Attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality among Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders

Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)

ΛNRØWS

In partnership with:

RMIT UNIVERSITY

Social Research Centre

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VicHealth

Acknowledgement of Country

ANROWS acknowledges the traditional owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders past, present, and emerging. We value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and knowledge.

Acknowledgement of lived experiences of violence

It is also important to acknowledge the lives and experiences of the women and children affected by domestic violence and sexual assault.

Caution: Some people may find parts of this content confronting or distressing.

Recommended support services include:
1800 RESPECT – 1800 737 732 and Lifeline – 13 11 14.

Contents

About this report

This report presents key findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey focusing on results for respondents who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. It also draws on other research, including research by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars and community leaders, to better understand the findings. Input from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts was secured through a working group (Appendix 1) and a workshop held to discuss preliminary findings (Appendix 2).

Key themes that were raised by participants in the workshop are represented in quote boxes throughout the report.

Findings for the community as a whole, young people and those from non-English speaking backgrounds are explored in dedicated reports. These, along with further detailed findings and methodological information, can be found on the ANROWS website www.anrows.org.au.

1   Executive summary

Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Intimate partner violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment and stalking are prevalent problems with serious consequences for women, their children and wider society (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), 2014; Webster, 2016). While affecting women across the population, this violence is more prevalent among, and has a particular and far-reaching impact upon, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls, their families and their communities. Such violence may be perpetrated by non-Indigenous men, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. Violence taking place *within* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is seen as part of a broader issue of family violence.

Many factors contribute to this violence and arise at the individual, relationship, community, organisational and societal levels. Some of these factors particularly affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Discussed in greater detail in this report, these include:

- influences associated with being a colonised people (e.g. the intergenerational impacts of the forced removal of children);
- exposure to other forms of violence in the community and institutional environments (e.g. prisons); and
- economic and social marginalisation.

Gender inequality and the disrespect of women increase the likelihood of this violence occurring (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2011; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015). There is evidence that violence against women can be prevented before it occurs by addressing the underlying factors that cause the problem. Prevention action complements, but is separate from, responses after violence has occurred. However, both forms of action are required to reduce the prevalence of violence over time.

Violence affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls has been identified as a particular focus in both *The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (the *National Plan*) (COAG, 2011), and *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia* (*Change the story)* (OurWatch, ANROWS, & VicHealth, 2015). Specific approaches for prevention in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are outlined in *Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children* (*Changing the picture*) (Our Watch, 2018), developed by Our Watch in partnership with key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.

Attitudes towards gender inequality and violence against women are among the many factors that contribute to this violence. Indirectly, they can influence the responses of service providers, as well as those of family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues of those affected. Attitudes can also influence perpetrators and women subject to violence. Since attitudes reflect the world around us, measuring these over time is one way to monitor progress towards addressing the problem.

The NCAS

The National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) is a periodic telephone survey (mobile and landline) of a representative sample. In 2017 more than 17,500 Australians aged 16 years and over, 342 of whom identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, were surveyed about their:

- knowledge of violence against women;
- attitudes towards this violence and gender equality; and
- intentions if they were to witness abuse or disrespect towards women.

The NCAS is one of the main mechanisms for measuring progress against the six National Outcomes outlined in the *National Plan* (COAG, 2011). Another is the *Personal Safety Survey* (PSS), which measures experiences of violence (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2017). Previous waves of the NCAS were conducted in 1995, 2009 and 2013.

The 2017 NCAS

Although as many questions as possible from the 2013 questionnaire were retained, a substantial redevelopment was undertaken for the 2017 NCAS, with key outcomes being:

- the capacity to measure and understand the ways Australians think about violence against women and gender equality, recognising that attitudinal support for these concepts can take many different forms;
- the use of composite measures (made up of groups of questions) to gauge understanding, attitudes and people's intention to act as overall concepts;
- new measures used to increase understanding of factors shaping knowledge, attitudes and intention to act, including measures of (a) the gender composition of a person's social network, (b) prejudice on the basis of disability, sexuality, ethnicity, and Aboriginality, and (c) attitudes towards violence in general; and
- better alignment with the *National Plan* (COAG, 2011) and *Change the story* (Our Watch et al., 2015).[1]

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[1]   The redevelopment of the survey instrument and data collection for the 2017 NCAS were undertaken before the production of *Changing the picture* (Our Watch, 2018), which focused on violence prevention in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities. Therefore, it could not be used to inform the framework for the 2017 NCAS.

Box 1-1: Overall findings for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders

Encouraging findings

Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have good knowledge of key aspects of violence against women, support gender equality and do not endorse attitudes supportive of violence against women (Tables 4-1 to 4-3). Most would also be concerned if they witnessed abuse and disrespect of women and would take, or would like to take, action (Figure 4-5).

The survey includes four overall measures (referred to as composite measures). These gauge the overall level of:

- understanding that violence against women can involve non-physical forms of violence and coercion (not just physical violence and forced sex);[2]
- endorsement of gender equality;
- attitudinal support for violence against women; and
- intention to act if witnessing abuse or disrespect of women.

Between 2013 and 2017, there has been an improvement among Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders on the overall measure of attitudes towards violence against women (Figure 4-1).

While recognising that reporting violence to the police can be troublesome for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls and their families, most respondents nevertheless believe that a report should be made (Figure 4-12).

Specific areas of concern

Mostly the findings for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample were similar to those for non-Indigenous Australians. There were no differences between the two samples in any of the four composite measures introduced above.

Attitudes to gender equality were measured in five themes (see Box 2-2). Of these, the most widely endorsed in both samples reflected the idea that gender inequality is no longer a problem. Attitudes supportive of violence against women were measured in four themes. Of these, the most widely endorsed in both samples were those reflecting the idea that women's reports of violence cannot be trusted.

There was no improvement between 2013 and 2017 in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample in the overall measures of understanding of violence against women and attitudes to gender equality (Figure 4-1). This is in contrast to the national sample in which there was improvement in both measures.

There were a small number of individual questions on which there were differences between the samples. People in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample were less likely to agree that domestic violence was mainly or more often perpetrated by men and more likely to agree that men and women were equally likely to suffer physical harm as the result of such violence. Between 2013 and 2017 there was a decline in the proportion of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders recognising that domestic violence is perpetrated mainly by men or men more often (similar to the national sample) (Table 4-1). Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders were also more likely than non- Indigenous Australians to:

- agree that 'A man should never admit when others have hurt his feelings' and that 'It is embarrassing for a man to have a job that is usually filled by a woman' (Table 4-2); and
- excuse violence against women if either the victim or perpetrator were affected by alcohol or drugs at the time (Table 4-3).

These areas, alongside other areas of concern common to both samples (outlined in greater detail in the report of findings for the national sample on the ANROWS website), require attention in future work with Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders to prevent violence against women.

Within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample, men are more likely than women to endorse negative attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality. Other groups within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample that are more likely to endorse negative attitudes towards violence against women are those aged 65 years and older, people with secondary education or less, and those living outside of a major city (page 37).

Predictors of attitudes among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

The six strongest predictors of attitudes supportive of violence against women are shown in Figure 4-10a and include:

- having attitudes that endorse gender inequality;
- having a low level of understanding of violence against women;
- holding prejudicial attitudes towards others on the basis of their disability, ethnicity or sexual orientation;
- educational level;
- endorsing violence as a practice; and
- the remoteness of the area that people live in.

Findings from the national sample show that people holding other forms of prejudice, including prejudice towards Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, are more likely to hold attitudes supportive of violence against women.

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[2] The composite measure gauges one aspect of knowledge of violence against women, being understanding that this violence extends beyond physical violence and forced sex to also include psychological, social, emotional and financial forms of abuse designed to intimidate and control. Questions ask about other aspects of knowledge. However, this is the only composite measure in the knowledge component of the questionnaire.

Implications for policy and practice

Overall, the findings for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample are very similar to those found among non-Indigenous Australians, suggesting that many of the implications discussed in the main report of the findings for the community as a whole (Webster et al., 2018a) are also likely to be relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

A multi-level, multi-strategy approach

In addition to tracking Australians' attitudes towards violence against women, it is also important to track attitudes towards Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. This is because findings from both the NCAS and prior research show that holding prejudicial attitudes attitudes may have a negative influence on responses to violence affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls.

Effective approaches to preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls are different to prevention work in general. *How* this work is undertaken is especially important (Blagg, Bluett-Boyd, & Williams, 2015; Blagg, Williams, Cummings, Hovane, Torres, & Woodley, 2018; Olsen & Lovett, 2016). Principles that ought to underlie prevention activity have been developed over many years in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (see, for example, Blagg et al., 2015; 2018; Olsen & Lovett, 2016). These principles are summarised in *Changing the picture* (Our Watch, 2018) as:

- self-determination: community ownership, control and leadership;
- cultural safety;
- trauma-informed practice and practitioner self-care;
- healing focused;
- holistic;
- prioritising and strengthening culture;
- using strengths-based and community strengthening approaches;
- adapting to different community, demographic and geographic contexts;
- addressing intersectional discrimination; and
- non-Indigenous organisations working as allies in culturally safe ways.

Supporting prevention in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

The small changes in attitudes among the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample between 2013 and 2017 contrast with the sample as a whole (Webster et al., 2018a), in which there was a positive change in the majority of questions asked in both surveys and in all three overall measures. This suggests that the factors driving positive change in the community as a whole may not have had as great an impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This, together with the disproportionate impact of violence on women and girls in these communities, supports the focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls in the *National Plan* (COAG, 2011).

Priority issues

The large proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents who agreed that reporting violence remains problematic for women indicates the importance of continued efforts to address institutional and community-level barriers to reporting. In prioritising efforts to strengthen knowledge, attitudes and bystander interventions[3] in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, there would also be benefits in:

- addressing the gaps in knowledge of violence against women, particularly in relation to help seeking, the gendered nature and dynamics of intimate partner violence, social factors contributing to violence, and the greater risk of sexual assault by a known person compared to sexual assault by a stranger;
- addressing all aspects of gender inequality, with a focus on challenging rigid gender roles and identities and the idea that gender inequality is no longer a problem;
- promoting attitudes that foster a mutually respectful approach to gender relations and challenging the idea that women lie about violence or use claims of violence for tactical advantage;
- addressing barriers to bystander action by informing people that they are likely to be supported by more of their friends than they might think, by strengthening their knowledge and attitudes, and by focusing on people who feel uncomfortable and would like to act but say they would not know how;
- addressing excuses for violence against women, particularly excuses involving alcohol (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men are particularly likely to hold such attitudes);
- having a particular focus on addressing the importance of consent in intimate relationships; and
- promoting the importance of police and support services for families in which violence reoccurs.

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[3] Noting the strengths and limitations of bystander approaches as discussed on page 34.

Whole community and targeted approaches

The fact that the differences between people within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample based on demographic characteristics are relatively small suggests the need for prevention strategies that reach the whole population. There are many factors to consider when making decisions to target prevention action, not just attitudes (e.g. the prevalence of violence in a community). However, the survey does show some grounds for targeting:

- men and boys, noting the gender differences found in this sample – men are also the majority perpetrators of violence (men who do not perpetrate violence are potential allies in violence prevention);
- elders, who play important leadership roles in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- people with a low level of education; and
- people living outside of major cities.

Although young Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders did not vary in significant ways from people in the sample aged 25 to 64 in their attitudes, they were less likely to have a high level of understanding of violence against women. A focus on young people is warranted given this finding, that violence has a particular impact at this life cycle stage, and data showing that young women are especially vulnerable to violence.[4]

Strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

The influence of a person's understanding of violence against women and their attitudes to gender equality on their attitudinal support for violence against women highlights the need to improve understanding of the nature of violence against women, and for an approach to preventing this violence that promotes equal and respectful relationships between men and women.

