Our WATCh
End violence against Women And Their Children

DIVERSITY COUNCIL AUSTRALIA

Myth Busting

Domestic & Family Violence at Work

USING EVIDENCE TO DEBUNK COMMON MYTHS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Suggested citation:
Diversity Council Australia and Our Watch, *Myth Busting Domestic and Family Violence at Work: Using Evidence to Debunk Common Myths and Assumptions*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia and Our Watch, 2021.

About Diversity Council Australia

Diversity Council Australia (DCA) is the only independent, not-for-profit workplace diversity advisor to business in Australia. We offer a unique knowledge bank of research, practice and expertise across diversity dimensions developed over 30 years of operation. In partnership with our members, our mission is to: lead debate on diversity in the public arena; develop and promote the latest diversity research, thinking and practice; and deliver innovative diversity practice resources and services to enable our members to drive business improvement. DCA works in partnership with members to generate groundbreaking high impact diversity research that drives business improvement through providing evidence-based guidance on how to fully leverage the benefits of a diverse talent pool.
www.dca.org.au

About Our Watch

Our Watch is a national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. We work to embed gender equality and prevent violence where Australians live, learn, work and socialise. Our vision is an Australia where women and their children live free from all forms of violence. An independent not-for-profit organisation, Our Watch was established in 2013 by the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments. Since then, all state and territory governments have joined as members. Our Watch supports workplaces to take active steps to promote and normalise gender equality and challenge sexism and discrimination through the Workplace Equality and Respect process.
www.ourwatch.org.au

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Designed by McGill Design Group 0417 730 464

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DIVERSITY COUNCIL AUSTRALIA

"Diversity Council Australia is proud to partner with Our Watch on this important resource.

Domestic and family violence is a critical issue for the workplace, especially as Covid-19 continues to blur the line between home and office. If an employee is living with, or using, domestic and family violence, it will have an impact on the workplace through absenteeism, presenteeism and the costs of replacement hiring. Not to mention the personal impacts on those people living with family and domestic violence.

But we know from our conversations with Australian businesses, that there can still be a reluctance on the part of some organisations to address an issue that for so long was seen as something purely in the domain of the home.

This resource uses evidence to tackle some common myths about domestic and family violence, and provides tools and resources for Australian organisations to become leaders in prevention.

As one of the places we spend a large part of our lives, workplaces have a really important role to in raising awareness, challenging sexist attitudes and behaviour, reinforcing gender equality, modelling respectful relationships, as well as providing a safe space from violence, and a crucial source of social and economic support to people experiencing violence.

We hope this resource will be a valuable tool for organisation to do just that."

LISA ANNESE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, DIVERSITY COUNCIL AUSTRALIA

Our WATCh

End violence against Women And Their Children

"Research shows that violence against women is a serious and widespread problem – 1 in 4 Australian women has experienced violence by a current or former partner*. Violence against women can take many forms, including physical, sexual, psychological and financial.

The good news is that violence against women is preventable. By understanding what drives violence against women and taking action, we can stop it before it starts. Research tells us that by increasing gender equality in public and private life – including in workplaces – we can reduce violence against women.

We know that violence, harassment and sexism occur in workplaces, and that violence at home or in the community can have impacts at work. Employers must ensure all staff have a safe workplace by supporting employees who experience violence and by responding appropriately to employees who perpetrate violence.

Beyond this, we need workplaces that don't tolerate sexism, reject discriminatory attitudes; and stop practices that devalue, exclude or marginalise women.

By taking active steps to promote and normalise gender equality and challenge sexism and discrimination in your workplace, you can create an environment where women are not only safe, but also respected, valued and treated as equals."

PATTY KINNERSLY

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, OUR WATCH

*ABS 2017. Personal Safety Survey, Australia, 2016, ABS cat. no. 4906.0. Canberra: ABS. "Intimate partner" includes a current or former cohabiting partner and non-cohabiting partners and dates.

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE & THE WORKPLACE

BUST
THE MYTHS.

BREAK
THE SILENCE.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

This report uses the term DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE to describe violence that occurs between intimate partners and family members as it's the most accessible and relevant term for workplaces.

However, this resource recognises the importance of understanding the gendered nature of domestic and family violence. We note that domestic and family violence are overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women and represents a large proportion of violence against women in Australia.

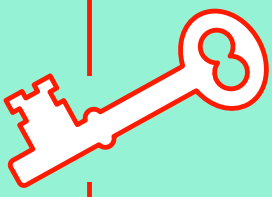
Not all violence against women is domestic and family violence and not all domestic and family violence is violence against women. At times, this resource will use the terms intimate partner violence and violence against women, this is because it's drawing from research on these types of violence, rather than domestic and family violence.

This report uses the terms 'victim' and 'person experiencing domestic and family violence' as well as 'perpetrator' and 'person using domestic and family violence' interchangeably, where appropriate and sometimes for brevity.

However, we recognise that this approach is not without contention. Although socially recognised, the term 'victim' can be problematic as it can suggest that people who have experienced family violence are helpless or lack the capacity to make rational choices about how to respond to the violence.[1]

We apologise if this causes any offense – this is not our intention.

"Domestic and family violence doesn't have anything to do with the workplace."



REALITY: Domestic and family violence is a workplace issue. If an employee is living with, or using, domestic and family violence, it will have an impact on the workplace.

The name 'domestic and family violence' suggests a pattern of behaviour that occurs in the home and many workplaces have been reluctant to consider it a workplace issue.

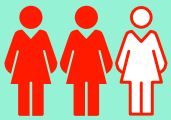
20%

of people experiencing domestic and family violence report that the violence continues into the workplace

Increasingly businesses are realising that there is a strong link between what happens outside work and the workplace. What's more, about one-fifth of people experiencing domestic and family violence report that the violence continues into the workplace.

People in our workplaces are experiencing domestic and family violence

- About two thirds of women experiencing violence from a current partner are employed.[2]
- Given the prevalence of domestic and family violence in the community, it is likely that many people who use domestic or family violence are also employed and in our workplaces.



About TWO THIRDS of women that experience violence are EMPLOYED

Domestic and family violence is a WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUE

Domestic and family violence has an impact on workplace health and safety

- **It is a workplace health and safety issue.** About one in five Australian workers experiencing domestic and family violence report the violence continuing into the workplace.[3] If a perpetrator harasses or stalks a person at their workplace, it can put the employee and their co-workers in danger.
- **It can impact workplace productivity.** Employees using or experiencing family or domestic violence might be more likely to take unplanned days off, arrive late or finish early. When they're at work, they might also be less effective carrying out their work because they're distracted, anxious or lack energy. Domestic and family violence can also cause individuals to leave the workplace, increasing staff turnover rates.

