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## **Attitudes matter: Overall Australians attitudes towards violence against women have improved, but there is still a long way to go.**

**Australians have a better understanding of domestic violence, recognising non-physical forms of violence, but 2 in 5 people mistakenly believe that domestic violence is perpetrated by both men and women equally.**

The 2021 National Community Attitudes Survey (NCAS), released by ANROWS today, has revealed that 41% of respondents mistakenly believe that domestic violence is equally committed by men and women, a significant increase from 23% of respondents in 2009.

The 2021 NCAS, which measures understanding and attitudes of people across Australia, found that only 57% of respondents believe males are the primary perpetrators of domestic violence, despite recent ABS Personal Safety Survey<sup>1</sup> evidence, which revealed most victim-survivors name a male perpetrator.

The world's longest running survey of community attitudes towards violence against women, the 2021 NCAS surveyed 19,100 Australians and found that while understanding and rejection of domestic and sexual violence have generally improved, there is a still long way to go.

Concerningly, the 2021 NCAS also found that even though 91% of respondents believe violence against women is a problem in Australia, only 47% of respondents believe it is a problem in their own suburb or town. In addition, Australian's overall rejection of domestic violence plateaued between 2017 and 2021.

Despite concerning findings, the 2021 NCAS found some significant improvements in understanding and attitudes over the last decade, after the release of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, such as a greater understanding of the different forms of violence. In 2013 only 53% of respondents considered controlling a partner by denying them money a form of domestic violence, this rose to 81% in 2021.

Pleasingly, the 2021 NCAS also found significant improvements in Australians' understanding and rejection of sexual violence, with 81% of respondents disagreeing that women find it flattering to be persistently pursued, even if they are not interested, which rose from 68% in 2017.

Padma Raman PSM, CEO of ANROWS, said the 2021 NCAS findings provide the evidence that the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032* is moving in the right direction to eliminate violence in one generation.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release>

“The National Plan, agreed to by all Governments, creates the blueprint for how as a nation we can eliminate violence against women and children and the 2021 NCAS findings provide concrete areas where we need to work as a country to achieve this,” Ms Raman said.

“These findings show us that significant work needs to be done to improve attitudes and understanding regarding family, domestic and sexual violence.”

“Whilst these findings show really pleasing shifts in Australians’ attitudes towards sexual violence, we still have a long way to go in correcting victim-blaming attitudes and rape myths.”

“Over the last decade we’ve seen an improvement in understanding of family and domestic violence, including recognising non-physical forms of violence, but it is extremely worrying that many Australians don’t understand that domestic violence is predominantly perpetrated by men against women.”

Minister for Social Services Amanda Rishworth thanked ANROWS for its important work on the long-running National Community Attitudes Survey.

“Research like this helps us identify where there may be gaps in our understanding and where we need to focus our efforts on as a society when it comes to the important issues of family, domestic and sexual violence,” Minister Rishworth said.

“Along with states and territories, last year with the release of the *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032* we set a target to end violence against women and children in one generation. By all pulling in the same direction we can achieve this, but governments can’t do it on their own. Ending violence against women and children is everybody’s responsibility and everybody’s business.”

“A key piece in ending violence against women and children is addressing the attitudes that can support it. This includes attitudes that deny gender equality, that seek to limit women’s autonomy in relationships and that objectify women and disregard consent.”

Other significant findings from the NCAS include that, in 2021:

- 1 in 4 respondents believed that a woman who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing.
- 2 in 5 respondents said they would not know how to access domestic violence services.
- 37% of respondents thought women going through custody battles often make up or exaggerate claims of domestic violence to gain tactical advantage in their case.
- 41% of respondents agreed that many women mistakenly interpret innocent remarks as sexist.
- 1 in 3 respondents thought women exaggerate the unequal treatment of women in Australia.
- 34% of respondents believed that it is common for sexual assault accusations to be used as a way of getting back at men.
- 24% of respondents believed that a lot of times women who say they were raped had led the man on and later had regrets.
- 1 in 4 respondents believed that when a man is very sexually aroused, he may not even realise that the woman doesn’t want to have sex.
- 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.
- 85% of respondents did not believe 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% of respondents did not believe 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.

To read the full findings from the National Community Attitudes Survey 2021 and to access all reports and resources visit: [ANROWS 2021 NCAS](#)

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### **About ANROWS**

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety Limited (ANROWS) is a not-for-profit independent national research organisation. ANROWS was established as an initiative of Australia's *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* and is continuing under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*. ANROWS was established by the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments of Australia to produce, disseminate, and assist in applying evidence for policy and practice addressing violence against women and their children. ANROWS is the only such research organisation in Australia.

### **About the NCAS**

The National Community Attitudes Survey (NCAS) is the world's longest running survey of community attitudes towards violence against women, utilising a representative sample methodology to track changing attitudes over time. Running every four years, now in its sixth iteration, the NCAS provides a snapshot in time of Australia's progress in understanding violence against women, attitudes towards it, what influences attitudes, as well as examining attitudes towards gender equality and bystander responses. Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS), the NCAS provides a means of measuring progress against some of the key goals of the *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032*. The 2021 NCAS collected data from a sample of 19,100 Australians aged 16 years and over and was available in 10 languages. Random sampling was used to achieve a sample of respondents who had similar demographics to the Australian population. To ensure comparability between survey waves, most items were retained. However new items examined understanding and attitudes regarding issues such as technology-facilitated abuse and forms of violence experienced by diverse groups who may face intersectional forms of inequality.