Demographic factors had relatively less influence on attitudes towards violence within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample. However, a person's level of education and the remoteness of the area they live in were the strongest demographic predictors of attitudes supportive of violence against women. Having a low level of education can be an indicator of disadvantage, yet, education can also influence attitudes because it is a liberalising force. When a person continues their education they are exposed to different ideas and world views which can contribute to more positive attitudes on a range of social issues, including attitudes to gender relations and violence against women (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Davis & Greenstein, 2009; Stack, Cao & Adamzyck, 2007). The fact that education makes a substantial contribution to explained variance after controlling for other measures of disadvantage, suggests that education is likely to influence attitudes through its liberalising effect, rather than because it reduces disadvantage. Education was a relatively more important predictor of attitudes towards violence against women in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample than in the national sample. This suggests that there would be particular benefits in improving access to education among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Further research is required to better understand variation in attitudes in outer regional and remote areas.

The measure of attitudinal support for violence in general is not as robust as other measures in the NCAS and this needs to be taken into account in considering findings. This measure was among the top six predictors in both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample and in the national sample (Webster et al., 2018a), although it was relatively *less* influential in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample than the NCAS sample as a whole, in which the measure of support for violence in general ranked fourth (before education level). This supports other research, conducted with a range of communities, showing that attitudes supportive of violence in general are associated with attitudes towards violence against women (Diaz-Aguado & Martinez, 2015; Herrero, Torres, Rodriguez, & Juarros-Basterretxea, 2017). It suggests that there would be value in addressing support for violence in general in efforts to address attitudinal support for violence against women, alongside the more influential factors of understanding of violence against women, attitudes towards gender equality and education level.

> In incredibly close knit communities, if violence occurs, it is hard to know where to go, even if there are services. In some locations, people don't approach services because they don't trust that they will be culturally competent. There are also areas in which the workforce is fast changing and this leads to instability and works against continuity and people disengage from services.
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> **– Workshop participant**

Further research

Further research is needed, particularly qualitative research, to better understand attitudes and attitudinal change in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Research in regional and remote communities is especially important, given the findings of this survey and the need for tailored research designs that take account of the complexities of conducting research on sensitive issues in remote communities.

There would also be benefits in strengthening the capacity of the NCAS to understand the impact of attitudes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through:

- investigating other areas through questions tailored to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents; and
- including further questions for the whole sample that investigate attitudes towards violence affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls.

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[4] Particular issues of concern for young people are discussed in a separate NCAS report of findings from respondents aged 16-24 (Politoff et al., 2019).

2   Introduction

About the NCAS

The National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) tells us:

- about people's understanding of, and attitudes towards, violence against women;
- about attitudes towards gender equality;
- what influences attitudes;
- if there has been a change over time in knowledge or attitudes; and
- whether people are prepared to intervene when witnessing abuse or disrespect towards women.

The 2017 NCAS collected information through mobile and landline telephone interviews with a representative sample of 17,500 Australians aged 16 years and over, 342 of whom identified as Aboriginal people and/or Torres Strait Islanders.

The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) funds the NCAS as part of *The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (the *National Plan*) (COAG, 2011).

The 2017 NCAS is closely aligned with *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia* (*Change the story*) (Our Watch et al., 2015), which was developed to support achievement of the *National Plan* goals.[5] The NCAS also complements the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey (PSS), which asks people about their experiences of violence. The PSS monitors change over time in the prevalence of violence in Australia, and is also funded under the *National Plan* (COAG, 2011).

The NCAS is the world's longest-running survey of community attitudes towards violence against women. It was initially developed on behalf of the Australian Government in 1995, drawing on an earlier 1987 survey. The past two national surveys took place in 2009 and 2013 (led by VicHealth). Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) is proud to lead the 2017 NCAS in collaboration with our research partners.

The NCAS is a resource for anyone wanting to understand and prevent violence against women. It can be used, for example, by educators, policymakers, program planners, researchers, journalists and students.

In 2017 respondents identifying as Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders were asked the same questions as the sample as a whole. They were also asked additional questions as described in greater detail below.

ℹ Box 2-1: Note on terminology
Domestic violence, partner violence and violence against women

Many of the questions in the survey use the term 'domestic violence' because this is the term used when the questions were first asked nationally in 1995. The term was retained in the questions in which it was used in 2013 to enable the 2017 results to be compared with previous NCAS waves. For accuracy, this term is used in this report when referring to the questions or findings.

The terms 'intimate partner violence' and 'family violence' are now commonly used in policy and research. 'Intimate partner violence' is used to distinguish violence occurring between people in an intimate relationship. 'Family violence' encompasses violence between intimate partners, but also includes violence involving other family members (e.g. violence between siblings). The term 'intimate partner violence' is used in this report except when referring to NCAS questions and findings that use the terminology of domestic violence.

The NCAS encompasses four forms of violence: intimate partner violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment and stalking. These are all forms of 'violence against women', so this terminology is used when referring to two or more of these forms of violence. As noted above, typically Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities understand intimate partner violence in the context of the broader issue of family violence.

The terminology used to describe violence against women has been the subject of debate in the community and among service providers and researchers. Some people have argued that gender neutral terminology (e.g. domestic violence) should be avoided in favour of terms like 'violence against women' and 'woman abuse', which more accurately describe and 'name' the gendered nature of the problem (see, for example, DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013).

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5   The redevelopment of the survey instrument and data collection for the 2017 NCAS were undertaken before the production of *Changing the picture* (Our Watch, 2018). Therefore, it could not be used to inform the framework for the 2017 NCAS.

Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women – nature, prevalence and impacts

Violence against women is a prevalent problem with significant health, social and economic costs for women and their children, as well as society as a whole (Ayre, Lum On, Webster, Gourley, & Moon, 2016; Cripps & Adams, 2014). Gender inequality and the disrespect of women increase the likelihood of this violence occurring (COAG, 2011; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015).[6]

Violence against women is defined by the United Nations (1993) as:

any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Although violence against women can take many forms, the NCAS focuses on four forms: sexual assault, partner violence, sexual harassment and stalking. This is because they are the most prevalent forms of violence against women in Australia.

Australian governments have made significant efforts to reduce violence against women and promote gender equality and respect both in the community as a whole and among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Blagg et al., 2018; NT Board of Inquiry into Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, 2007). However, one in four Australian women have experienced intimate partner violence[7] since the age of 15, and one in five have experienced sexual violence (Cox, 2015). Also, one in six Australian women have experienced stalking and more than half have experienced sexual harassment (ABS, 2017; Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), 2017; 2018).

While affecting women across the social spectrum, this violence has a particular impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls. Although it is difficult to establish the true extent of violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Olsen & Lovett, 2016), research drawing from diverse data sources suggests that when compared to non-Indigenous women, it is highly probable that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls experience:

- a higher rate of violence (AIHW, 2018; Al-Yaman, Van Doeland, & Wallis, 2006; Cripps, Bennett, Gurrin, & Studdert, 2009; Cunneen & Tauri, 2017; Australian Human Rights Commission (HREOC), 2006; Lievore, 2003; McGlade, 2006; Olsen & Lovett, 2016; Saunders, 2015; Taylor & Putt, 2007);
- higher rates of sexual violence (ABS, 2017);
- higher rates of hospitalisation as a result of family violence (AIHW, 2018);
- more severe violence (Al-Yaman et al., 2006; Berry, Harrison, & Ryan, 2009); and
- greater barriers to disclosure (Cripps & Adams, 2014; Spangaro, Herring, Koziol-Mclain, Rutherford, Frail, & Zwi, 2016), securing safety (Nixon & Cripps, 2013; Prentice, Blair, & O'Mullan, 2017) and accessing support services (McCalman, Bridge, Whiteside, Bainbridge, Tsey, & Jongen, 2014).

Violence perpetrated *within* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is commonly seen as part of a broader picture of family violence, defined as 'a wide range of physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological and economic abuses that occur within families, intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities' (Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce, 2003). This reflects the significance of extended family and kinship relationships in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, resulting in both a broader understanding of 'family' and a view that the consequences of violence affect all those involved (Cripps & Adams, 2014; Day, Jones, Nakata, & McDermott, 2012). The broader definition also reflects the interrelationships between violence occurring within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and that which has been perpetrated against them (Atkinson, 1994).

> The focus is often on Aboriginal men, but we must remember that a lot of violence against Aboriginal women and their children is perpetrated by non-Aboriginal men.
>
> **– Workshop participant**

Violence against women in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities has a ripple effect in that it results in families being fractured, children being removed, and women losing their roles as partners and as mothers (Cripps & Adams, 2014). It also contributes to higher rates of imprisonment among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly men (Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC), 2017). The ripple effect extends to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as a whole, undermining the cultural and kinship structures that keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families strong (Cripps & Adams, 2014).

As is the case with violence occurring against women in the community as a whole, little is known about the backgrounds of those perpetrating violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls. However, it is important to note that this violence involves both violence perpetrated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women by non-Indigenous men, as well as Indigenous men (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2018; Biddle, 2013; Our Watch, 2018). Likewise, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men may perpetrate violence against women who are not Indigenous.

Like all women in Australia, violence from a known person – most likely a current or former partner (ABS, 2016b) – is the highest risk faced by women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. Based on data from the 2014-15 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS), nearly two in three (63%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who had experienced physical violence reported that the perpetrator of the most recent incident was a family member, including a current or previous partner. Of the women who had experienced physical violence in the 12 months before the survey, more than one in four (28%) indicated their most recent incident was perpetrated by a cohabiting partner (ABS, 2016). These patterns have also been found in other research (Lloyd, 2014; Kerr, Whyte, & Strang, 2017).

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6 Exploration of the complex range of factors contributing to violence against women is beyond the scope of this report. A number of reviews of the international evidence have been conducted. For a list and synthesis of these and factors to consider in drawing on the evidence base, see Webster & Flood (2015).

7 Includes current and former co-habitating partners and people in dating relationships.

Many factors contribute to violence against women. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are particularly affected by some of these factors, including:

- violence in the community (ABS, 2013) and in institutions, such as prisons (ALRC, 2017; Cunneen & Tauri, 2017; AHRC, 2006; 2011; Johnston, 1991);

- social and economic marginalisation, such as unemployment and poor access to education – persistent disadvantage, deprivation and neglect may lead to the breakdown of social controls against violence (Atkinson, 1990a; 1990b; Button, 2008; Langton, 2008) and such disadvantage may increase material and psychological stress, which, on their own, may not be the cause of violence, but collectively can create a 'tipping point' for violence (Weatherburn, 2011); and

- the impacts of being a colonised people, including historical and contemporary influences such as state intervention in, and control of, Indigenous family, social and economic life (including forced child removal, restrictions on peoples' movements, withdrawal and management of income, the undermining of traditional gender roles, racism, exposure to alcohol and other drugs, and high rates of incarceration of Indigenous women and men) (Cripps & Adams, 2014; Cunneen & Tauri, 2017; AHRC, 2011; Johnston, 1991).

Gender inequality and disrespect of women also increase the likelihood of violence occurring (for a review, see Webster & Flood, 2015). Gender inequality affects Australian women and men across the social spectrum, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Indeed, some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars note that women in their communities face the double jeopardy and intersecting consequences of both race and gender-based discrimination (Armstrong, Baldry, & Chartrand, 2007; Yap & Biddle, 2010; Davis, 2010; Langton, 2018). These forms of discrimination are not merely additive but interact together such that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience a particular form of discrimination (Liddle, 2014).

Attitudes that are violence supportive and undermine gender equality

Attitudes are shaped by the world around us, including through our families and friends, communities and institutions such as schools and the media (Flood & Pease, 2009; Pease & Flood, 2008). As a reflection of this world, attitudes may serve as a barometer. They are one way of telling us whether progress is being made and where we may need to focus future effort.

Attitudes that endorse violence and disrespect of women and gender equality are also among the many factors that contribute to violence against women. Indirectly, they can influence the responses of service providers, as well as those of family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues of those affected. Attitudes can also influence perpetrators and women subject to violence. The evidence for this is discussed in the report of the national sample (Webster et al., 2018a).

Attitudes held by people in the *wider community* towards violence against women and gender equality are relevant to understanding violence against women and girls in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. International research shows that the community is more likely to hold attitudes supportive of violence against women from minority ethnic and racial groups than the dominant racial group (Esqueda & Harrison, 2005).

The attitudes of the community as a whole have been documented in other NCAS reports. This report complements this data by exploring knowledge and attitudes among respondents identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Box 2-2: Attitudes that are violence supportive and undermine gender equality

What are attitudes supportive of violence against women?