"We run the risk, at times, of being a nation of bystanders comforted by a few statistics. Let me tell you, there are people dying and people whose lives are absolutely ruined as a result of domestic violence and, what's more, we are all, as a society, the victim."

DAVID MORRISON – DCA BOARD CHAIR, OUR WATCH BOARD DIRECTOR (2015–2019)

Violence against women and their children costs Australian businesses $1.9 billion a year

In 2015–2016 the impact of violence against women and their children (which includes domestic and family violence) on production and the business sector is estimated to cost $1.9 billion, which is made up of:

- $806 million in victim absenteeism from paid and unpaid work and the inability to perform household tasks and voluntary work;
- $443 million in perpetrator absenteeism;
- $96 million in additional management costs, including search, hiring and training replacements.[4]

Therefore, not addressing domestic and family violence as a workplace issue actually costs businesses money.

Workplaces may have concerns about the impact of paid leave for domestic violence, but research shows that it has a small cost to business, but a hugely positive impact in supporting people who need it:

> *Since Telstra introduced 10 days paid leave for people experiencing domestic and family violence, in six months, 22 people accessed additional paid leave out of a workforce of 32,000. The average leave taken was 2.3 days.*[5]

Addressing gender inequality is good for business

Gender inequality sets the underlying social context for violence against women.[6]

Workplaces who do well on gender equality have been shown to:

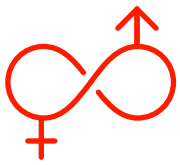
- Have financial improvements: Organisations in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams are 25% more likely to financially outperform organisations in the bottom quartile;[7]
- Have increased organisational performance;
- Be able to attract talent and retain employees;
- Have an enhanced organisational reputation through demonstrating leadership on gender equality.[8]

Workplaces have a unique role in prevention of domestic and family violence

Workplaces are one of the social settings in which we spend majority of our lives. Workplaces can therefore contribute to the prevention of domestic and family violence by raising awareness, challenging sexist attitudes and behaviour, reinforcing gender equality, modelling respectful relationships,[9] as well as providing a safe space from violence,[10] and a crucial source of social and economic support to people experiencing violence.

$1.9 billion:

the estimated COST OF THE IMPACT OF VIOLENCE against women and their children on production/ the business sector



GENDER INEQUALITY provides the underlying conditions for violence against women – including in the workplace

Workplaces can providing a SAFE SPACE FROM VIOLENCE, and a crucial source of social and economic support to people experiencing violence

GENDER INEQUALITY is where women and men do not have equal social status, power, resources or opportunities, and their voices, ideas and work are not valued equally by society.

Gender inequality provides the underlying conditions for violence against women. It exists at many levels in our society – from how we view men and women, to economic factors like the pay gap between men and women, to family and relationship roles and expectations.

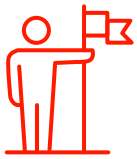
– OUR WATCH

Policies and programs to respond to incidents of violence are less likely to be effective within an informal workplace culture that condones violence against women, sexist and/or discriminatory behaviour, or accepts gender inequity.[11]

What can my workplace do?

- Start by addressing domestic and family violence as part of your D&I policies, bullying and harassment policies, and/or gender equality initiatives and strategies. Our Watch has a great set of resources available on the Workplace Support Website.
- Make sure you include men in prevention and promotion strategies. Research shows that men receive more positive reactions and experience fewer negative consequences than women when confronting sexism.[12]
- Hold leaders accountable for minimising or justifying sexism, harassment or violence in any internal and external communication.
- Look at your policies to ensure staff safety at work and home:
  - Review your employee privacy systems, i.e., consider how your employee contact information is stored and accessed;
  - Ensure domestic and family violence is addressed in your existing workplace policies, e.g., Code of Conduct, harassment and bullying, technology usage, flexible work and working from home;
  - Ask what your employees need, e.g., building security personnel to provide an escort, on-site parking, provision of a work phone, access to counselling or other support service;
  - Implement a safety plan to address instances of assault, harassment or stalking at the workplace, including how to respond to harassing emails and/or phone calls.
- Implement flexible work as a tool to assist those experiencing domestic and family violence to seek protection or safe housing, attend court/legal/counselling appointments, i.e., offer adjustments to time or location of work. See DCA's Future-Flex tools.

Address domestic and family violence as part of your D&I POLICIES, INITIATIVES AND STRATEGIES



HOLD LEADERS ACCOUNTABLE for minimising or justifying sexism, harassment or violence

IMPLEMENT A SAFETY PLAN to address instances of assault, harassment or stalking at the workplace

Tools and Resources

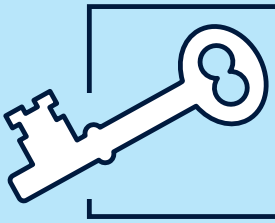
Our Watch, Workplace Support Website – provides resources to support organisations in addressing domestic and family violence and identify key actions to ensure that gender equality and respect are at the centre of the workplace.

DCA, Change At-Work: Designing Diversity & Inclusion Differently to Achieve Organisational Change – an evidence-based model for designing D&I initiatives to ensure more effective outcomes in the workplace.

Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), Domestic and Family Violence: A Workplace Issue, A Discrimination Issue factsheet.

Women's Health Victoria, Everyone's Business: A guide to developing workplace programs for the primary prevention of violence against women.

"There aren't any 'perpetrators' or 'victims' at our workplace."



REALITY: There is no 'typical' or 'standard' person who uses or experiences domestic and family violence.

It can be hard to recognise that our colleagues can be people who perpetrate domestic and family violence, particularly when they don't fit the image of the sort of monsters we imagine perpetrators to be.

There ISN'T ONE TYPE OF PERSON who experiences domestic and family violence

Just as there is no one type of perpetrator, there is no typical victim – domestic and family violence occurs across all communities, and cultures and is not unique to certain socio-economic groups.

Domestic and family violence affects all communities

People sometimes think that domestic and family violence isn't something that could be happening in their workplace or community. But domestic and family violence isn't something that just happens to 'other people'. There isn't one type of person who experiences domestic and family violence.

Domestic and family violence exists across Australia, and happens across all communities, socio-economic groups and cultural backgrounds.[13]

The key driver of violence against women, including domestic and family violence against women, is GENDER INEQUALITY. Cultural background, socio-economic status and/or sexuality or gender identity can, however, reinforce gender inequality.

