Factsheet 2: Gender-based violence

What is gender-based violence?

The term refers to all forms of violence directed at someone because of their gender. This includes acts that cause or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life. It is most often used to refer to men's violence against women.

What are its drivers?

Research broadly shows that this type of violence happens as a result of gender inequality - a system where women and men do not have equal status, power, resources or opportunities in their society and are not valued or respected in the same way.

As a result, the drivers of this kind of violence are distinctly gendered. According to Our Watch, these are:

→ Condoning violence against women

When societies, institutions or communities support or condone violence against women, levels of such violence are higher.

→ Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life

This can happen in private relationships - where men who control decision-making, limit women's autonomy and hold rigid ideas on acceptable female behaviour are more likely to be violent - and in the public sphere - where men's greater control over power, resources and decision-making sends a message that women have less value and are therefore less worthy of respect.

→ Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity

Studies have shown that men aged 18-30 who identify with rigid stereotypes of masculinity are 17 times more likely to say they have hit a partner. Promoting these stereotypes has the effect of reproducing the conditions that create gender inequality and underpins gendered violence.

→ Male peer relations and masculinity that emphasises aggression, dominance and control

While men's relationships with other men can be an essential source of support and comfort, peer groups that promote aggression, dominance, control or hypersexuality can normalise and lead to higher levels of violence against women.

Statistics on gender-based violence

- Globally, an estimated 736 million women - almost one in three - have been subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their life.[1]
- In Australia:
  - Two in five women (39%) have experienced violence since the age of 15.[2]
  - On average, one woman is killed every 9 days by a current or former partner.[3]
  - In 2023/24, 6,751 women aged 15 years and over – or on average of 18 women per day – were hospitalised due to family and domestic violence.[4]
  - Women with disability in Australia are twice as likely to have experienced sexual violence over their lifetime than women without disabilities.[5]
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience disproportionally high rates of violence, and are 31 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence–related assaults.[6] Anecdotal evidence suggests non-Indigenous men make up a significant proportion of perpetrators.[7]
  - Lesbian, bisexual and queer women experience higher rates of sexual violence than heterosexual women in Australia.[8]
  - In addition to physical and sexual violence, women from migrant and refugee backgrounds are more vulnerable to financial abuse, reproductive coercion and immigration-related violence.[9]

According to UN Women, only 40% of women seek help of any kind after experiencing violence.

- Research shows that around one in four men in Australia between the ages of 18 to 45 say they have used physical and/or sexual violence against an intimate partner.[10]

[1] World Health Organization 2021. Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018.

[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021-22). Personal Safety, Australia. ABS

[3] Bricknell S 2023. Homicide in Australia 2020–21. Statistical Report no. 42. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

[4] Australian Institute for Health and Welfare. 2025. Family, domestic and sexual violence: Health services.

[5] Centre of Research Excellence in Disability and Health (CRE-DH). 2021. Nature and extent of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation against people with disability in Australia: Research report.

[6] Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (AIHW). 2023. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework

[7] Braybrook, A (2015). Family violence in Aboriginal communities, Domestic Violence Resource Centre.

[8] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2021-2022. Sexual violence, ABS.

[9] Vaughan, C., Davis, E., Murdolo, A., Chen, J., Murray, L., Block, K., Quaizon, R., & Warr, D. 2016. Promoting community-led responses to violence against immigrant and refugee women in metropolitan and regional Australia.

[10] The Men's Project. 2024. The Man Box 2024: Re-examining what it means to be a man in Australia.

- Men between the ages 18 to 30 who identify with rigid stereotypes of masculinity (such as believing men should be tough, aggressive or in control in relationships) are 17 times more likely to say they have hit a partner.[11]
- Women in public life, including parliamentarians and journalists, face high levels of psychological violence, harassment, and threats, often tied to their gender:
  - nearly 90% of women in Australia who hold elected office or are running for office across all levels of government have experienced online abuse or intimidation linked to their political participation, with 82% having changed their behaviour because of online abuse. Of those, 36% have increased security measures and 34% have taken time away from campaigning or public life.[12]
  - 73% of women journalists have experienced online violence, with 20 per cent said they had been attacked or abused offline in connection with online violence they had experienced.[13]

[11] Ibid.

[12] Women for Election. 2026. Online Abuse and Women's Political Participation.

[13] UNESCO. 2021. The Chilling: global trends in online violence against women journalists; research discussion paper.