These are attitudes that:

Excuse the perpetrator and hold women responsible by shifting responsibility for violence from the perpetrator and/or to the victim by holding women responsible for the violence occurring, or for not preventing it. Attitudes excusing the perpetrator suggest that there are factors that make some men unable to control their behaviour.

Disregarding the need to gain consent by denying the requirement for men to secure positive consent in sexual relationships. These attitudes rationalise men's failure to actively secure consent either as a 'natural' aspect of masculinity (e.g. men's uncontrollable sexual drive), or logical due to stereotypes around female sexuality (e.g. the idea that women do not have the right to withhold consent if they have been sexually assertive).

Minimise violence against women by denying its seriousness, downplaying the impact on the victim, or making the violence and its consequences seem less significant or complex than they really are.

Mistrust women's reports of violence by suggesting women lie about or exaggerate reports of violence in order to 'get back at' men or gain tactical advantage in their relationships with men. Such attitudes have been referred to as part of a backlash.

Individuals who hold such attitudes are not necessarily violence prone or would openly condone violence against women. However, when such attitudes are expressed by influential individuals or are held by a large number of people, they can contribute to a culture in which violence is at best not clearly condemned, or at worst, is actively condoned or encouraged.

Attitudes that support violence against women (themes)

Attitudes that undermine gender equality (themes)

What are attitudes that undermine gender equality?

These are attitudes that:

Undermine women's independence and decision-making in public life by suggesting men make better leaders, decision-makers or are more suited to holding positions of power and responsibility.

Undermine women's independence and decision making in private life by agreeing that men should have greater authority to make decisions and control in the private realm of intimate relationships, family life and household affairs.

Promote rigid gender roles, stereotypes and expressions by reflecting the idea that men and women are naturally suited to different tasks and responsibilities, and have naturally distinctive – often oppositional – personal characteristics (e.g. 'women are emotional and are therefore better childcarers', while 'men are rational and are therefore better politicians').

Condone male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women by accepting as normal, natural or harmless men's aggressive and disrespectful behaviour towards/about women by men in peer group settings (e.g. locker room talk).

Deny gender equality is a problem through denial that gender inequality, sexism, or discrimination against women continue to be problems in society. These attitudes often reflect hostility towards women and resentment towards improvements, or action for the improvement of women's rights. They are sometimes referred to as reflecting a 'backlash' towards women's advancement.

3 Methodology

About the NCAS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample

To form the NCAS sample as a whole, people aged 16 years and over were randomly selected from across Australia and invited to participate in a 20-minute telephone interview. The consent of a parent or guardian was sought for respondents aged under 18 years. Forty percent of the interviews were conducted with people on landline telephones and 60 percents with people on mobile phones. Interviewing on both landlines and mobile phones enables participation from a broader range of people than landline interviewing only.

This report focuses on describing findings for the sample of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. In most analyses, findings are given for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women, as well as for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample as a whole. There were 342 respondents (including 180 women and 160 men) in the 2017 survey who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, sufficient to enable conclusions to be drawn about the population.[8] This includes a cross-section of men and women of different ages and walks of life and from all Australian states and territories. However, people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds in very remote areas were under-represented.[9]

As in almost all surveys, the number of people in various groups does not match exactly their proportions in the population. There is a risk that this will result in a bias towards the views of a particular group. To make sure that appropriate representation was given to the views of all groups (e.g. men and women, young people and old people, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders in different states), the sample was weighted proportionally to match the known population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia.

Approach to analysing data

In most analyses, findings for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample were compared with the non-Indigenous sample. Data comparing these two samples are not presented in all the tables because there were only a small number of differences between them. However, when they were found, they are reported in the text.

As is the case for all NCAS reporting, differences between groups noted in this report:

- Have been tested for statistical significance at the $p \leq 0.01$ level. Significance testing makes sure that any differences are not occurring due to chance.[10]
- Have been assessed to make sure that only differences that are both statistically significant and notable in size are reported. This is because a difference between groups can be statistically significant but trivial in size. This was achieved using a Cohen's test of effect size. A Cohen's threshold of 0.2 has been applied. Differences between variables that are both significant and notable in size are denoted in tables and figures using symbols.
- Are based on a base size of at least 30. Results based on base sizes smaller than this are not reported. This is because findings from small numbers have a higher probability of being due to chance. Findings from sample sizes greater than 30 but less than 100 are noted with the ᐃ symbol when given in either the text or a table and should be treated with caution, as discussed further in Box 3-2.

Where there are no differences that meet the thresholds for significance and effect presented above, but a trend is apparent in the data, this may be noted.

The exception to the above are data exploring change over time at the overall level (measured using the composite measures). Here, significance testing at the $p \leq 0.05$ level is used and the Cohen's threshold is not applied. This is because attitudes change slowly such that even small changes between surveys are important. These same tests and thresholds are used in all the other NCAS reports.

Questions are grouped thematically in each table and any group may contain a mix of questions asked of the whole, half or quarter of the sample. To minimise the complexity of the tables, the figure given for the 'n' value is for the question asked of the largest proportion of the sample. Where an individual question is asked of fewer respondents, this is denoted by way of a footnote to the table.

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[8] For the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample, the 95% confidence interval for an estimate of 50% is +/– 5.3%. In addition, the difference between the sum of men and women and the total is accounted for by people who did not identify a gender or who did not respond to the question on gender.

[9] In the NCAS the remoteness of an area is measured using the Accessibility and Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) (ABS, 2018). Remoteness is measured on the basis of road distance from a point to the nearest urban centre and localities in five categories. Very remote areas are the most remote of these categories.

[10] A threshold for statistical significance of $p \leq 0.05$ is commonly used in social science research. The level $p \leq 0.01$ used in this report is a more stringent threshold (i.e. one providing a higher level of certainty that results are not due to chance) and is particularly helpful with large samples where small changes can be significant but not necessarily meaningful.

About the 2017 NCAS questionnaire

In 2017 the questionnaire given to all respondents was also given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents. There was also a special module containing questions that were asked only of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. The questionnaire given to all respondents is described below, followed by a description of the special module for respondents identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

The whole community questionnaire

The questionnaire from the 2013 survey was redeveloped for 2017, retaining as many questions as possible to measure changes over time. More detail on survey design and construction of the measures used in analysis in this report can be found in the NCAS methodology report (Webster et al., 2018b) on the ANROWS website. The NCAS Questionnaire Framework (Figure 3-1) provides an overview of the questionnaire.

The core of the 2017 survey (represented in the centre cells in Figure 3-1) involves four **components**.[11] The first is made up of questions designed to find out about people's knowledge of violence against women (25 questions). The second is concerned with attitudes towards gender equality (19 questions), the third with attitudes towards violence against women (35 questions and two scenarios), and the fourth with intentions if witnessing abuse or disrespect towards women (two scenarios).

Each component is further divided into **themes**. The themes reflect different aspects of knowledge and different ways attitudinal support for gender inequality and endorsement of violence against women can be expressed. The themes are described in greater detail in Box 2-2. The themes in the 'Bystander action' component reflect the conditions known to increase the chances that people, as bystanders, will take positive action to address abuse and disrespect.[12]

As well as measuring people's responses to individual questions, selected overall concepts are gauged using 15 **composite measures** (these may be referred to as scales or constructs). These comprise selected questions using statistical methods (Rasch and factor analysis) to ensure they measure the concept accurately.[13]

The first component in the NCAS Questionnaire Framework, the knowledge component ('Knowledge of violence against women'), has one composite measure that gauges people's overall understanding that violence against women extends beyond physical violence and forced sex to also include psychological, social and financial means of control and intimidation.[14] There are composite measures to gauge attitudes towards gender equality and violence against women overall, as well as the themes in each of these components. Drawing on questions from the bystander component ('Bystander action'), there is a composite measure of people's overall intention to take positive action if they witness abuse or disrespect towards women.

Many factors influence knowledge and attitudes. Increasing understanding of these factors is an aim of the NCAS. The factors included in the 2017 NCAS are shown in the far left cells in Figure 3-1. Information is collected from survey participants to measure each factor. This is then used in the analysis of their responses to the questions in the four core survey components. This includes questions about the people, such as their age, occupation, education and whether they have a disability. Among the new factors measured in the 2017 NCAS are:

- people's levels of prejudice on the basis of other attributes (sexual orientation, ethnicity and disability) – non-Indigenous respondents were also asked a question to establish if they held prejudice against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, but this was not asked of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample because it may have caused stress to some respondents);
- their support for violence in general; and
- the gender composition of their friendship networks and wordplaces.

Composite measures are also used to measure prejudice and support for violence in general.

ℹ Box 3-1: How are composite measures used in NCAS?

The strength of a composite measure is that it can measure a complex overall topic or concept (such as support for gender equality) that would be difficult to measure with a single question or even several questions considered separately. These are used in the NCAS to:

- ensure overall understanding and attitudinal support measures are as valid as possible;
- measure change in overall concepts over time;
- find out how widely supported particular attitudinal concepts are held, so that greater focus can be placed on more troubling concepts in prevention work;

- explore factors that are related to knowledge, attitudes and action (e.g. whether a person's age influences whether they are more likely to endorse gender equality overall); and
- explore relationships between concepts (e.g. to find out whether some aspects of attitudes towards gender equality are more strongly related to attitudinal support for violence against women than others).

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[11] The fifth component listed in the NCAS Questionnaire Framework, 'Social norms', was not measured in the 2017 NCAS. Measurement of social norms is subject to future development in the NCAS.

[12] For reasons discussed further in Chapter 4, the NCAS focuses on bystander responses to precursors to/risk factors for physical violence, rather than physical violence itself.

[13] Further information on the methodology used can be found in the 2017 NCAS methodology report (Webster et al., 2018b).

[14] Note that although there are five themes in the knowledge component of the questionnaire, a composite measure has been made for just one of these, as shown in Figure 3-1. It was not possible to develop a measure for all the themes in the knowledge component within the bounds of the questionnaire due to the number of questions that would be required.

Figure 3-1: NCAS Questionnaire Framework

Factors	Questionnaire components	Composite measures
demographic, contextual & attitudinal factors that may be associated with and influence attitudes	*made up of questions in themes*	*made from groups of questions to measure an overall concept*

Demographic factors

- Gender
- Age
- Household composition
- Education
- Labour force status
- Occupation of respondent and main household income earner
- Postcode
- Self-identified disability
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status
- Country of birth of respondent and their mother and father
- Year of arrival
- Language other than English spoken at home
- English language proficiency

Contextual factors

- Gender make-up of a person's social networks

Attitudinal factors

- Prejudice Attitudes Construct (PAC) – Prejudice towards people on the basis of ethnicity, Aboriginality, sexuality and disability
- General Violence Construct (GVC) – Support for the use of violence in general

Knowledge of violence against women

- Definition / nature of the problem

- Violence & the law
- Patterns & consequences
- Contributing factors
- Knowledge of resources

Understanding Violence Against Women Scale (UVAWS)

Attitudes towards gender equality

- Undermining women's independence and decision-making in
  – public life
  – private life
- Promoting rigid gender roles, stereotypes and expressions
- Condoning male peer relations involving aggression & disrespect
- Denying gender inequality is a problem

Gender Equality Attitudes Scale (GEAS) and scale themes

Attitudes towards violence against women

- Excusing the perpetrator and holding women responsible
- Minimising violence against women
- Mistrusting women's reports of violence
- Disregarding the need to gain consent

Community Attitudes Supportive of Violence Against Women Scale (CASVAWS) and scale themes

Bystander action

When witnessing abuse or disrespect towards women
- Intentions
- Confidence
- Anticipation of social support

Intention to Act Construct (ITAC)

Social norms**

Measured by what people think others think or what is expected of them
- Social norms pertaining to violence against women and gender equality

** Not measured in the 2017 NCAS. Subject to future development.

Box 3-2: The need for caution in using results from this report based on individual questions

Results marked with an △ symbol should be treated with some caution as they are based on sample sizes of between 30 and 100 people. Small sample sizes effect two categories of results in this report:

- results for some **individual questions**, especially when they are broken down by gender;
- results comparing groups within the sample (e.g. people in different occupations) using the **composite measures**.