But, there are factors that can exacerbate the likelihood of violence occurring

Our Watch explains that these include:

- **Harmful use of alcohol,** and harmful ideas about alcohol and violence. For example, thinking that being drunk is an excuse for violence or a reason to blame the victim of violence;
- **Socio-economic inequality and discrimination.** When women have lower social or economic status and power, or they are treated as less worthy of respect, they are more likely to experience violence – for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disabilities and transgender women;
- **Backlash.** When people push back against positive social change in a hostile way. This can happen when men's status and privilege is challenged by calls for gender equality.[14]

There is no 'one type' of perpetrator

It can be tempting to think that perpetrators of domestic and family violence fit a neat stereotype of a monster: someone who is abrasive, overbearing and easy to spot.

But there is no one type of person who uses domestic and family violence. They come from different cultural and religious backgrounds, have different sexualities, gender identities, socio-economic-statuses, postcodes, different industries, occupations, jobs and varied levels of education.[15]

Perpetrators can be 'nice' too

Those who use violence can seem likeable to their colleagues and their friends, they might be good at their job, and seem 'just like everyone else'.

In fact, often perpetrators of domestic violence are often portrayed this way in the media.[16]

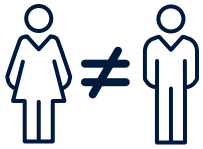
Just because someone seems nice at work or is good at their job, doesn't mean they cannot commit violence.

Sexism and rigid gender norms are common among perpetrators

While there is not a singular type of person who uses domestic and family violence, what we do know is that:

- 75% of people who experience domestic and family violence report that the perpetrator is male;[17]
- Men who use domestic and family violence are more likely to have, and express, sexist beliefs about women,[18] and have strong beliefs about gender roles and masculinity.[19]

JUST BECAUSE SOMEONE SEEMS NICE AT WORK or is good at their job, doesn't mean they cannot commit violence



Men who use domestic and family violence ARE MORE LIKELY to have, and express, sexist beliefs about women

What can my workplace do?

- Develop a workplace response to domestic and family violence even if you're not aware of any incidents among your staff. This will send the message that your organisation is supportive and can be a safe space should there be someone experiencing domestic and family violence among your staff.
- Ensure perpetrators are included in your workplace response to domestic and family violence. **The Male Champions of Change (MCC)** guide to Employees Who Use Domestic & Family Violence: A Workplace Response highlights four roles the workplace can play in addressing those who use domestic and family violence:
  - **Recognise:** identify and raise awareness of the signs of domestic and family violence and any workplace impacts;
  - **Respond:** manage the workplace impacts of the domestic and family violence;
  - **Refer to experts:** ensure processes are in place to support effective referrals;
  - **Record incidents:** ensure privacy, that access is limited to 'need to know' and the record is kept separate from employment files.[20]

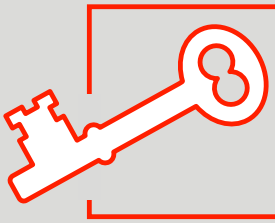
Tools and Resources

The Male Champions of Change (MCC), guide to Employees Who Use Domestic & Family Violence: A Workplace Response.

Our Watch, Change the Story: the drivers of violence against women video.

Our Watch, Men in Focus: Unpacking Masculinities and Engaging Men in the Prevention of Violence Against Women.

"It's not that bad, he doesn't hit her."



REALITY: Violence can take many forms, and physical violence is only one of them.

Domestic and family violence is often portrayed as including only acts of physical violence. But in fact, it encompasses much more than that.

An estimated 1 in six women has EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL VIOLENCE FROM A CURRENT OR FORMER PARTNER since the age of 15

It can include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse, as well as violent, controlling or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour that causes that family member to be fearful.

Violence is not always physical

The media often portrays domestic and family violence as something that only occurs when physical violence is involved. The reality is that violence can take many forms, some of which can be harder to see.

Domestic and family violence includes physical and sexual violence, emotional, psychological and financial abuse, as well as what is known as coercive control.

Physical violence includes physical assault and the threat (attempted or suggested) of physical harm.[21]

An estimated 1 in six women (16%) and one in seventeen men (5.9%) has experienced physical violence from a current or former partner since the age of 15.[22]

Sexual violence includes any unwanted sexual activity that the victim has been forced, coerced or manipulated into.[23]

Women are eight times more likely to experience sexual violence by a current or former partner than men, with around 5.1% of women and 0.6% of men experiencing sexual violence.[24]

Emotional & Psychological abuse includes:

- Controlling or trying to control a person from contacting family, friends or community (whether physically or through technology);
- Creating fear (e.g., driving dangerously, possessing weapons, stalking);
- Blaming a person for all relationship problems or making them feel crazy or guilty (also known as gaslighting);
- Constantly insulting a person to make them feel ashamed, belittled or humiliated (e.g., put downs);
- Shouting, yelling or verbally abusing a person to intimidate them;
- Destroying property or valued possessions or hurting pets in front of family members;
- Lying to a person's child/children with the intent of turning their children against them;
- Threatening to take a person's child/children away from them.[25]

1 in 4 Australian women (23.0%) and 1 in 6 Australian men (16%) has experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner.[26]

Financial abuse includes:

- Preventing a person from getting or keeping a job;
- Controlling finances by making a person ask for money or giving them an allowance;
- Not letting a person know about or having access to family income;
- Running up debts in a person's name.[27]

Financial abuse is under-reported and under-recognised. Estimates are that up to 16% of women and 7% of men have experienced financial abuse.[28]

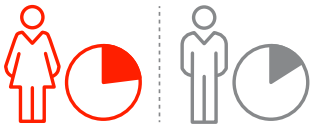
Coercive control is the MOST COMMON risk factor present prior to a domestic violence homicide.[29]

Coercive control includes emotional and/or financial abuse. It is characterised by the intent to manipulate, control, isolate or intimidate:

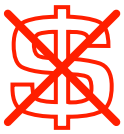
- Threats to do something to hurt or kill a person or other family member;
- Isolating a person from their friends and family;
- Threatening to leave a relationship or family;
- Restricting or tracking a person's movement;
- Controlling a person's appearance, enforcing rigid rules or micro-management of everyday life;
- Threatening to take their own life;
- Threatening to report a person to welfare or legal services;
- Making a person drop charges against them;
- Making a person partake in illegal activities.[30]

