some respondents agreed that catcalls (13%) and being persistently pursued without consent (13%) are flattering for women
<p>Australians’ attitudes towards domestic violence did not improve between 2017 and 2021. Misperceptions about domestic violence persist, including that perpetration can be justified, that it should be handled privately within the family and that victims and survivors are partly to blame</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly one quarter (23%) of respondents agreed that much of what is called domestic violence is a normal reaction to day-to-day stress and frustration • More than 1 in 10 respondents (12%) agreed that domestic violence is a private matter that should be handled in the family • 1 in 4 respondents agreed that a woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing
<p>There is a lack of awareness in the community about the impact of violence that is perpetrated online, and about what online behaviour constitutes a criminal offence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly 1 in 10 (9%) respondents did not think that a man sending an unwanted picture of his genitals to a woman is a form of violence against women • 21% of respondents agreed that if a woman sends a naked picture to her partner, then she is partly responsible if he shares it without her permission • Around 1 in 10 (11%) respondents did not recognise that sharing a sexual picture of an ex-partner online without their consent is a criminal offence, or were uncertain if it is an offence
<p>Explaining differences in understanding, attitudes and bystander responses</p>	
<p>Demographics only explain a fraction of people’s understanding, attitudes, and bystander responses</p>	<p>The NCAS data was analysed to determine which factors impact people’s understanding, attitudes and bystander responses. Although demographic factors such as age, gender and education explained a fraction of the differences in understanding, attitudes and bystander responses, other factors are needed to fully explain these differences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 93% of the differences in respondents’ understanding of violence against women could not be explained by demographic factors • 82% of the different attitudes towards gender inequality could not be explained by demographic factors • 80% of the different attitudes towards violence against women could not be explained by demographic factors

Key message	Supporting messages and data
<p>People’s understanding of violence against women explains only some of the differences in their attitudes towards gender equality</p>	<p>The NCAS data was analysed to determine which factors could most strongly predict someone’s attitudes towards gender inequality.</p> <p>Higher scores for understanding of violence against women were associated with significantly higher rejection of gender inequality.</p> <p>However, only around a fifth (19%) of the difference in attitudes towards gender inequality was explained by levels of understanding of violence against women, suggesting that other factors are more important in determining these attitudes</p>
<p>Attitudes towards violence against women are closely connected to attitudes towards gender inequality</p>	<p>Attitudes towards gender inequality were the most significant predictor of attitudes towards violence against women: high rejection of gender inequality meant someone was more likely to reject violence against women.</p> <p>Attitudes towards gender equality explained more of the differences in people’s attitudes towards violence against women than demographics or their understanding of violence against women</p>
Bystander responses	
<p>It is everyone’s business to create environments that support and encourage people to stand up and speak out when they witness abusive, disrespectful or sexist behaviour</p>	<p>Most respondents indicated they would want to intervene in some way if they witnessed abuse or disrespect towards women. However, their intention to call out behaviour or intervene depended on the type of abusive or disrespectful behaviour. Respondents were more likely to call out abuse than sexist jokes.</p> <p>Whether respondents intended to intervene or not also depended on other factors such as the presence of a power differential between the bystander and perpetrator, anticipated peer support and the gender composition of the respondents’ networks</p>

■ What are the NCAS findings used for?

Preventing violence against women requires the community to take a wide range of actions, and changing attitudes is one important step. The NCAS findings have been used to assist in the design of violence prevention programs, consent and respectful relationships education, and other initiatives which aim to end violence against women.

The NCAS has also been a key means of monitoring progress against the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* and will continue to evaluate progress against the National Plan 2022–2032.

The NCAS measures progress against some of the key indicators in the National Plan 2022–2032 in order to end violence in one generation. These indicators include that the population:

- has a strong understanding of the nature of violence against women, including its diverse and nuanced forms (early intervention key indicator)
- strongly rejects attitudes that condone gender inequality and violence against women (prevention key indicator)
- is prepared to intervene when witnessing violence or abuse against women (early intervention key indicator).