It is helpful to know the results for individual questions because this can provide some clues about factors contributing to attitudes. However, when these are based on sample sizes of less than 100 people, there is a higher likelihood that they are due to chance than results based on larger sample sizes. It would be especially wrong to use a result based on a small sample for a particular question:

- without mentioning that it is based on a small sample size and hence may have occurred by chance;
- as evidence of an *overall* trend among Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. Rather, the composite measures should be used for this purpose because they are a stronger overall measure (see Box 3-1). This is because they are based on responses to a number of questions and have been constructed using rigorous methods. It is also important to consider results for individual questions alongside the overall trend for a particular group of questions. For example, there may be an unfavourable result on one question, but the overall trend may be positive.

There are also small sample sizes for some demographic breakdowns, including for the composite measures. This is because the number of Aboriginal people and Torres Strat Islanders in the sample as a whole is small, so that when it is divided further (e.g. by occupation), even smaller numbers are being compared. This is a challenge affecting any population-level research, not just the NCAS. It arises because Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders represent a relatively small proportion of the Australian population and this, in turn, is reflected in their small numbers in randomly selected survey samples.

Why is sample size a particular issue in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander analysis?

To maximise the number of questions asked in the 2017 NCAS, selected questions were asked of only one half or one quarter of the sample. These were mainly in the 'knowledge' and 'bystander' components. This was not a barrier to analysis for the national sample as a whole, given the overall sample size. However, a disadvantage is that sample sizes are insufficient for some questions for some of the smaller groups within the national sample, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample.

This problem is partly addressed in the NCAS through the composite measures because allowance can be made in the statistical modelling for the fact that not all people answered every question – that is, every person in a sample can be given a score on the composite measure.

Small sample sizes can sometimes occur in survey research because many people overall, or in a particular subgroup, elect not to answer the question (e.g. because they find it offensive). This response bias can in turn produce a bias in findings. This is not the case in the NCAS. Rather, small sample sizes are due to the split sampling approach described above.

Additional module for respondents identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

The questions in the module were developed by the NCAS research team in collaboration with an Expert Group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to ensure that the questions tapped attitudes in ways that are appropriate, relevant and tailored to those from, and those working with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The Expert Group was national in scope and included women with academic backgrounds and from key organisations working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (see Appendix 1).

As indicated earlier (see Box 2-1) partner violence, sexual assault, stalking and sexual harassment within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are commonly seen as part of a broader picture of family violence. This broad definition of family violence informed the development and framing of the questions to be asked of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents. In particular, this way of understanding family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities informed the decision to focus on violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls perpetrated by any other person regardless of that person's gender, race or relationship to the victim. This is in contrast to most of the questions in the survey instrument, which, consistent with the survey scope, focus on men's violence towards women (and hence, where relevant, more or less explicitly refer to the perpetrator as male and the victim as female). The Expert Group indicated that focusing on male-perpetrated partner violence in particular would not accord with the dynamics and understandings of violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

As a starting point for the collaborative development of these items, four broad topics were determined:

1. Knowledge of causes of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls.
2. Barriers to help seeking for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls experiencing violence.
3. Practices of help seeking: Where do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls go for help?
4. Appropriateness of various responses to violence (e.g. law enforcement, counselling, healing).

These topics were identified by the Expert Group based on their understanding of areas in which data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are needed.

Various procedures are used in developing the NCAS questionnaire to ensure that the questions are as valid as possible and that the interview as a whole takes no longer than 20 minutes.[15] These procedures were also used in developing the new questions for respondents identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. They include testing questions with a smaller number of people face to face to ensure their intended meaning is understood and clear (referred to as cognitive testing) and a 'rehearsal' by telephone to identify any problems in asking the questions over the phone and to find out how many questions can be asked within the 20-minute interview timeframe (referred to as pilot testing). It is impossible to predict in the development phase whether questions will test well and how long they will take to administer, so a larger number of questions were

developed for piloting than was likely to be possible in the final survey instrument. Ultimately, there was room in the questionnaire for only the first two topics above.

The process by which the topics and wording of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-tailored items were determined occurred as follows:

- Once the broad topics were finalised, the NCAS team drafted possible question options and wordings. These were refined with the Expert Group.

- Once a number of question options were settled upon, an in-person meeting was held at which the group modified the framing of some of the questions, reworded some elements of the items, and determined the priority order of the four topic areas and the questions within them, as well as the priority order of the response options. The prioritising of these elements was important, given the likelihood that there would not be space for all of them in the survey instrument.

- It was agreed that the NCAS team would finalise the questions on the basis of cognitive testing and piloting with people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

- Proportionately more cognitive and pilot interviews were completed with Aboriginal people and/or Torres Strait Islanders than was the case for the main community, given the potential sensitivity of the survey. Five face-to-face cognitive interviews were conducted covering questions in the survey as a whole, as well as those in the special module. Feedback was sought from respondents on all the questions developed through the process outlined above. Interviewees were asked about their personal reactions to the questions (including terminology, wording and meaning). Due to the potentially sensitive nature of the questions, respondents were also specifically asked how they would feel about them being asked over the telephone. During the pilot test, an additional ten individuals identifying as Aboriginal people and/or Torres Strait Islanders were recruited to ensure a sufficient number of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders were involved in pilot testing the survey as a whole and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific module. Feedback from this testing contributed to the shape of the final questions.

- On the basis of advice from those involved in the cognitive interviews and the pilot testing, an introduction to the special questions was scripted to inform respondents that these questions would only be asked of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. This was to avoid Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interviewees feeling stigmatised if they mistakenly thought these questions were being asked of the whole sample.

- Following the outcomes of testing, the final number of questions in the survey instrument was determined based on the priority order given by the Expert Group and taking into account the survey's 20-minute time limit. Of the questions proposed by the group, a total of 12 were included in the 2017 NCAS, representing approximately one-third of the questions developed by the process described here.

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[15] Twenty minutes is considered the longest a telephone survey should be. A bigger survey places undue burden on respondents. Also the quality of their answers can be negatively affected.

4 Findings

As discussed in Chapter 3, respondents were asked to respond to a number of individual statements or questions in four components ('Knowledge of violence against women'; 'Attitudes towards gender equality'; 'Attitudes towards violence against women'; 'Bystander action'). Responses to these questions are reported in Tables 4-1 to 4-3 and Figures 4-3 and 4-5 in this chapter. For reasons noted in 'Approach to analysis' in Chapter 3, comparisons between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample and the non-Indigenous sample are not shown in these tables. However, where significant differences between the two samples were found, they are noted in the text.

Answers to the individual statements and questions were also used to measure the concepts in each of the four components overall (referred to as composite measures). To measure change over time at an overall level, statistical modelling was used to account for the fact that not every question was asked in both 2013 and 2017. Using the composite measures, each Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander respondent was given a score based on their answers to questions in the composite measures. An average for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample was then calculated. Scores range from one to 100. In the case of the measures of understanding of violence against women and attitudes to gender equality, a higher score indicates a greater level of understanding and more favourable attitudes towards gender equality respectively. In contrast, for the measure of attitudes towards violence against women, a higher score indicates less favourable attitudes.

It is important to note that mean scores are not the same as percentages. The approach is used to compare findings (in this case, findings between survey waves) relative to one another, rather than to measure concepts of concern in an absolute sense.

Change in knowledge and attitudes over time

Between 2013 and 2017 there was no significant change in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample on the Understanding of Violence Against Women Scale (UVAWS), measuring the extent to which respondents understand that violence against women extends beyond physical violence and forced sex to also include social, psychological and economic forms of abuse. There was an improvement in the Gender Equality Attitudes Scale (GEAS), measuring attitudes to gender equality among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. There was no statistically significant difference on this measure between 2013 and 2017 among women or in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample as a whole. This is in contrast to the national sample in which there was an overall (and statistically significant) improvement on both the UVAWS and the GEAS.[16]

There was positive change on the Community Attitudes Supportive of Violence Against Women Scale (CASVAWS), measuring attitudes towards violence against women. The average score for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders fell from 38 to 34 (a favourable result, with 1 representing the lowest level of endorsement of violence-supportive attitudes). This improvement occurred among both men and women in the sample. This was similar to the national sample, in which there was also an improvement in this measure in this period.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men are more likely than women to have a high endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women and to have low support for gender equality.

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[16] Data on change over time in the Intention to Act Construct are not shown because the questions on which it was based were asked for the first time in 2017.

Figure 4-1: Changes in understanding of violence against women and attitudes to gender equality and violence against women over time, in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample (means)

Changes in understanding of violence against women over time, 2013 & 2017
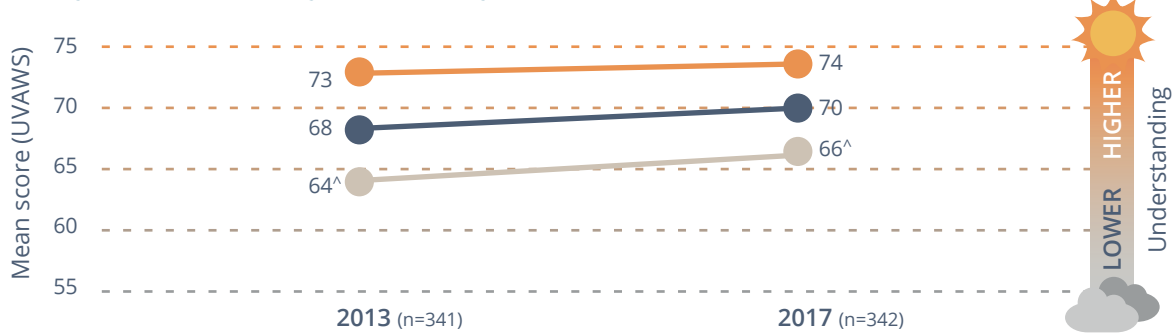
Changes in attitudinal support for gender equality over time, 2013 & 2017
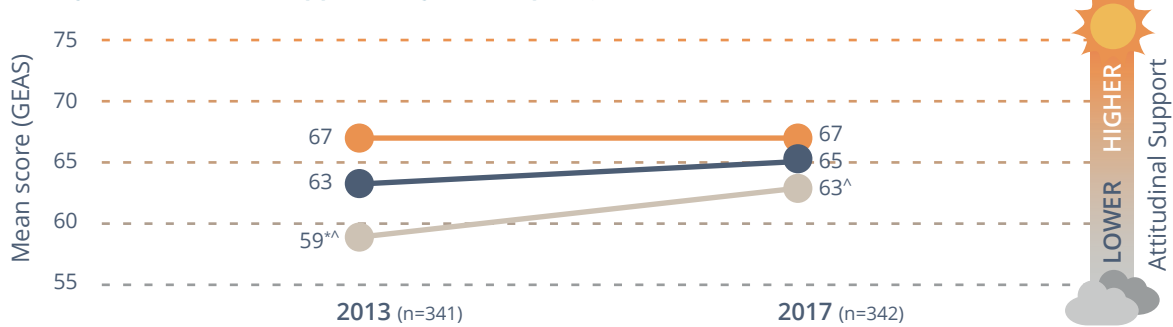
Changes in attitudinal support for violence against women over time, 2013 & 2017
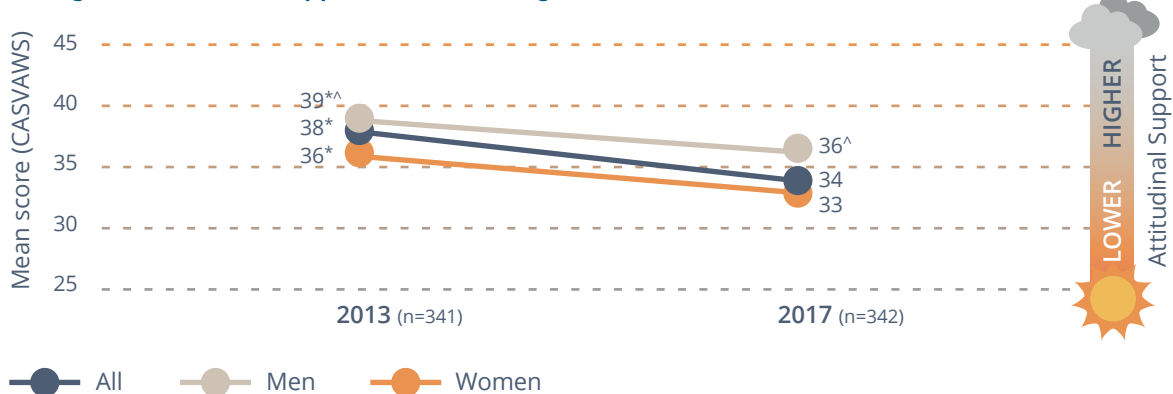
Note: The data used in this figure are means, not percentages. They rank the themes relative to one another, rather than showing an absolute level of attitudinal support for each theme in the population.