Almost 6% of women experienced coercive control from a current or former partner during the COVID-19 pandemic.[31]

Women are EIGHT TIMES MORE LIKELY to experience sexual violence by a current or former partner than men

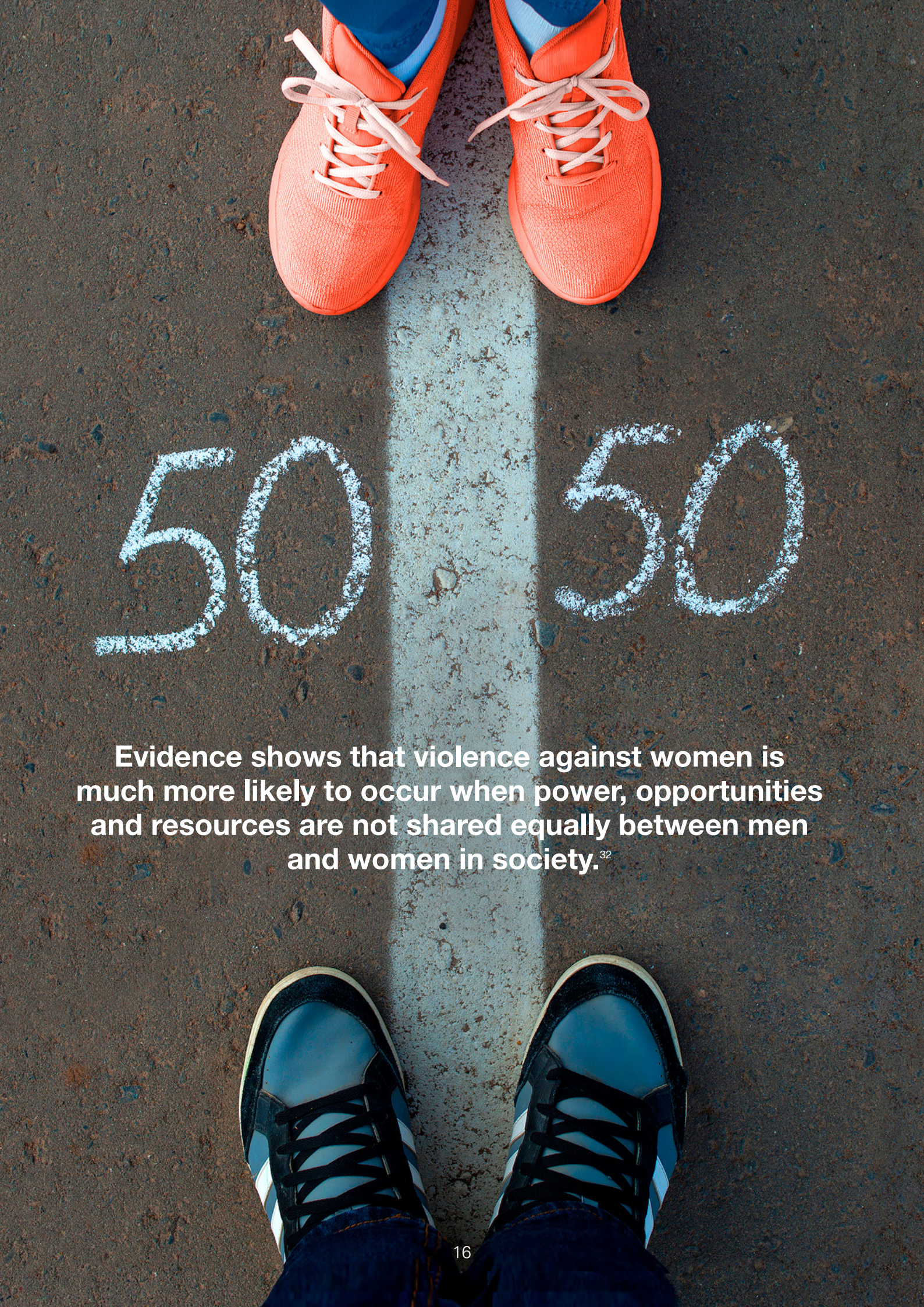


1 in 4 Australian women and 1 in 6 Australian men has EXPERIENCED EMOTIONAL ABUSE BY A CURRENT OR FORMER PARTNER



FINANCIAL ABUSE is under-reported and under-recognised – it can be difficult to recognise and identify

Coercive control is the MOST COMMON RISK FACTOR present prior to a domestic violence homicide



Evidence shows that violence against women is much more likely to occur when power, opportunities and resources are not shared equally between men and women in society.[32]

Violence-supportive attitudes and behaviours include:

- Trivialising violence and its impacts;
- Attributing blame to the victim of violence and excusing or justifying the perpetrator;
- Mistrusting women's reports of violence;
- Disregarding the need to gain consent;
- Denying violence occurred or that certain behaviours are violence;
- Denying that public agencies or the community have a responsibility for preventing violence or holding violent people to account.[33]

Other forms of domestic and family violence can include spiritual or religious abuse (the forcing or denying of spiritual or religious practice), reproductive abuse (coercing someone into unprotected sex, pregnancy or a termination) and image-based abuse (the sharing of nude or sexual images without consent).[34]

Domestic and family violence isn't well understood

Approximately 20% of Australians believe a lot of what is called domestic violence is really just a normal reaction to day-to-day stress and frustration and 14% believe that violence can be excused if afterwards the person genuinely regrets what they have done.[35]

20%

of Australians believe what is called 'domestic violence' is just a NORMAL REACTION to day-today stress

14%

of Australians believe that VIOLENCE CAN BE EXCUSED if afterwards the person genuinely regrets what they have done

What can my workplace do?

- **Workplaces can be a setting to speak up against disrespectful relationships**

  Evidence shows that violence against women is much more likely to occur when power, opportunities and resources are not shared equally between men and women in society, and when women are not valued and respected as much as men.[36]

  Speaking out against rigid gender stereotypes, which are themselves a driver of violence against women is important. We need to challenge those rigid views about 'men's work' or 'women's work' or 'men being the head of the household' or 'men being in charge in a relationship' because they are the kinds of problematic ideas that can underpin or condone financial abuse.

- **Workplaces can set out clear policies that address violence in all it's forms, and regularly communicate these to staff**

  Our Watch's No Excuse for Abuse campaign aims to raise awareness of non-physical abuse and makes it clear there is never an excuse for using any type of violence or abuse against women.