A full list of implications for ending violence against women can be found in Chapter 10 of the [2021 NCAS report](#). These implications reflect all four domains of the National Plan 2022–2032: prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing. Many implications from the 2021 NCAS are already captured in work currently underway by the Australian Government, and in state and territory governments. This includes, for example, the development of a set of *National Principles to Address Coercive Control* by the [Standing Council of Attorneys-General](#); amendments to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) relating to employers having to take steps to address sexual harassment in workplaces; and work currently underway on Australia's first [National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality](#).

The following are some examples of how the NCAS findings translate into practical steps we can take toward ending violence against women and children.

Finding	Implication
<p>The majority of respondents (91%) agreed that violence against women is a problem in Australia, but only 47% agreed it is a problem in their own suburb or town</p>	<p>Prevention programs and awareness campaigns should focus on “personalising violence” by drawing attention to the nationwide prevalence of violence against women. It is a problem that occurs in every social network, community and workplace and requires a community-wide approach</p>
<p>2 in 5 respondents would not know how to access domestic violence services</p>	<p>Raise public awareness of where and how to seek help for domestic violence, including for people who personally experience violence; witness or become aware of someone experiencing violence; are a perpetrator of domestic violence; or know someone who is using violence</p>
<p>41% of respondents believed that domestic violence is equally perpetrated by men and women, despite men being the main perpetrators of domestic violence. Similarly, concerning proportions of respondents incorrectly believe that men and women equally suffer physical harm (21%) and fear (28%) as a result of domestic violence</p>	<p>Policy and prevention initiatives – such as awareness campaigns, education and training – should address any scepticism about the gendered nature of domestic violence by highlighting domestic violence statistics (e.g. prevalence rates and hospitalisation statistics)</p>
<p>34% of respondents believed that it is common for sexual assault accusations to be used as a way of getting back at men</p>	<p>Correct myths and misconceptions about the nature of sexual assault and “genuine” victims within the community and justice and service systems. For example, address persistent myths that false allegations are common by highlighting the very high level of underreporting of sexual assault to police as well as the rarity of false allegations</p>
<p>There is less recognition that non-physical forms of abuse, including emotional abuse, constitute violence (e.g. only 66% agreed that repeatedly criticising a partner to make them feel bad or useless is “always” domestic violence)</p>	<p>Continue progress on developing and implementing consistent definitions of domestic violence and coercive control across legislative and policy settings Australia-wide and ensure they are adopted across education and prevention initiatives</p>

Tips for sharing the NCAS results

The responses below have been developed to assist stakeholders in responding to misinterpretation and misinformation when sharing findings from the NCAS. Where possible, responses should also link to sources that contain further information.

Question	Suggested response
<p>Why is the research focused on violence against women? What about violence against men?</p>	<p>Violence against anyone is unacceptable. However, men and women experience violence – and its impacts – differently.</p> <p>Evidence shows that women are more likely to experience domestic, family and sexual violence, and to experience greater harm and fear as a result of it.</p> <p>Women are over two times more likely to experience sexual harassment and police-recorded sexual assault is almost seven times as high for women than men. Women are nearly three times more likely than men to experience violence from a current or former partner, and eight times more likely to experience sexual violence from an intimate partner (see, for example, ABS and AIHW).</p> <p>Domestic and family violence perpetrated against women is significantly more likely to end in a death. One woman is murdered by her intimate partner every 10 days in Australia (see, for example, AIC). Table 1-1 in the 2021 NCAS report provides further details on the impacts of violence against women.</p> <p>The vast majority (94%) of women who experienced violence since the age of 15 did so at the hands of a man. Men are also more likely to perpetrate acts that result in serious injury or fatality (see, for example, analysis of ABS data and AIHW).</p> <p>The NCAS has shown that there has been a decline over time in people’s understanding that domestic violence is a gendered issue. Despite overwhelming evidence that men are more likely to perpetrate domestic violence and women far more likely to experience severe harms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only 57% of respondents recognised that men are the main perpetrators of domestic violence in 2021, compared to 74% in 2009 • only 76% of respondents recognised that women are more likely to experience physical harm as a result of domestic violence in 2021, compared to 89% in 2009. <p>One possible reason for this decline in understanding is people believing that progress towards gender equality means that men and women now equally perpetrate and experience domestic violence. This perspective is referred to as a “gender-ignoring” lens and reveals the necessity of focusing on the issue of violence against women.</p>