* Difference between 2013 and 2017 is statistically significant, $p \leq 0.05$.

^ Difference between men and women is statistically significant, $p \leq 0.05$.

Knowledge of violence against women among Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders

Knowledge of violence against women is among the factors influencing attitudes (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2004; Chaiken & Trope, 1999; Fazio, 1990) and is an important resource for both affected individuals and those around them to identify and respond constructively to the problem (Carlson & Worden, 2005; Powell, 2011). Knowledge of the law is important in encouraging individuals to report violence when it occurs and can play a role in shaping positive social norms that take violence seriously (Salazar, Baker, Price, & Carlin, 2003). Table 4-1 compares 2013 and 2017 survey findings for each question of knowledge of violence against women for respondents who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Table 4-1: Knowledge of violence against women by survey year and gender, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents	2013	2017		
	Total n=341	Total n=342	Men n=160	Women n=180
Understanding that certain behaviours are a form of domestic violence/violence against women (% always, usually or sometimes violence)				
Physical forms of violence				
Slaps or pushes to cause harm or fear	98	96	96	97
Forces the other partner to have sex**	96	99△	98△	100△
Tries to scare or control by threatening to hurt other family members**	97	98△	97△	98△
Throws or smashes objects to frighten or threaten**	97	97△	97△	100△
Non-physical forms of violence				
Repeatedly criticises to make partner feel bad or useless#	90	85	77△	92△
Controls the social life by preventing them from seeing family and friends#	86	91	90△	94△
Controls the other partner by denying them money	75	76	68	83
Repeatedly keeps track of location, calls or activities through mobile phone or other devices without consent**	-	85△	78△	94△
Stalking by repeatedly following/watching at home/work	94	90	86	94
Harassment via repeated emails, text messages#	91	89	88△	90△
Knowledge of the prevalence of violence against women (% agree)				
Violence against women is common**	87	88△	80△	94△
Understanding of sexual violence (% agree)				
If a woman doesn't physically resist –even if protesting verbally – then it isn't really rape**	14△	11△	17△	4△
Many allegations of sexual assault made by women are false**	-	22△	32△	11△
It is a criminal offence for a man to have sex with his wife without her consent**	-	81△	73△	91△
Women are more likely to be raped by someone they know than by a stranger**	70	70△	70△	70△
Patterns and consequences of partner violence (% agree)				
Men mainly or more often commit acts of domestic violence**	65†	44△	41△	49△
Women are more likely to suffer physical harm from domestic violence**	81	71△	71△	73△
Level of fear from domestic violence is worse for women**	47	38△	40△	37△
Knowledge of resources (% agree)				
If I needed to get outside advice or support for someone about a domestic violence issue, I would know where to go**	71	56△	61△	53△

** Asked of a quarter of the sample in 2017.

Asked of half the sample in 2017.

‾ Question not asked in 2013.

△ Results to be treated with caution because they are based on a small number of responses (i.e. between 30 and 100). See 'Approach to analysis' in Chapter 3 for further explanation.

† Difference between 2013 and 2017 is statistically significant, p ≤ 0.01.

Box 4-1: Key findings
Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders knowledge of violence against women

Understanding: Overall, there is a high level of understanding among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents that domestic violence involves both physical and non-physical violence. However, there is still more work to do in prevention work to emphasise that violence against women can be more than physical violence. This is especially needed given that, as indicated in Figure 4-1, there was no improvement on the composite measure of understanding of violence against women between 2013 and 2017 in this sample.

The behaviours that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were least likely to see as domestic violence are repeatedly keeping track of a partner's location, calls or activities through a mobile phone or other device without their consent (85%△), repeatedly criticising a partner to make them feel bad or useless (85%) and controlling the other partner by denying them money (76%).

Prevelance: Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (88%△) agree that violence against women is common.

Resources: Just over half (56%△) of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders say they would know where to get outside help for a domestic violence issue.

Sexual violence: Twenty-three percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents are unaware that a woman is more likely to be sexually assaulted by someone she knows than by a stranger (with 9% disagreeing with this statement and 14% responding that they did not know) (data not shown). This lack of awareness can lead to undue emphasis on preventing assaults perpetrated by strangers, rather than the more common problem of assault by someone known to the victim.

More than one in five (22%△) respondents believe that 'Many allegations of sexual assault made by women are false', and a further 13 percent△ did not know or felt they could not answer (data not shown). This is contrary to research that shows that false allegations are rare – in the order of between 1.2 percent and 10 percent of all reports made to the police (Ferguson & Malouff, 2016; Heenan & Murray, 2006; Kelly, 2010; Levett & the Crown Prosecution Service Equality and Diversity Unit, 2013; Lisak, Gardinier, Nicksa, & Cote, 2010; Lonsway, Cortina, &, Magley, 2008; Patton & Snyder-Yuly, 2007; Spohn, White, & Tellis, 2014; Weiser, 2017).

A majority (81%△) are aware that it is against the law for a man to have sex with his wife without her consent.

Patterns and consequences: Research shows that partner violence follows a gendered pattern. Men are more likely than women to perpetrate this violence, while women are more likely than men to be victims (ABS, 2017). Among those who have experienced this violence, women are more likely to suffer physical injury (Belknap & Melton, 2005; Myhill, 2015) and report feeling more fearful than men (ABS, 2017; AIHW, 2018; Bagshaw, Chung, Counch, Lilburn, & Wadham, 2000; Caldwell, Swan & Woodbrown, 2012; Headey, Scott, & De Vaus, 1999; National Crime Prevention, 2001). The gendered patterns of violence are apparent in the community as a whole and among Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders (see Box 4-2).

- In contrast to the research evidence, a little less than half the sample in 2017 (44%△) believe that domestic violence is perpetrated by men or mainly by men. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (44%△) are less likely than non-Indigenous respondents (64%) to agree that partner violence is mainly or more often perpetrated by men.

- A majority (71%△) agrees that 'Women are more likely to suffer physical harm from domestic violence'. However, only 38 percent△ agree that 'Level of fear from domestic violence is worse for women'.

- Those who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (49%△) are more likely than non-Indigenous Australians (31%) to believe that men and women are equally likely to perpetrate domestic violence and equally likely to suffer physical harm resulting from domestic violence (28%△ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; 14% non-Indigenous Australians) (data not shown). This could be due to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities understanding domestic violence through a broader definition of family violence, which includes behaviours that could be seen as less gendered (e.g. bi-directional violence, negative behaviours between extended family members and lateral violence).

Gender and sample differences

A larger proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women than men gave responses consistent with the evidence. However, none of the differences between men and women meet the thresholds for statistical significance and effect size applied in this report (see 'Approach to analysis' in Chapter 3).

There was no discernible trend in differences between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample and the non-Indigenous sample. With the exception of the questions on gendered patterns of partner violence, none of the differences met the significance and effect size thresholds used in this report.

Change over time in individual questions

As already explained, there was no overall improvement between 2013 and 2017 in the measure of understanding of violence against women (a measure based on selected questions in the knowledge component). In examining individual questions in the component, there was no statistically significant improvement on any of the individual questions between 2013 and 2017. The pattern in the data shows either no change or an improving trend on eight of the 16 questions asked in both surveys.

The main exceptions are the questions on the patterns and consequences of domestic violence. A significantly smaller proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents in 2017 (44%) agreed that it was men or mainly men who perpetrated domestic violence (65% in 2013). A similar trend was apparent in the national sample (Webster et al., 2018a). Although not statistically significant, there was a worsening trend on the remaining two items on the patterns and consequences of domestic violence.

△ These results in this figure should be treated with caution because they are based on a small number of responses (i.e. between 30 and 100). See 'Approach to analysis' in Chapter 3 for further explanation.

> **ⓘ Box 4-2: Gendered experiences of family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**
>
> - Two in three women (63%) and one in three men (35%) who had experienced physical violence reported that the perpetrator of the most recent incident was a family member, including a current or previous partner (ABS, 2016b).
> - Women aged 15 years and over were more likely than men to have experienced partner violence in the past 12 months (ABS, 2016b).
> - Women who had experienced physical violence were more than four times as likely as men to say that their current or previous partner was the perpetrator of the most recent incident (28% compared with 6%) (ABS, 2016b).
>
> - Women account for seven out of ten (73%) Indigenous hospitalisations from family violence, while men account for three in ten (27%) (AIHW, 2018).
> - Domestic violence is the main reason Indigenous women seek assistance from homelessness services, and Indigenous women (61%) are more likely to seek these services than Indigenous men (39%) (AIHW, 2018).

Attitudes to gender equality

Promoting gender equality is pivotal to reducing violence against women. Gender inequality and attitudes supporting gender inequality provide the social conditions in which violence against women is more likely to occur (for a review, see Webster & Flood, 2015). This is a position supported by key expert bodies (Michau, Horn, Bank, Dutt, & Zimmerman, 2015; UN Women, 2015; World Health Organization (WHO), 2010) and which underpins both the *National Plan* (COAG, 2011) and *Change the story* (Our Watch et al., 2015). Monitoring changes in attitudes to gender equality over time is an important way of tracking the conditions that increase the likelihood of violence against women.

Achieving gender equality is also important for other reasons, including its link to the wellbeing of women, men and their families, the protection and promotion of human rights, and its benefits for wider society, including improved productivity, creativity and economic development (VicHealth, 2017a; 2017b). The aspects of gender equality found to be linked to violence against women have been identified in research compiled for *Change the story* (Our Watch et al., 2015). Table 4-2 shows 2013 and 2017 results for the questions asked in the NCAS to measure these attitudes, which were adapted from existing studies.

Table 4-2: Attitudes to gender equality in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample by year and gender	2013	2017		
	Total n=341	Total n=342	Men n=160	Women n=180
Promoting rigid gender roles, stereotypes and expressions (% agree)				
If a woman earns more than her male partner, it is not good for the relationship#	-	11	12	10
A man should never admit when others have hurt his feelings	-	11	18^	5
When a couple start dating, the woman should not be the one to initiate sex#	-	14	10	17
I think it is embarrassing for a man to have a job that is usually filled by a woman#	-	10	17	4
A woman has to have children to be fulfilled	9	6	9	3
Undermining women's independence and decision-making in public life (% agree)				
In the workplace, men generally make more capable bosses than women#	-	21	28	15
Men, rather than women, should hold positions of responsibility in the community#	-	14	20	8
On the whole, men make better political leaders than women	32†	15	20	10
Women are less capable than men of thinking logically	-	11	13	9
Undermining women's independence and decision-making in private-life (% agree)				
Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household	23	20	27^	13
Women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship	29	28	29	26
Condone male peer relations involving aggression and disrespect towards women (% agree)				
I think there is no harm in men making sexist jokes about women when they are among their male friends#	-	21	31^	11
I think its ok for men to joke with their male friends about being violent towards women	-	3	4	2
I think it's natural for a man to want to appear in control of his partner in front of his male friends#	-	37	28	45
Denying gender inequality is a problem (% agree)				
Many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia#	-	45	51	40
Many women mistakenly interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist	-	51	58	44
Many women fail to fully appreciate all that men do for them#	-	32	33	32
Women often flirt with men just to be hurtful	-	24	25	24
Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the workplace in Australia	17†	9	12	5

Asked of half the sample in 2017.

- Question not asked in 2013.

^ Difference between men and women is statistically significant, p ≤ 0.01, and reaches the 0.2 Cohen's threshold.

† Difference between 2013 and 2017 is statistically significant, p ≤ 0.01.

Most Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders support gender equality, although there is a higher level of support for gender equality in some themes than others.