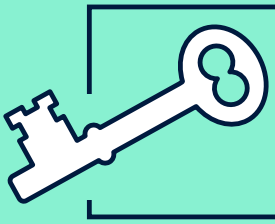
- **Some workplaces can provide support to the community**

  The Commonwealth Bank created a publicly available guide, Recognise and Recover: A guide to recognising financial abuse, recovering and regaining financial control, designed to help victims and survivors of domestic and family violence to identify and find support when experiencing financial abuse.

Tools and Resources

Our Watch, Unpacking Violence: A storytelling resource for understanding nonphysical forms of abuse and the gendered drivers of violence against women.

"I don't want to get involved – its none of my business…"



REALITY: Violence is everyone's business, including workplaces. If you see it, or hear about it, it becomes your business.

Domestic and family violence is something that occurs behind closed doors, so people can often feel reluctant intervening. But addressing domestic and family violence is everyone's business. It affects the safety and wellbeing of people in our workplaces.

79%

of people surveyed want practical tips about WAYS TO SAFELY INTERVENE when witnessing disrespect towards women and girls

Workplaces have an important role to play in equipping staff to be active bystanders and challenge the behaviours linked to domestic and family violence.

Many people do want to speak up when they hear or see disrespectful behaviours, but don't feel equipped to do so

Australians overwhelmingly want to speak up against sexism, gender discrimination and gender inequality. Research conducted for Our Watch showed that:

- 79% of people surveyed want practical tips about ways to safely intervene when witnessing disrespect towards women and girls;
- 75% of people surveyed want practical tips about how to respond to casual sexism in a social environment without being a 'party pooper'.[37]

It can be challenging to confront inappropriate workplace behaviour, especially when it's coming from powerful or influential people in our organisation. In fact, research on some young women's reactions, suggests that they confront sexist behaviour less than half the time they encounter it.[38]

But to really make a difference when it comes to disrespectful behaviour, we need a critical mass of people to stop standing silently by and instead stand up for safety and respect at work.

What are active bystanders?

Active bystanders are people who intervene to take appropriate actions to challenge the drivers of violence against women.[39]

Bystander action never includes intervening in unsafe or violent situations!

A bystander approach sends a message that domestic and family violence is everyone's business and everyone can play a role in eliminating it.[40]

Bystander action at work can fall into three types:

1. **Proactive calling out/challenging**

- Speaking up against sexist or disparaging language or jokes;
- Identifying and changing workplace practices and policies that discriminate against women;
- Questioning stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity, and male peer relationships that emphasise aggression;
- Challenging violence-supportive attitudes and behaviours.[41]

2. **Intervening during an incident**

- Using workplace values and policies as a basis to speak up;
- Speaking up when women are interrupted;
- Letting colleagues being targeted of discriminatory or sexist behaviour know that you will be a witness to their formal complaint;
- Pulling colleagues aside to talk about what's not OK;
- Forming an alliance of like-minded people to support each other when doing something.

3. **Speaking to a manager or colleague after an incident to call out sexist behaviour**

Equipping staff to be active bystanders is an important element of building a culture of respect and equality, and stopping violence before it starts

Training staff in how to be active bystanders is an important part of the prevention work that workplaces can take to address domestic and family violence. Bystanders can disrupt some of the underlying conditions and precursors to violence – such as disrespect and casual sexism. Research shows that going along with sexist or sexual jokes can actually create an environment that tolerates problematic behaviour.[42]

- Here, jokes end up giving permission to people to express sexist attitudes.
- In practice, that means that when **some** people hear sexist jokes, it tells them it's ok to think less of women, and it can actually trigger sexist behaviour.

Not intervening or calling out someone when we hear an off-colour joke or comment can actually allow these negative attitudes to fester and create an environment where problematic behaviour is seen as normal, including violence against women.

Speak up against SEXIST OR DISPARAGING LANGUAGE OR JOKES

Challenge VIOLENCE-SUPPORTIVE ATTITUDES and behaviours

PULL COLLEAGUES ASIDE to talk about what's not OK

TRAINING STAFF in how to be active bystanders is an important part of the prevention work that workplaces can take

What are the 'drivers of violence'?

The key driver of violence against women is gender inequality – whereby sexist gender norms, social structures and practices are normalised, and disrespect and hostility is excused.

Other factors that have an impact on how violence is experienced include:

- Harmful use of alcohol;
- Socio-economic inequality and discrimination;
- Backlash to challenging gender inequality.

What can my workplace do?

- **Give staff the skills to address sexist language and jokes**

  Check out DCA's Words At Work to give staff *Courage to Call* It when they see or hear sexist language, sex discrimination or sexual harassment taking place at work.

  1. **Start with yourself:** Pay attention to your everyday language and be conscious of how bias may (unintentionally) affect what you do and don't say.
  2. **Say something – directly:** If you hear someone using language that excludes others, say something. Speaking up is a way of changing culture, and culture changes slowly and involves many small steps.
  3. **Say something – indirectly:** If you don't feel comfortable saying something directly, try the indirect approach. While not as effective as a direct approach, it does show that you are not comfortable with sexist jokes and/or comments.[43]

- **Address workplace practices and policies that discriminate against women**

  Evidence shows that violence against women is much more likely to occur when power, opportunities and resources are not shared equally between men and women in society, and when women are not valued and respected as much as men.[44] To address this in your workplace, check out DCA's Men Make a Difference: How to Engage Men on Gender Equality for a framework to drive organisational change by changing gender-biased systems, policies, and practices.

- **Question stereotyped ideas about masculinity and femininity**

  Speaking out against gender stereotypes is important as these are drivers of violence against women. We need to challenge rigid views about 'men's work' or 'women's work' or 'men being the head of the household' or 'men being in charge in a relationship' because they are the kinds of problematic ideas that can underpin or excuse financial abuse.

  Having gender balance in different jobs and across all levels in your organisation can help to address some of these assumptions.

- **Partake in the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence**

  The United Nations international campaign, 16 Days, runs from 25 November to the 10 December annually. It is used as an organising strategy by individuals and organisations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls. See the MCC's Playing Our Part: Workplace Responses to Domestic and Family Violence – 16 Days of Activism Toolkit.

Tools and Resources

Our Watch, It's time to act on our watch campaign video.

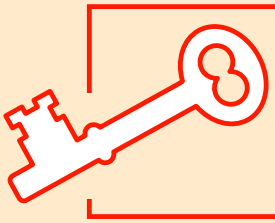
MCC, We Set the Tone: Eliminating Everyday Sexism.