Question	Suggested response
<p>Gender inequality doesn't have anything to do with violence against women</p>	<p>Gender inequality involves devaluing or disrespecting women or women's contributions. Research has consistently found that this disrespect and devaluing increases the likelihood of violence against women and there is evidence that holding negative attitudes towards women has been associated with the actual perpetration of violence (see, for example, Our Watch).</p> <p>Preventing violence against women starts with challenging attitudes, practices, systems and structures throughout society that support gender inequality. Attitudes influence social norms or expectations about what is acceptable behaviour. These expectations in turn influence behaviour. It is for these reasons that the National Plan 2022–2032 has identified a reduction in attitudes that do not support gender equality as a key indicator for progress and preventing violence.</p> <p>The NCAS measures Australian attitudes towards gender inequality by asking questions that reveal how strongly people condemn or condone sexism and sexist behaviour; reinforce rigid gender roles; limit the autonomy of women; undermine women's leadership in work and public life; and deny the fact that inequality exists. The NCAS therefore provides a way to track changes in attitudes and to support the National Plan 2022–2032 key indicator.</p>
<p>This research is biased</p>	<p>This survey is the world's longest-running survey of its kind. It is led by Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety in partnership with the Social Research Centre, a leading Australian research institution. It uses rigorous and widely accepted methodologies and has been peer reviewed by national and international experts. For more information on the research methodology, see the 2021 NCAS Technical report.</p>
<p>Why are we spending time exploring this when Australia has so many other important issues to tackle?</p>	<p>Violence against women is a huge issue in Australia and has significant health, social and economic costs for women and society as a whole.</p> <p>One woman is murdered by her intimate partner every 10 days in Australia. Since the age of 15, one in two women have experienced sexual harassment, one in four have experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner, one in five have experienced sexual violence and one in six have experienced physical violence by a partner (see, for example, AIC and ABS).</p> <p>Table 1-1 in the 2021 NCAS report details the impacts of violence against women, including increasing rates of mental health issues, suicide and early pregnancy loss, impacts upon children, and economic loss at a personal and national level.</p> <p>Violence against women has far-reaching impacts and cost for the entire community.</p>
<p>How does this research change anything? Why don't we put the money into support services instead?</p>	<p>Responding to violence against women is critical, but so is preventing violence before it starts. Improving attitudes can play an important role in prevention. Attitudes contribute to social norms that impact behaviour. Researching how Australian attitudes towards violence and gender inequality have changed and identifying problematic areas in understanding and beliefs can help guide intervention and prevention programs to be successful.</p>

Question	Suggested response
<p>Violence against women isn't a problem for everyone. Shouldn't we focus on groups who are the problem?</p>	<p>The NCAS shows that attitudes to violence against women and gender inequality are not primarily determined by demographics.</p> <p>Demographics only predicted a small portion of the difference in respondents' attitudes towards violence against women. Beliefs about violence against women are determined by complex factors that cannot be explained solely by demographics.</p> <p>We also know that both experiencing and perpetrating violence against women transcends all backgrounds in Australia. Violence is a problem for everyone (see, for example, ABS [2017], ABS [2021], ABS [2021]).</p>
<p>Violence against women isn't a problem in Australia compared to the rest of the world</p>	<p>Violence against women is still a problem in Australia.</p> <p>One woman is murdered by her intimate partner every 10 days in Australia. Since the age of 15, one in two women have experienced sexual harassment, one in four have experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner, one in five have experienced sexual violence and one in six have experienced physical violence by a partner (see, for example, AIC and ABS).</p> <p>While comparative data may show higher prevalence in other countries, this does not diminish the personal and social costs of violence against women in Australia.</p>
<p>If attitudes are getting better, why isn't the problem of violence against women getting any better?</p>	<p>The relationship between attitudes and behaviour is complex. It takes time to change such entrenched human behaviours, and while Australians' attitudes and understanding are improving, it's happening slowly.</p> <p>Attitudes and knowledge are essential for social change, but there are many other factors that impact our <i>behaviour</i> and therefore impact the prevalence of violence. All of these factors need to be addressed.</p>

Social media content

Some examples of social media content are provided below to assist with online communications about the NCAS 2021 findings. Images can be found in high resolution on the [ANROWS website](https://www.anrows.org.au). ANROWS suggests linking to the 2021 NCAS report or the Summary report where possible.