Relatively few in the sample support **rigid gender roles, stereotypes and expressions** (between 6%-14% depending on the question). The statement with the largest proportion of agreement (14%) is 'When a couple start dating, the woman should not be the one to initiate sex'.

- When compared to non-Indigenous Australians (6%), a greater proportion of the sample (11%) agrees that a man should never admit when others have hurt his feelings. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (18%) are more likely to agree with this statement than non-Indigenous men (7%) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (5%).

- A greater proportion of men in the sample (17%), compared to non-Indigenous men (6%) and non-Indigenous women (5%), agree that it is embarrassing for a man to have a job that is usually filled by a woman.

When compared with attitudes towards gender roles and stereotypes, there is a relatively high level of endorsement of questions undermining **women's independence and decision-making in *public* life** (ranging from 11%-21% of the sample depending on the statement).

- Of the questions in this group, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are most likely to agree that in the workplace, men generally make more capable bosses than women (21%).

- Data on the proportion disagreeing with statements is not shown in the tables. However, when the proportions *disagreeing* with this statement are examined, people in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample (72%) are less likely to disagree than non-Indigenous respondents (81%); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (83%) are more likely to disagree than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (61%), and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (61%) are less likely to disagree than non-Indigenous men (75%) and non-Indigenous women (86%).

There is a higher level of agreement (20%-28%) for propositions concerning **men's control over decision-making in *private* life** than in public life.

- One in five (20%) respondents in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample agree that 'Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household', and men (27%) are more than twice as likely to agree with this than women (13%).

- Twenty-eight percent of the sample agrees that women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship.

In the theme concerning **male peer relations,** more than a third (37%) of the sample think it is natural for a man to want to appear in control of his partner in front of his male friends.

- A little more than one in five (21%) respondents think there is no harm in men making sexist jokes about women when they are among their male friends, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (31%) are nearly three times more likely to agree with this than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (11%).

- A small proportion of respondents (3%) think it is ok for men to joke with their male friends about being violent towards women.

A large proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents support attitudes that **deny gender inequality is a problem** (ranging from 9% to 51% of the sample), with the highest rates of agreement being for the statements:

- 'Many women mistakenly interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist', with which more than half (51%) agree;

- 'Many women fail to fully appreciate all that men do for them', with about a third (32%) agreeing; and

- 'Many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia', with nearly half (45%) agreeing.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (95%) are more likely than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (82%) to *disagree* that discrimination is no longer a problem in Australia (data not shown).

Gender and sample differences

There are differences between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men on most measures. Only a small number of these meet the thresholds for statistical significance and effect size used in this report, and these differences are identified above. They all show that women are more likely to support gender equality than men. For all but one of the remaining statements, a larger proportion of women than men gave answers showing their support for gender equality.

Likewise, when comparing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample with the non-Indigenous sample, for most items the proportion supporting gender equality is higher in the non-Indigenous sample. However, only a small number meet the thresholds for significance and effect and these are reported above.
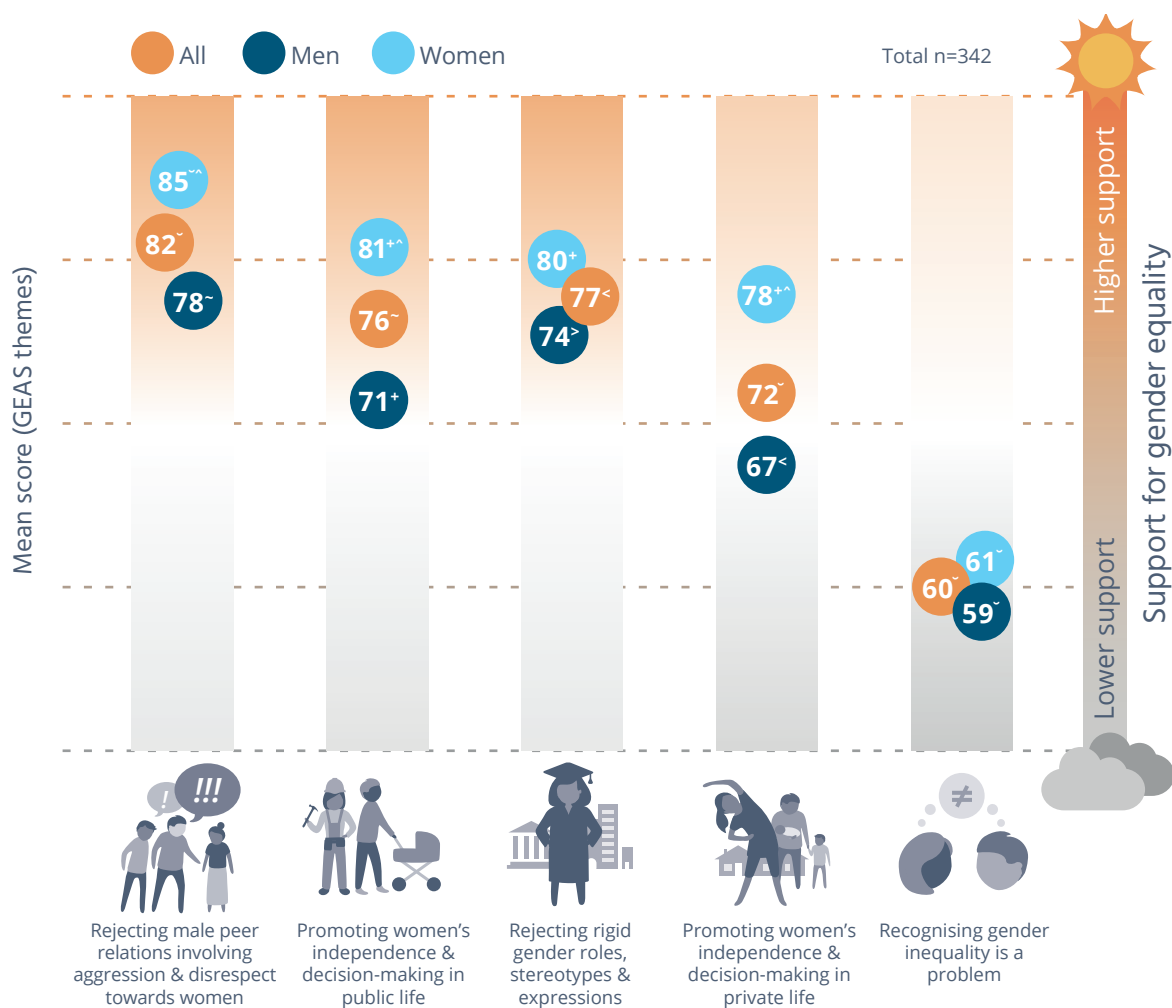
Change over time in individual questions

There was a statistically significant improvement among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents on two of the five questions asked in both the 2013 and 2017 surveys. As noted earlier, there has been no statistically significant change in overall support for gender equality based on the composite measure.

Which aspects of gender equality are most widely supported by Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders?

To find out which aspects of gender equality (see Box 2-2) are more or less likely to be supported by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people *overall*, each respondent was given a score based on their answers to questions in each theme. An average for the sample was then calculated and the results are shown in Figure 4-2.

The NCAS questions are framed to ask about gender *inequality*, but the scores for the composite measures have been calculated to indicate the level of support for gender *equality*. Scores range from 1 to 100, with 1 signifying the lowest level of support for gender equality (a very poor result). This information is useful because it tells us which aspects of attitudes to gender equality most need to be addressed in prevention programs and interventions.

Figure 4-2: Relative attitudinal support for gender equality in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample by themes, 2017 (means)

Note: Mean scores are used for the purposes of comparing samples relative to one another, rather than measuring concepts in an absolute sense.

^ Difference between men and women is statistically significant, p ≤ 0.01.

˘ Difference between this theme and all other themes in this sample is statistically significant, p ≤ 0.01.

˜ Difference between this theme and all other themes in this sample, with the exception of 'Rejecting rigid gender roles, stereotypes & expressions', is statistically significant, p ≤ 0.01.

˃ Difference between this theme and 'Rejecting male peer relations involving aggresion & disrespect towards women' and 'Promoting women's independence and decision-making in public life' in this sample is statistically significant, p ≤ 0.01.

˂ Difference between this theme and all other themes in this sample, with the exception of 'Promoting women's independence and decision-making in public life', is statistically significant, p ≤ 0.01.

+ Difference between this theme and 'Rejecting rigid gender roles, stereotypes & expressions' and 'Promoting women's independence & decision-making in private life' in this sample is statistically significant, p ≤ 0.01.

Box 4-4: Key findings

Relative levels of attitudinal support for gender equality among Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander respondents

- Among the five themes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents are least likely to support the idea that gender equality is a problem. This is also the theme least likely to be supported in the national sample (Webster et al., 2018a).
- Respondents in this sample are most likely to support gender equality (or to reject inequality) in the male peer relations theme.

- Women have a higher support for gender equality in three of the five themes. There are no differences between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women in the themes of 'Recognising gender inequality is a problem' and 'Rejecting rigid gender roles, stereotypes & expressions'. This contrasts with the NCAS sample as a whole, in which there were gender differences in all five themes (Webster et al., 2018a).

Similar to the NCAS sample as whole, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample is more likely to support gender equality in decision-making in *public life* than in *private life* (see Figure 4-2 and definitions in Box 2-2).

To find out if this difference in attitudes between gender equality in the public and private spheres was the case for all aspects of gender equality (i.e. not just the questions concerned with *decision-making*), results for all the gender equality questions concerned with equality in public life were compared with the results for all questions concerned with equality in private life.

Box 4-5: Key findings

Relative levels of attitudinal support for gender equality in the *private* versus *public* spheres among Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander respondents

Similar to the NCAS sample as whole, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders have a higher level of support for gender equality in the public sphere (e.g. in the workplace or politics) than in the private sphere of relationships, families and households (data not shown).

The overall level of support for gender equality in the public sphere is higher among women than in men in the sample.

However, there is no difference between women and men in attitudes to gender equality in the private sphere overall (i.e. not just attitudes concerned with *decision-making*).

Attitudes to violence against women among Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders

As explained, attitudes can be used to monitor progress. Attitudes may also contribute to violence against women indirectly because they influence social norms or expectations of what is acceptable behaviour. These expectations in turn influence behaviour itself (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2004). In this way, community attitudes can influence how professionals respond to violence against women, as well as the responses of neighbours, friends, family members and work colleagues. Holding violence-supportive attitudes can influence whether women experiencing violence seek help. Such attitudes may be adopted by men who use violence to excuse their behaviour.[17]

The four themes in this component have been formed by synthesising hundreds of prior studies on attitudes towards violence against women, selecting groups of questions that reflect them, and then confirming through the NCAS that they reflect the way the Australian public thinks about violence against women.

Again, for reasons noted in 'Approach to analysis' in Chapter 3, comparisons between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample and the non-Indigenous sample are not shown in the table. However, where they were found they are noted in the text.

Table 4-3: Attitudinal support for violence against women in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample by year and gender

	2013	2017		
	Total n=341	Total n=342	Men n=160	Women n=180
Excusing the perpetrator and holding women responsible (% agree)				
Attitudes excusing the perpetrator and holding women responsible for abuse or managing its consequences				
A lot of what is called domestic violence is really just a normal reaction to day-to-day stress and frustration	-	22	30^	14
Domestic violence can be excused if it results from people getting so angry that they temporarily lose control	37†	17	24	10
Domestic violence can be excused if the violent person was themselves abused as a child	16Δ	13	20^	7
Domestic violence can be excused if, afterwards, the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done	25Δ	17	23	10
Sometimes a woman can make a man so angry that he hits her when he didn't mean to	-	23	29	16
Women who flirt all the time are somewhat to blame if their partner gets jealous and hits them	-	20	26	14
Attitudes concerning the family and intimate partner violence				
Domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family	24Δ	14	19	9
It's a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship in order to keep the family together	13†	4	7	3
The role of alcohol and other drugs in excusing the perpetrator or holding women responsible				
Domestic violence can be excused if the victim is heavily affected by alcohol	25†	10	12	7
Domestic violence can be excused if the offender is heavily affected by alcohol	21	12	17	8
A man is less responsible for rape if he is drunk or affected by drugs at the time**	16Δ	14	20	8
If a woman is raped while she is drunk or affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible	18Δ	14	19	9
Minimising violence against women (% agree)				
Minimising the impacts and consequences of recurring intimate partner violence				
A female victim who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing	-	37	41	33
I don't believe it's as hard as people say it is for women to leave an abusive relationship	-	19	23	14
If a woman keeps going back to her abusive partner then the violence can't be very serious	-	17	24^	9
It's acceptable for police to give lower priority to domestic violence cases they've attended many times before	-	20	24	16

Table 4-3 continued on next page

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[17] See the NCAS main report (Webster et al., 2018a) on the ANROWS website for a more detailed discussion of the influence of attitudes supportive of violence against women, and relevant evidence.