VicHealth, Stepping In: Bystander Action Toolkit to Support Equality and Respect at Work.

1800 Respect, Support a friend who is experiencing violence video.

If you hear someone using language that excludes others, say something. Speaking up is a way of changing culture, and culture changes slowly and involves many small steps.

"We aren't therapists or lawyers, there's nothing we can do."



REALITY: HR or managers can often be first responders to disclosures or revelations of domestic and family violence.

When disclosures occur or the use of domestic and family violence is revealed, those in Human Resources, management or colleagues may become first responders.

Staff should be EQUIPPED TO RESPOND safely and respectfully to disclosures or revelations of violence

It is not their role to provide counselling or legal advice, but they do have a vital role in listening and hearing the stories of those experiencing or using domestic and family violence.

It is therefore important for organisations to equip staff to respond safely and respectfully to disclosures or revelations of violence, and to provide appropriate referrals to services.

Understanding disclosure

A disclosure is when someone reveals they have directly experienced or perpetrated violence. This could be someone that you work with, either directly or indirectly. The violence may be ongoing, have happened recently or occurred in the past. Sometimes the disclosure is about violence experienced by a close family member or friend, rather than someone disclosing that they have experienced violence.

Disclosures are not always expressed in the way you expect. Some people do not name their experiences as 'violence', 'abuse', 'rape' or 'sexual abuse', and disclosures can occur when and where you least expect them.[45]

There are a number of ways that a disclosure of violence could occur in the workplace

These could include:

- An employee leave request to attend court or legal, police or counselling appointments or behaviour change programs;
- A disclosure as part of a role obligation or to request support; or
- A person experiencing or using domestic and family violence disclosing in a group or one-on-one meeting.

How should employees respond?

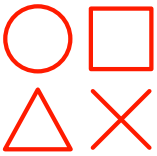
When individuals share experiences of violence it is an act of trust. The most important thing you can do is listen to the person, show you believe them and take the disclosure seriously.[46]

It is important to remember that instances of domestic and family violence will be different for every individual, and the response may be different depending on the circumstances.

Be honest that you do not have legal or counselling skills or training, but that you can provide referral information about where to get specialised support or assistance.[47]

Our Watch's Workplace Equality and Respect Practice Guideline: Responding to Disclosures outlines this approach.[48]

The most important thing you can do IS LISTEN TO THE PERSON, show you believe them and take the disclosure seriously



Domestic and family violence will be DIFFERENT FOR EVERY INDIVIDUAL

Establish whether there is an IMMEDIATE RISK to their safety

Provide ACCURATE referral information

What to do if someone discloses their experience of violence to you:

Believe the person's experience.

Thank you for sharing your experience with me…

Show **empathy**.

That sounds like a terrible experience…

I imagine it has taken a lot of courage for you to share your story with me…

Avoid judgement or blame.

Condemn the use of violence, but not the perpetrator.

Be open and honest, including about **your skills and knowledge**.

I don't have any special training in helping people with experiences like yours but I can give you contact details for people who do…

Establish whether there is an **immediate risk to the safety** of the person disclosing, their children or anyone else.

Are you feeling safe at the moment?

Provide options for the person to seek specialist support if required (sometimes a person just wants you to know and understand that this has occurred and is not necessarily looking for assistance).

I would like to make sure you know where you can get support from trained people; can I provide you with contact details for…

Enable the victim to be in **control of decisions**

Provide **accurate referral** information.

Serious instances that cause you to believe someone is at immediate risk should be discussed with a manager or supervisor. It is important to consider helping the person to act, but do not force them to do so.

The importance of accurate

Workplaces should keep an up to date list of relevant services for people experiencing domestic and family violence.

But remember, it is up to the person making the disclosure to determine whether they want to act or follow up with the referral.

Enable the individual experiencing violence to make their own decisions.[49]

Serious instances that cause you to believe someone is at immediate risk should be discussed with a manager or supervisor. It is important to consider helping the person to act, but do not force them to do so.

ENABLE the individual experiencing violence to make their own decisions

Referral for help and support for those experiencing violence:
1800 Respect – 1800 737 732
https://www.1800respect.org.au/

What can my workplace do?

- Set out a clear process for how staff should deal with disclosure as part of your workplace responses to domestic and family violence. Workplace responses and policies should be adapted to the safety requirements of the organisation, reputation and performance risks, the role of the employee and where both the person using and the person experiencing domestic and family violence are employed by the same organisation.[50]
- Ensure employees are trained in how to recognise a disclosure, and how to respond appropriately.
- Ensure your risk policies and procedures include domestic and family violence.
- Keep an up-to-date list of relevant referral services, and regularly communicate referral pathways and support services available. Provide all staff with information on where and how to seek support themselves or how to refer an employee experiencing or using violence to an appropriate service and/or to report their experience.
- Ensure your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) has domestic and family violence expertise.

Tools and Resources

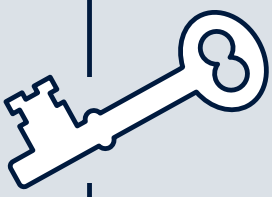
Our Watch, Workplace Equality and Respect Practice Guideline: Responding to Disclosures.

Our Watch, Practice guidance: Workplace support for staff who experience family violence.

Our Watch, Practice Guidance: Workplace responses to staff who perpetrate violence.

MCC, Employees Who Use Domestic & Family Violence: A Workplace Response Guide.

"Domestic and family violence only happens to [straight-cisgender] women.[i]"



REALITY: Men can be victims of domestic and family violence. However, women and gender diverse people experience domestic and family violence at rates much higher than men.

Much of the discussion around domestic and family violence is centred around men's violence against women. There is good reason for this, as women experience domestic and family violence at rates much higher than men.

But domestic and family violence can affect anyone, regardless of sex, age, race, sexuality, disability, income, gender or lifestyle, including men.

Men can be victims of domestic and family violence

Men can, and do, experience partner violence in heterosexual and same-sex relationships.

>500,000

More than HALF A MILLION MEN have reported experiencing intimate partner violence since the age of 15

More than half a million men have reported experiencing intimate partner violence since the age of 15.[51]

But men and boys experience of violence differs to that of women:

- Men and boys are more likely to experience violence in family relationships, e.g., as a child or a sibling (than as a partner).[52]
- Men are also more likely to report that an incidence of physical assault was perpetrated by **a male stranger** at a place of entertainment or outside location.[53]

95% of all victims of violence – whether women or men – experience violence from a male perpetrator.[54]

i **What is a straight-cisgender woman?** Cisgender is a term used to describe people who identify their gender as the same as what was assigned to them at birth (male or female). The term 'cis' is a Latin word meaning the same as. So a cisgender, or cis, woman is essentially someone who is not trans.

