

ANROWS

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

MEDIA RELEASE

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Major report finds young people's understanding of violence against women and their attitudes towards this violence and gender inequality are improving, but that more work is needed.

The findings for young Australians from the 2021 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) are here. The periodic survey, conducted by ANROWS, shows that young Australians' (aged 16 to 24) understanding of violence against women and attitudes towards this violence and towards gender inequality are improving slowly over time.

The report shows that 27 to 43% of young respondents have an advanced understanding of violence against women and advanced attitudes towards this violence and gender inequality. However, the report also highlights concerning trends, including that improvement in attitudes towards domestic violence had plateaued among young people. Between 2017 and 2021, young Australians' understanding of violence against women, rejection of gender inequality, rejection of violence against women and rejection of sexual violence have significantly improved.

The latest NCAS report reinforces the need for continued focus on supporting young people to contribute to a culture that rejects violence against women and fosters gender equality.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Young people improved many attitudes that minimise violence and mistrust and objectify women. However, young respondents were still significantly less likely than those aged 25 years or older to “strongly disagree” with some attitudes that minimise violence, such as that **domestic violence should be excused if the violent person later regrets their behaviour (54% compared to 73%)**.
- Most young Australians recognise that consent must be active and ongoing. However, **fewer young respondents “strongly disagreed” that a man was justified in forcing sex when the woman had initiated kissing and then pushed the man away (70 – 72%),** compared to when the man had initiated kissing (89 – 90%).
- Most young respondents **agreed that violence against women is a problem in Australia (91%) and in the suburb or town where they live (53%)**. The recognition that violence

against women is a problem in their local area was higher for young respondents compared to respondents aged 25 years or older.

- Many young Australians know where to get help. About **two in three young respondents knew how to access domestic violence services**.
- Young men consistently lagged behind young women in their understanding and attitudes. For example, **young men (48%) were significantly more likely than young women (25%) to agree that women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia**. Young men also lagged behind young non-binary respondents in their rejection of gender inequality and rejection of some aspects of violence against women.
- Rejection of problematic attitudes towards violence against women was often stronger for young people aged 18 to 24 years compared to those aged 16 to 17 years, indicating that **attitudes are still developing among young people**.
- Most young respondents **would be bothered by witnessing abuse or disrespect of women (78 – 98%)**. Most of the **young respondents who said they would be bothered expressed the intention to intervene prosocially (63 – 96%)**.
- Young respondents were **significantly more likely (75%) to say they would be bothered by a male work friend telling a sexist joke about women** compared to those aged 25 years or older (64%).
- Most young respondents thought that **their peers would support them if they intervened (79–89%)** when witnessing a friend using verbal abuse or telling a sexist joke.

The report draws on the evidence to **highlight implications for prevention across programs and initiatives, respectful relationships education, and further research**. These include the need to:

- Begin violence prevention early, and continue these efforts in age-appropriate ways as understanding and attitudes change throughout adolescence and young adulthood
- Work across genders to respond to consistent gender differences in attitudes and understanding, including adopting gender-transformative approaches to break down problematic gender norms and to address gender-ignoring biases
- Strengthen co-design with young people to ensure that prevention initiatives reflect young people's unique insights and needs
- Implement sexual violence prevention initiatives to improve the understanding of consent as active and ongoing
- Increase young people's knowledge, skills, and confidence to act as prosocial bystanders through tailored initiatives as well as the introduction of clear policies, tools, and resources in workplaces
- Learn from improvements in young people's understanding and attitudes to leverage these drivers to facilitate improvement across the whole population.

- Conduct research with perpetrators to understand the nature of perpetration and to develop effective education models and early intervention strategies.

Acting CEO Jane Lloyd notes, “This research provides the evidence-base needed to direct ongoing preventative work with our younger generations to stop violence against women. We know from the data, that while there has been improvement across the board there exists a concerning cohort of younger Australians who still hold problematic attitudes on sexual consent and domestic violence.

“The NCAS report shows more needs to be done to ensure the next generation learn from the earliest age not to embrace harmful attitudes against women, which in many cases normalise violence against women. This is a difficult task because young people are awash with information – and are often deliberately targeted and recruited in online environments.

“On a positive note, and benchmarked against the 2017 iteration of the NCAS, there were a number of trends indicating young people had shown improvement in 2021, including the increased understanding of violence against women and rejection of gender inequality, and sexual violence against women”.

Assistant Minister for Social Services and Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Justine Elliot, welcomed the new findings, saying “The latest data from the NCAS demonstrates broad improvements regarding young people’s attitudes towards sexual violence, violence against women, and gender inequality. However, the report also highlights a minority of young people that exhibit some concerning views. We therefore must continue to invest and deliver targeted prevention and education campaigns, in order to ensure all young people develop respectful and positive attitudes towards women”.

The report will be launched on Wednesday 13 December at 11am. ANROWS Board Chair Sam Mostyn AO will be joined by Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Justine Elliot, Director of the NCAS Dr Christine Coumarelos, and youth advocate Mack Kohn (Youth Family Service).

Registration is available [here](#).

ANROWS is Australia’s independent research organisation building the evidence base to end violence against women and children in Australia.

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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 under Australia's *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*. ANROWS continues to produce, disseminate and mobilise evidence for policy and practice addressing violence against women and children under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*.

ANROWS is the only such research organisation in Australia.

About the NCAS

The National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) is a periodic, representative survey of the Australian population that is conducted every four years. It provides insights into the Australian community's understanding and attitudes regarding violence against women, their attitudes towards gender inequality, and their intentions to intervene if witnessing violence or disrespect against women. The findings of this report were drawn from the results of the 2021 NCAS, which had 19,100 respondents, including nearly 1,700 young respondents aged 16 to 24. This report focuses on the findings for young respondents.