Table 4-3 continues from previous page

	2013	2017		
	Total n=341	Total n=342	Men n=160	Women n=180
Women who stay in abusive relationships should be entitled to less help from counselling and support services than women who end the relationship	-	16	21	11
In domestic situations where one partner is physically violent towards the other it is entirely reasonable for the violent person to be made to leave the family home**	94	90△	79△	99△
Minimising sexual violence by claiming that women lie				
If a woman claims to have been sexually assaulted but has no other physical injuries she probably shouldn't be taken too seriously	-	9	12	6
Women who wait weeks or months to report sexual harassment are probably lying**	-	20△	31△	10△
Women who wait weeks or months to report sexual assault are probably lying	-	12	18	7
Minimising violence against women by placing it beyond the law				
Women who are sexually harassed should sort it out themselves rather than report it**	16	7△	14△	2△
In my opinion, if a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders it is shameful for her family	-	16	19	13
It is a serious problem when a man tries to control his partner by refusing her access to their money**	-	78△	79△	77△
Mistrusting women's reports of violence (% agree)				
Many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence	-	32	38	27
Women going through custody battles often make up or exaggerate claims of domestic violence in order to improve their case**	67	58△	72△	46△
A lot of times, women who say they were raped had led the man on and then had regrets	39△	36	40	32
It is common for sexual assault accusations to be used as a way of getting back at men	-	51	54	49
Disregarding the need to gain consent (% agree)				
Women find it flattering to be persistently pursued, even if they are not interested**	-	24△	23△	25△
If a woman sends a nude image to her partner, then she is partly responsible if he shares it without her permission**	-	49△	46△	52△
Women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes'	16	14	12	14
Since some women are so sexual in public, it's not surprising that some men think they can touch women without permission	-	21	21	22
If a woman is drunk and starts having sex with a man, but then falls asleep, it is understandable if he continues having sex with her anyway	-	8	8	6
When a man is very sexually aroused, he may not even realize that the woman doesn't want to have sex	-	34	29	39
Rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex**	49△	43△	47△	39△

** Asked of a quarter of the sample in 2017.

⁻ Not asked in 2013.

^ Difference between men and women is statistically significant, p ≤ 0.01, and reaches the 0.2 Cohen's threshold.

† Difference between 2013 and 2017 is statistically significant, p ≤ 0.01, and reaches the 0.2 Cohen's threshold.

△ Results to be treated with caution because they are based on a small number of responses (i.e. between 30 and 100). See 'Approach to analysis' in Chapter 3 for further explanation.

Most Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders do not support attitudes **excusing partner violence** as an acceptable reaction or by shifting blame to the victim (between 74% and 83% reject excuses depending on the question).

- Of the excuses for violence against women, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders (23%) are most likely to agree that 'Sometimes a woman can make a man so angry that he hits her when he didn't mean to', and that 'A lot of what is called domestic violence is really just a normal reaction to day-to-day stress and frustration' (22% of the sample, 30% of men and 14% of women).

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (20%) are almost three times more likely than women (7%) in the sample to agree that 'Domestic violence can be excused if the violent person was themselves abused as a child'. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (20%) are more likely than non-Indigenous men to support this statement (9%).

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (24%) are more likely than non-Indigenous men (13%) and non-Indigenous women (10%) to agree that 'Domestic violence can be excused if it results from getting so angry they temporarily lose control'.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (26%) are more likely than non-Indigenous men (16%) and women (13%) to agree that 'Women who flirt all the time are somewhat to blame if their partner gets jealous and hits them'.

- Overall, few (14%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents agree that 'Domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family', and even fewer (4%) agree that 'It is a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship in order to keep the family together'.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (74%) were less likely than women (89%) in the sample to *disagree* that 'Domestic violence can be excused if, afterwards, the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done' (data not shown).

- Between 10 and 14 percent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample support attitudes that excuse violence against women when alcohol is involved. Although low, this is higher than the level of support for statements excusing violence in the non-Indigenous sample, where support ranged between 5 and 8 percent (depending on the question).

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (17%) are more likely than non-Indigenous men (6%) and women (4%) to agree that 'Domestic violence can be excused if the offender is heavily affected by alcohol'.

- Of the four scenarios involving alcohol and other drugs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (14%) are most likely to support excusing rape if the perpetrator or victim is drunk or affected by drugs at the time. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (20%) are more than twice as likely as non-Indigenous men (7%) to agree that a perpetrator can be excused of rape if drunk at the time, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (78%), compared to women in the sample (91%), are less likely to disagree (data not shown).

Compared with the results for the theme of excusing violence against women, a relatively larger proportion of respondents are willing to **minimise violence against women** (between 7%△ and 37% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample depending on the question).

> The assumption that women should leave, puts the burden of responsibility to leave on the woman. Maybe other things should be tried before the woman leaves? How can women and children be made safer?
>
> **– Workshop participant**

- Of the questions in this theme, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (37%) were most likely to agree that 'A female victim who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing'.

- Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders (20%) are two times more likely than non-Indigenous respondents (11%) to agree that 'It is acceptable for police to give lower priority to domestic violence cases they've attended many times before'.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (24%) are more likely than Indigenous women (9%), non-Indigenous men (14%) and non-Indigenous women (10%) to agree that 'If a woman keeps going back to her abusive partner then the violence can't be very serious'.

- A sizable proportion (9%-20%△ depending on the question) supports attitudes that minimise sexual violence by claiming that women lie. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (69%△) are less likely than women (90%△) in the sample to disagree that 'Women who wait weeks or months to report sexual harassment are probably lying' (data not shown).

- One in five (20%△) of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample agrees that 'Women who wait weeks or months to report sexual harassment are probably lying', which is a concern given evidence of barriers to women reporting sexual assault. As explained above, false allegations of sexual violence are rare.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (12%) are more likely than non-Indigenous men (6%) and non-Indigenous women (5%) to agree that 'If a woman claims to have been sexually assaulted but has no other physical injuries, she probably shouldn't be taken too seriously'.

- A small proportion of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders (7%△) think that 'Women who are sexually harassed should sort it out themselves rather than report it'.

- One in six (16%) respondents agree that 'If a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders, it is shameful for her family'.

- Nearly one in five (19%△) disagree that 'It is a serious problem when a man tries to control his partner by refusing her access to their money'.

The proportion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample (32% to 58%ᐃ depending on the question) supporting attitudes in the theme of **mistrusting women's reports of violence** is larger than in the themes discussed above.

- More than half of the sample (58%ᐃ) agree that 'Women going through custody battles often make up or exaggerate claims of domestic violence in order to improve their case', and that 'It is common for sexual assault accusations to be used as a way of getting back at men' (51%).
- People in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample (32%) were more likely than non-Indigenous people (23%) to agree that 'Many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence'.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (44%) were less likely than women to *disagree* that 'A lot of times, women who say they were raped had led the man on and then had regrets' (63%) (data not shown).

Similar to the non-Indigenous sample, there was also a relatively high level of agreement for most of the questions in the theme of **disregarding the need to gain consent**.

- Nearly half of the sample (49%ᐃ) agree that 'If a woman sends a nude image to her partner, then she is partly responsible if he shares it without her permission'. People in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample (49%ᐃ) were more likely to agree with this than non-Indigenous people (29%).
- More than two in five (43%ᐃ) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people agree that 'Rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex'.
- Just over a third (34%) agree that 'When a man is very sexually aroused, he may not even realise that the woman doesn't want to have sex'.

Gender and sample differences

There are differences between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men on most measures. Only some of these meet the thresholds for statistical significance and effect size used in this report, and these differences are identified above. However, for most statements a larger proportion of women than men gave answers showing their intolerance of violence against women. All but one of the exceptions to this pattern are in the theme of disregarding the need to gain consent. In this theme a larger proportion of women gave responses indicating *tolerance* of violence than men. Likewise, the trend apparent in the data is for a larger proportion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample to give answers suggesting support of violence against women than the non-Indigenous sample. However, only a small number of these meet the thresholds for statistical significance and effect size used in this report, and these differences are identified above.

Change over time

As noted earlier, there was an improvement between 2013 and 2017 on the composite measure of attitudes towards violence against women. Turning now to individual questions, of the 15 statements included in both the 2013 and 2017 surveys, there was a positive change in three that met the thresholds for significance and effect size used in this report. Specifically, when compared with 2013, a smaller proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 2017 agreed that;

- 'Domestic violence can be excused if it results from people getting so angry that they temporarily lose control' (37% in 2013 compared with 17% in 2017).
- 'It's a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship in order to keep the family together' (13% in 2013 compared with 4% in 2017); and;
- 'Domestic violence can be excused if the victim is heavily affected by alcohol' (25% in 2013 compared with 10% in 2017).

There were no differences in the responses of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people between 2013 and 2017 in the remaining 12 items that met the thresholds for significance and effect size. However, of these, the data suggest an improving trend in 11 statements.
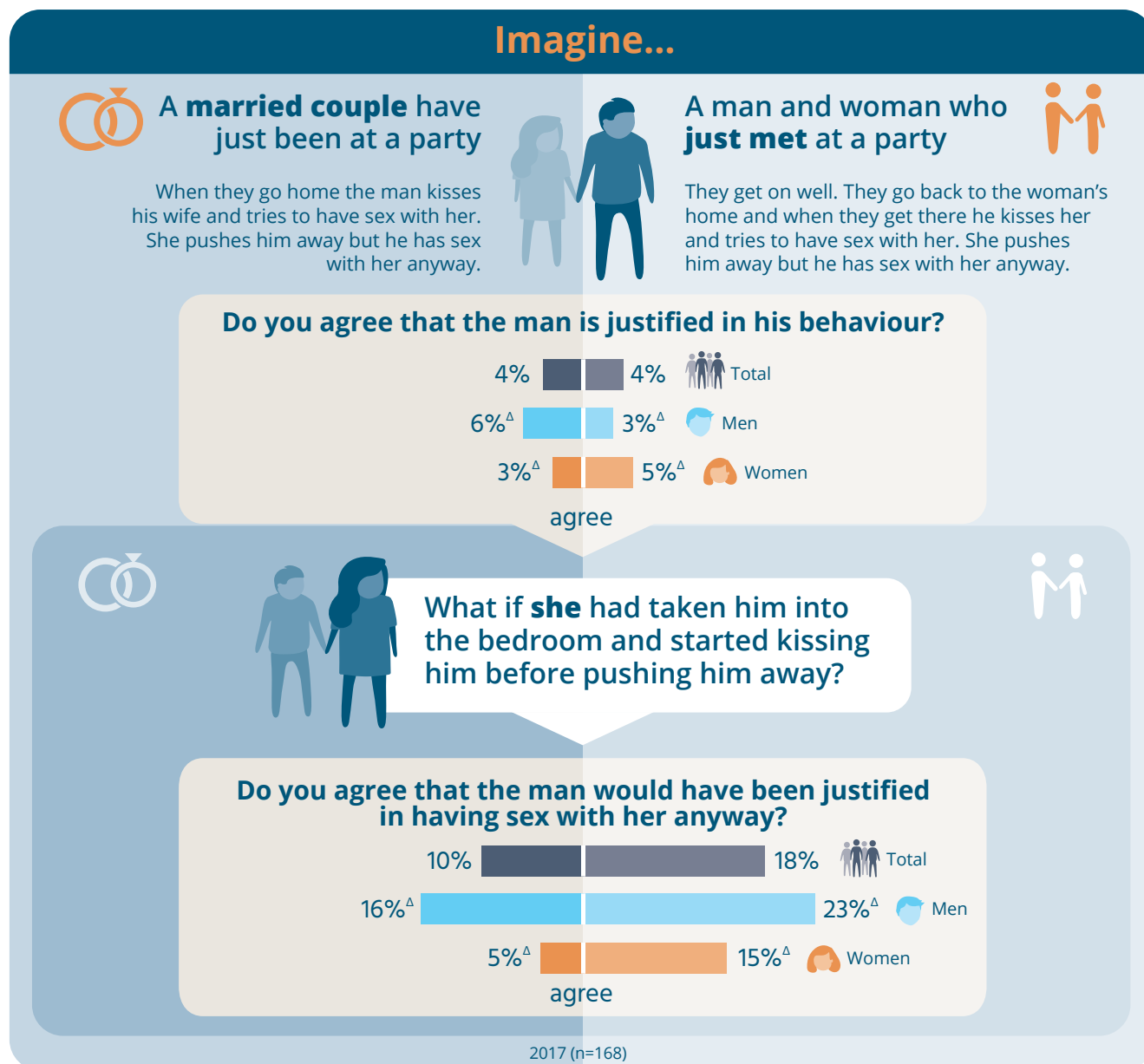

ᐃ These results in this figure should be treated with caution because they are based on a small number of responses (i.e. between 30 and 100). See 'Approach to analysis' in Chapter 3 for further explanation.