#NCAS

A majority of Australians do not think violence against women occurs in all communities, including their own

Even though **91%** of respondents agreed that violence against women is a problem in Australia

only **47%** agreed that it is a problem in their own suburb or town

Find out more at ncas.anrows.org.au

ANROWS

#NCAS

A concerning proportion of Australians **mistrust women's reports of violence**

34% of respondents believed that it is common for sexual assault accusations to be used as a way of getting back at men, contrary to the evidence



Find out more at ncas.anrows.org.au

ANROWS

#NCAS

Many Australians don't understand that **domestic violence is predominantly perpetrated by men against women**

41% of respondents believed that domestic violence is equally committed by both men and women



Find out more at ncas.anrows.org.au

ANROWS

#NCAS

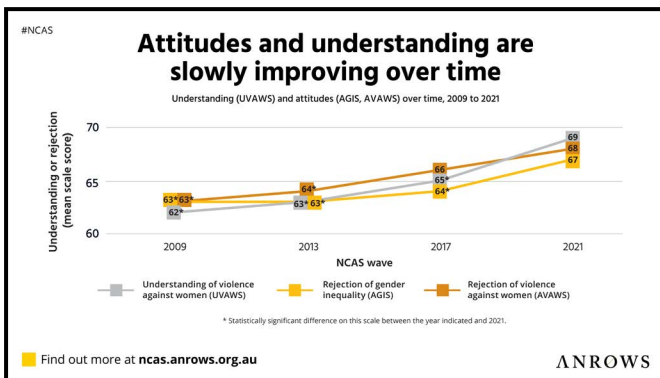
Many Australians do not know where to get help

2 in 5 respondents would **not know** how to access domestic violence services



Find out more at ncas.anrows.org.au

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Further reading and resources

2021 NCAS

Coumarelos, C., Weeks, N., Bernstein, S., Roberts, N., Honey, N., Minter, K., & Carlisle, E. (2023). *Attitudes Matter: The 2021 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS), Findings for Australia* (Research report 02/2023). ANROWS.

Coumarelos, C., Weeks, N., Bernstein, S., Roberts, N., Honey, N., Minter, K., & Carlisle, E. (2023). *Attitudes matter: The 2021 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS), Summary for Australia* (Research report, 03/2023). ANROWS.

Coumarelos, C., Honey, N., Ward, A., Weeks, N., & Minter, K. (2023). *Attitudes matter: The 2021 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS), Technical report* (Insights 02/2023). ANROWS.

2017 NCAS

Qualitative research studies based on findings

Carlisle, E., Coumarelos, C., Minter, K., & Lohmeyer, B. (2022). "It depends on what the definition of domestic violence is": How young Australians conceptualise domestic violence and abuse. ANROWS. <https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/it-depends-on-what-the-definition-of-domestic-violence-is-how-young-people-conceptualise-domestic-violence-and-abuse/>

Minter, K., Carlisle, E., & Coumarelos, C. (2021). "Chuck her on a lie detector": Investigating Australians' mistrust in women's reports of sexual assault. ANROWS. <https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/chuck-her-on-a-lie-detector-investigating-australians-mistrust-in-womens-reports-of-sexual-assault/>

The Personal Safety Survey

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2017). *Personal Safety, Australia*. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release>

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2023). *Personal Safety, Australia*. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release>

The National Plan

Council of Australian Governments. (2022). *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*. Commonwealth of Australia. https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/10_2022/national_plan_accessible_version_for_website.pdf

Change the Story

Our Watch. (2021). *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia* (2nd ed.). <https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/11/23131846/Change-the-story-Our-Watch-AA.pdf>



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Please check the online version at www.anrows.org.au for any amendments.



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