Men face barriers to reporting domestic and family violence and accessing support

Gender inequalities such as gender stereotypes – that is ideas about what it means to be a man – can hold back men who experience violence from reporting it, including:

- Feelings of shame and denial and diminished confidence;
- Fears that complaints will not be taken seriously as well as the practical and financial implications;
- Assumptions that violence is mainly physical;
- Challenges to masculinity and identity as a man;
- The desire to remain committed to the relationship and/or family unit;
- Invisibility of services for male victims; and/or
- Having complaints disbelieved, not taken seriously or treated with indifference.[55]

LGBTIQ+ people, including cis and trans men, experience domestic and family violence, but it can be different

Specific forms of abuse experienced by LGBTIQ+ people include:

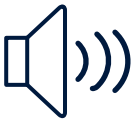
- Using someone's intersex status, sexuality, gender, gender expression, transgender or HIV status against them;
- Threatening to 'out' someone to their family, friends, community or workplace. Outing can include someone's gender, sexuality, intersex status or HIV status;
- Controlling someone's medications, access to gender transition related healthcare, or pressuring them to conform to sex or gender "norms".[56]

LGBTIQ+ people are also less likely to find support services that meet their specific needs, such as safe housing services for male victims, supports for female perpetrators, transgender and intersex inclusive services.

Overall, women experience domestic and family violence at rates much higher than men

- Approximately one quarter (23%) of Australian women have experienced at least one incident of violence by a current or past intimate partner, (who they may or may not have lived with).[57]
- Women are nearly three times,[58] more likely to experience violence (physical and/or sexual) by a partner than men.[59]
- 92% of women who have recently experienced physical assault reported that the perpetrator was someone they knew, and most likely occurred in their own home.[60]
- On average, one woman a week is murdered,[61] by her current or former partner.[62]
- Almost 10 women a day are hospitalised for assault injuries perpetrated by a spouse or domestic partner.[63]
- Although family violence also includes inter-generations and different relationships, the most common act of family violence is intimate partner violence used by men against their current or former female partner.[64]

GENDER STEREOTYPING and fears of not being taken seriously can hold men back from reporting domestic violence



Abuse experienced by LGBTIQ+ people can include THREATS TO 'OUT' SOMEONE to their family, friends, community or workplace

92% of women who recently experienced physical assault reported that the PERPETRATOR WAS SOMEONE THEY KNEW

Almost 10 WOMEN A DAY ARE HOSPITALISED for assault injuries perpetrated by a spouse or domestic partner

When we suggest that some women are 'vulnerable' to violence, it can impact or distract from the severity of violence and unintentionally lay blame with the victim. Shifting the focus from the severity of the violence not only justifies it in some way, but also dismisses it.

Saying 'some groups of women experience higher rates of domestic and family violence' refocuses the issue onto the way overlapping forms of discrimination are harmful to women.

Women with disability are TWICE AS LIKELY to experiences domestic and family violence than women without a disability

Diverse women experience higher rates of domestic and family violence

> *Violence against women is often experienced in combination with other forms of structural inequality and discrimination. Examining how other forms of structural inequality and discrimination intersect with gender inequalities to exacerbate violence is necessary to effectively address the root causes of violence against all women, across the diversity of the Australian population.*
> **– Our Watch**[65]

Some groups of women experience domestic and family violence at increased rates. They are not "more vulnerable to violence" but experience overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation.

- **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander** women are three times more likely to experience violence,[66] and 32 times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be hospitalised due to family violence.[67]
- **Women with disability** are twice as likely to experience domestic and family violence than women without a disability and are likely to experience this violence over a longer period of time, increasing the risk of more serious injuries.[68]
- **Non-heterosexual women**[69] are at least twice as likely to experience physical violence by a partner than cisgender-heterosexual women.[70]
- **Transgender and gender diverse people** experience sexual **violence or coercion**, a rate four times higher than the general Australian population.[71]

It's harder for some groups and communities to access support

Although domestic and family violence occurs across all communities, there are barriers certain groups face when seeking help, accessing support or reporting violence:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people who are experiencing violence can face additional barriers because of a legacy of colonial, racist and discriminatory practices that do not take into account cultural protocols;[72]
- Those in rural, regional and remote areas and individuals with a non-English speaking background can experience difficulties accessing support services;[73]
- People with disability utilising crisis accommodation or transport whilst leaving a violent relationship can face accessibility issues.[74]

'Intersectionality' refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity (e.g., their age, care-giving responsibilities, disability status, sexual orientation and gender identity) can expose them to overlapping forms of exclusion, discrimination and marginalisation.

Intersectionality is an important element of D&I practice as it recognises that D&I initiatives should be designed to work across diversity dimensions rather than just within them.

An intersectional lens also means acknowledging that no single initiative will be equally relevant to all groups.

Workplaces need to take an intersectional approach to developing their policies and workplace response to domestic and family violence.

What can my workplace do?

Because domestic and family violence is experienced in different ways from different groups, **workplaces need to take an intersectional approach** to developing their policies and workplace response to domestic and family violence.

When developing a workplace response to domestic and family violence, workplaces should:

- Consider the way that diverse groups experience higher levels of violence;
- Consult with a diverse range of peak groups representing people with lived experience when developing a workplace policy or response to domestic and family violence;
- Develop a response that involves different initiatives that will address the experiences of different groups; and
- Ensure that a diversity of people, including men, contribute to the development of your workplace response.

Check out **Our Watch's** Equality and Respect for all Women: An intersectional approach practice guidance.

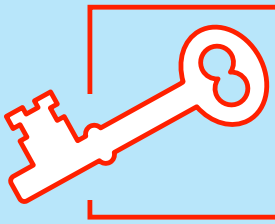
Tools and Resources

DCA, Understanding Domestic Violence through an Intersectional Lens Webinar.

DCA, The Art of Inclusion Podcast – When Love Hurts: Domestic Violence Through an LGBTIQ+ Lens.

Rainbow Health Victoria, Pride in Prevention Evidence Guide.

"If anyone at our organisation did that, we would just fire them..."



REALITY: There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to perpetrators.

It's tempting to think that if you become aware of an employee perpetrating family or domestic violence the workplace should dismiss them immediately.

But in fact, this may make things worse for their victim/s. Addressing individual behaviour is not always successful – but organisations do have a role in addressing the drivers of violence and encouraging perpetrators to seek help. Until we see systematic change, we will continue to see domestic and family violence, including at work.

Workplaces must be safe

Organisations should be clear that they will not tolerate violence, discrimination, harassment and bullying. All workplaces should be a safe space.

All employees have the right to feel safe at work. Workplaces also have a critical role in ensuring their workplaces are safe, and individuals perpetrating domestic and family violence are not using organisational resources (e.g., telephone, email or time) to do so.

Workplaces can address safety through codes of conduct relating to bullying, harassment, and use of work premises and technology, by communicating regularly the organisation's position on domestic and family violence, and by ensuring that behaviour contrary to these policies is not condoned, formally or informally.[75]

Organisations should be clear that they WILL NOT TOLERATE violence, discrimination, harassment and bullying

Workplaces can address safety through CODES OF CONDUCT relating to bullying, harassment, and use of work premises and technology

Given the many female victims/survivors of violence in formal employment, it can be assumed there are also a large number of perpetrators in workplaces. It is important that workplaces carefully consider how they respond to staff who perpetrate violence to be sure they send a clear message that perpetrators will always be held to account for their behaviour and that their organisation does not condone violence against women under any circumstances.[76]

OUR WATCH – WORKPLACE RESPONSES TO STAFF WHO PERPETRATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Workplaces need to be aware of their legal obligations

Employers have a responsibility to provide and maintain a safe workplace, free from bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation.[77]

They also must be aware of their legal obligations under the *Fair Work Act* towards employees dealing with the impact of domestic and family violence. The *Fair Work Act* includes the right for employees to:

- Take up to 5 days unpaid domestic and family violence leave;
- Request flexible working arrangements; and
- Take paid or unpaid personal/carer's leave, in certain circumstances.[78]

Workplaces also need to balance accountability and support for people who use domestic and family violence, while ensuring safety is foremost for those experiencing violence.[79]

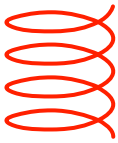
Sometimes it is not as simple as dismissing employees who have disclosed using domestic and family violence or who have been revealed as perpetrators.

Workplaces should ensure that they adhere to procedural fairness, and that their perpetrator response programs or initiatives do not exacerbate or escalate the risk of violence.[80]

Training on domestic and family violence may make perpetrators accountable

Providing training on domestic and family violence and what those behaviours look like, can provide support for those who use violence to recognise and reflect on their behaviour and be a catalyst to seek out help.[81]

Employers have a responsibility to provide and maintain a SAFE WORKPLACE, free from bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation



The FAIR WORK ACT includes the right for employees to request FLEXIBLE WORKING arrangements

What can my workplace do?

- Never excuse or minimise violence against women.
- Prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the victim/survivor both within and outside the workplace.
- Always hold perpetrators to account for their actions.
- Maintain a safe work environment for victim/survivors, those who have supported them, and staff who have witnessed violence.
- Ensure they know about the Family Violence Leave Policy.
- Respect the rights of perpetrators to fair processes and employment.
- Support workplace initiatives to address the underlying drivers of violence against women to stop it before it starts.

Tools and Resources

Our Watch, Workplace Gender Equality and the Law Practice Guidance.

Referrals for people who use domestic and family violence

Men's Referral Service	1800 Respect	Relationships Australia
http://mrs.org.au/	https://www.1800respect.org.au/	https://www.relationships.org.au/
1300 766 491	1800 737 732	1300 364 277

KEY TERMS USED IN THIS REPORT

Domestic violence: refers to acts of violence that occur in domestic settings between two people who are, or were, in an intimate relationship. It includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse. Sometimes referred to as 'Intimate Partner Violence'.

Our Watch, Change the Story (2015)

Family violence: is a broader term than domestic violence, as it refers not only to violence between intimate partners but also to violence between family members. This includes, for example, elder abuse and adolescent violence against parents. Family violence includes violent or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour that coerces or controls a family member or causes that family member to be fearful.

In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, family violence is often the preferred term as it encapsulates the broader issue of violence within extended families, kinship networks and community relationships, as well as intergenerational issues.

Our Watch, Change the Story (2015)

Gendered drivers: the underlying causes that are required to create the necessary conditions in which violence against women occurs. They relate to the particular structures, norms and practices arising from gender inequality in public and private life, but which must always be considered in the context of other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage.

Our Watch, Change the Story (2015)

Intersectionality: refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity (e.g., their age, care-giving responsibilities, disability status, sexual orientation and gender identity) can expose them to overlapping forms of exclusion, discrimination and marginalisation.

The term 'intersectionality' is attributed to Kimberlé Crenshaw, a legal theorist of race and feminism, who coined the term in the 1980s to highlight how gender and race combine to further marginalise African American women, and how discourses are shaped to respond to one identity or other, rather than multiple.[82]

More recently, the term intersectionality has been extended to include other aspects of diversity (e.g., our age, care-giving responsibilities, disability status, sexual orientation and gender identity).

Intimate partner: can include a current partner (living with), previous partner (has lived with), or boyfriend/girlfriend/date and ex-boyfriend/ex-girlfriend (never lived with).

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2017)

Men who use violence: A term that is used in men's behaviour change programs. This phrase recognises that the majority of family violence that occurs is violence perpetrated by men against women, and it places responsibility for the violence with the man who uses it.

Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victoria, 2016)

Partner: a subset of 'intimate partner' that refers to a person who lives with, or lived with at some point, in a married or de facto relationship.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2017)

Perpetrator: a person who uses domestic and family violence.

Sexual Violence: sexual activity that happens where consent is not obtained or freely given. It occurs any time a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity, such as touching, sexual harassment and intimidation, forced marriage, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, sexual assault and rape.

Our Watch, Change the Story (2015)

Victim: a person who experiences domestic and family violence. Although this term is commonly used in the Australian community, some people consider 'victim' problematic because it suggests that people who have experienced family violence are helpless or lack the capacity to make rational choices about how to respond to the violence.

Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victoria, 2016)

Violence: the occurrence, attempt or threat of either physical or sexual assault experienced by a person.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2017)

Violence against women: any act of gender based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life. This definition encompasses all forms of violence that women experience (including physical, sexual, emotional, cultural/spiritual, financial, and others) that are gender based.

Our Watch, Change the Story (2015)

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