Circumstances in which Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders justify non-consensual sex

In the 2017 NCAS two scenarios were introduced to investigate whether or not Australians would justify non-consensual sex in different circumstances. Scenarios were used to test two questions:

1. Are respondents more likely to justify non-consensual sex among a married couple (a context in which people sometimes believe women forgo their sexual autonomy), as opposed to people that just met?

2. Are respondents more likely to justify non-consensual sex in a circumstance where a woman had initiated intimacy as opposed to when she did not? This tests the belief that when a woman consents to one element of sexual expression, she is automatically consenting to any further sexual activity.

Figure 4-3: Impact of situational factors on attitudes towards consent in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample, 2017

Imagine...

A married couple have just been at a party

When they go home the man kisses his wife and tries to have sex with her. She pushes him away but he has sex with her anyway.

A man and woman who just met at a party

They get on well. They go back to the woman's home and when they get there he kisses her and tries to have sex with her. She pushes him away but he has sex with her anyway.

Do you agree that the man is justified in his behaviour?

4%	4%	Total
6%△	3%△	Men
3%△	5%△	Women

agree

What if she had taken him into the bedroom and started kissing him before pushing him away?

Do you agree that the man would have been justified in having sex with her anyway?

10%	18%	Total
16%△	23%△	Men
5%△	15%△	Women

agree

2017 (n=168)

△ These results in this figure should be treated with caution because they are based on a small number of responses (i.e. between 30 and 100). See 'Approach to analysis' in Chapter 3 for further explanation.

Both scenarios describe criminal offences. These findings (see above and Box 4-7 below) are significant because they indicate that a concerning proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are unclear about what constitutes consent, and the line between consensual sex and coercion (Muehlenhard, Humphreys, Jozkowski, & Peterson, 2016; Warren, Swan, & Allen, 2015).

Non-consensual sex can range from rape or coerced sex to non-consensual acts within an initially consensual sexual encounter. Gendered power dynamics, expectations and stereotypes related to sexuality influence how consent is understood and negotiated (e.g. men are seen as sexually aggressive, or "in control", while women are often portrayed as passive or submissive in sexual matters) (Hust, Rodgers, & Bayly, 2017). These dynamics and expectations can contribute to some people failing to see the need to gain consent or to assuming that if a person consents to one thing, they are consenting to any sexual contact, rather than recognising that consent must always be an ongoing and respectful process of negotiation. Ensuring ongoing positive consent is important because people have the right to change their minds, or the situation may change to one where they are no longer comfortable.

Box 4-7: Key findings
Attitudes regarding consent among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents

- A small proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are prepared to justify non-consensual sex, regardless of whether the couple are married or have just met (4% in both circumstances).
- However they are more likely to do so if the woman initiates intimacy by kissing the man, with between 10 percent and 18 percent doing so in this circumstance.

- There were no significant differences between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous samples, or between men and women in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample.

Box 4-8: What does consent mean and why is it important?

Many attitudes about sex reinforce the idea that men should want and actively pursue sex, while women should be passive and not show an active desire for sex (e.g. the attitude that 'the woman should not be the one to initiate sex'). Such attitudes reinforce gender stereotypes where women, in particular, are judged as 'sluts' if they show too much sexual interest. This is often described as a 'sexual double standard' that permits sexual freedom and promiscuity for men but not for women (Tharp et al., 2013). Such attitudes position heterosexual encounters as adversarial (with men's and women's interests in conflict with one another) and have been linked to increased risk for men's perpetration of sexual violence (Tharp, DeGue, Valle, Brookmeyer, Massetti, & Matjasko, 2013).

When men are seen as the 'natural' or the more socially acceptable pursuers of sexual encounters, it can mean that women's assertion of desire is less socially acceptable (Allen, 2005; Powell, 2010; Tolman, 2009).

Young women experience higher rates of sexual violence than older women (ABS, 2017), and men are more likely to perpetrate sexual violence when they are young (Fulu, Jewkes, Roselli & Garcia-Moreno, 2013). For these

reasons, the findings related to **rigid gender roles** (in the gender equality component of the survey) and **consent** are of particular relevance for young people. They suggest that sexual violence prevention education should encourage young people to challenge rigid gender roles and stereotypes when it comes to sexual desire and the negotiation of their intimate encounters.

Indeed, sexuality education internationally has increasingly moved away from a 'no means no' model of teaching about sex and consent towards an 'active and continuing consent model' (see Carmody, 2015; Coy, Kelly, Vera-Gray, Garner, & Kanyeredzi, 2016). Such sexuality education is more in line with legislation in many Australian states and territories, in which it is the absence of active consent that defines sexual assault, and increasingly there is a legal responsibility for individuals to take active steps to ascertain consent (Burgin, 2019; Larcombe, Fileborn, Powell, Hanley, & Henry, 2016).
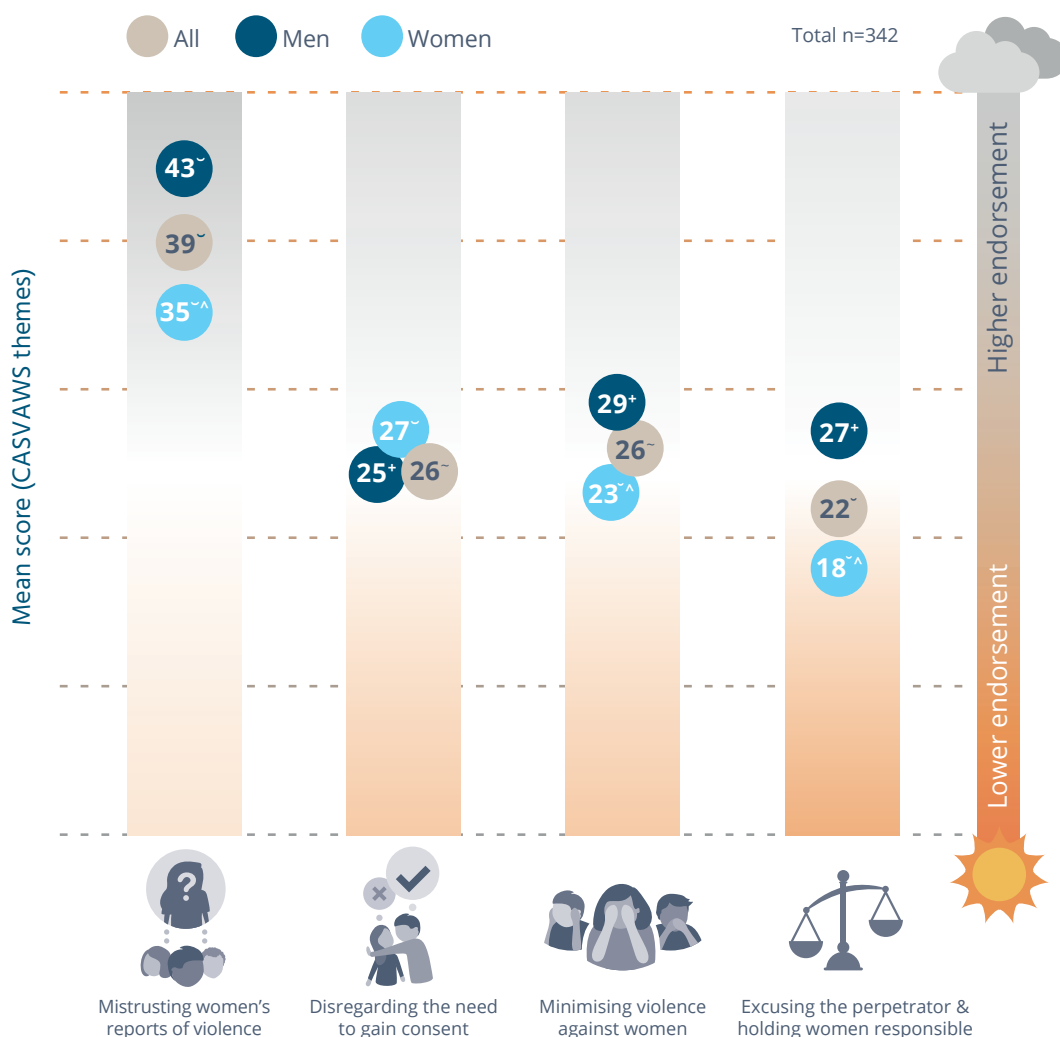
In short, we need to be making clear to all that anything short of active consent for sex by a partner means that a person should stop and check-in about consent before going any further.

Which aspects of attitudinal support for violence against women are most widely supported?

To investigate which aspects of attitudinal support for violence against women are more or less likely to be supported by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample overall, an average score for the sample was developed for each theme using the same approach described above as for the gender equality themes. Scores range from 1 to 100, with 1 signifying the lowest level of endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women (a *favourable* result).

This information is useful because it tells us which aspects of violence-supportive attitudes most need to be addressed in prevention programs and interventions among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Figure 4-4: Relative endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample by themes, 2017 (means)

Note: Mean scores are used for the purposes of comparing samples relative to one another, rather than measuring concepts in an absolute sense.

^ Difference between men and women is statistically significant, p ≤ 0.01.

ˇ Difference between this theme and all other themes in this sample is statistically significant, p ≤ 0.01.

˜ Difference between this theme and all other themes in this sample, with the exception of 'Minimising violence against women', is statistically significant, p ≤ 0.01.

⁺ Difference between this theme and 'Mistrusting women's reports of violence' in this sample is statistically significant, p ≤ 0.01.

Box 4-9: Key findings

Relative levels of attitudinal support for violence against women among Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, by theme

- Of the four themes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are most likely to support the idea that women's reports of violence cannot be trusted.
- They are least likely to support the idea that violence against women can be excused.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have a lower level of endorsement across three of the four

themes than men in the sample, the exception being the theme 'Disregarding the need to gain consent'. There were no differences between men and women on this theme.

- These patterns are similar to the national sample, except that in the national sample there were gender differences in all four themes.

Bystander action

There are limitations to the role the community can play in addressing physical violence against women once this violence is occurring. There are two reasons for this:

- Much of this violence occurs in private, beyond the gaze of the public, family and friends.
- There may be risks for all involved in intervening in physical violence.

However, it has been suggested that there may be promise in encouraging the community to take action in response to witnessing abuse and disrespect towards women.[18] There are three main reasons for this. First, these may be precursors to, or risk factors for, physical violence. Second, many of the precursors to violence are not in themselves officially able to be sanctioned and, third, disapproval shown by those around us has been found to be one of the most effective forces to prevent abuse and disrespect (as precursors to violence against women) (Powell, 2011). Interventions to increase bystander interventions are especially indicated among men, for whom peer influences have been found to be particularly influential (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013).

The 2017 NCAS included questions on respondents' anticipated responses should they witness two scenarios in a social setting: a male friend telling a sexist joke and a male friend verbally abusing his partner.

Figure 4-5: Reactions among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents to scenarios involving the telling of a sexist joke and the verbal abuse of a partner in a social setting, 2017
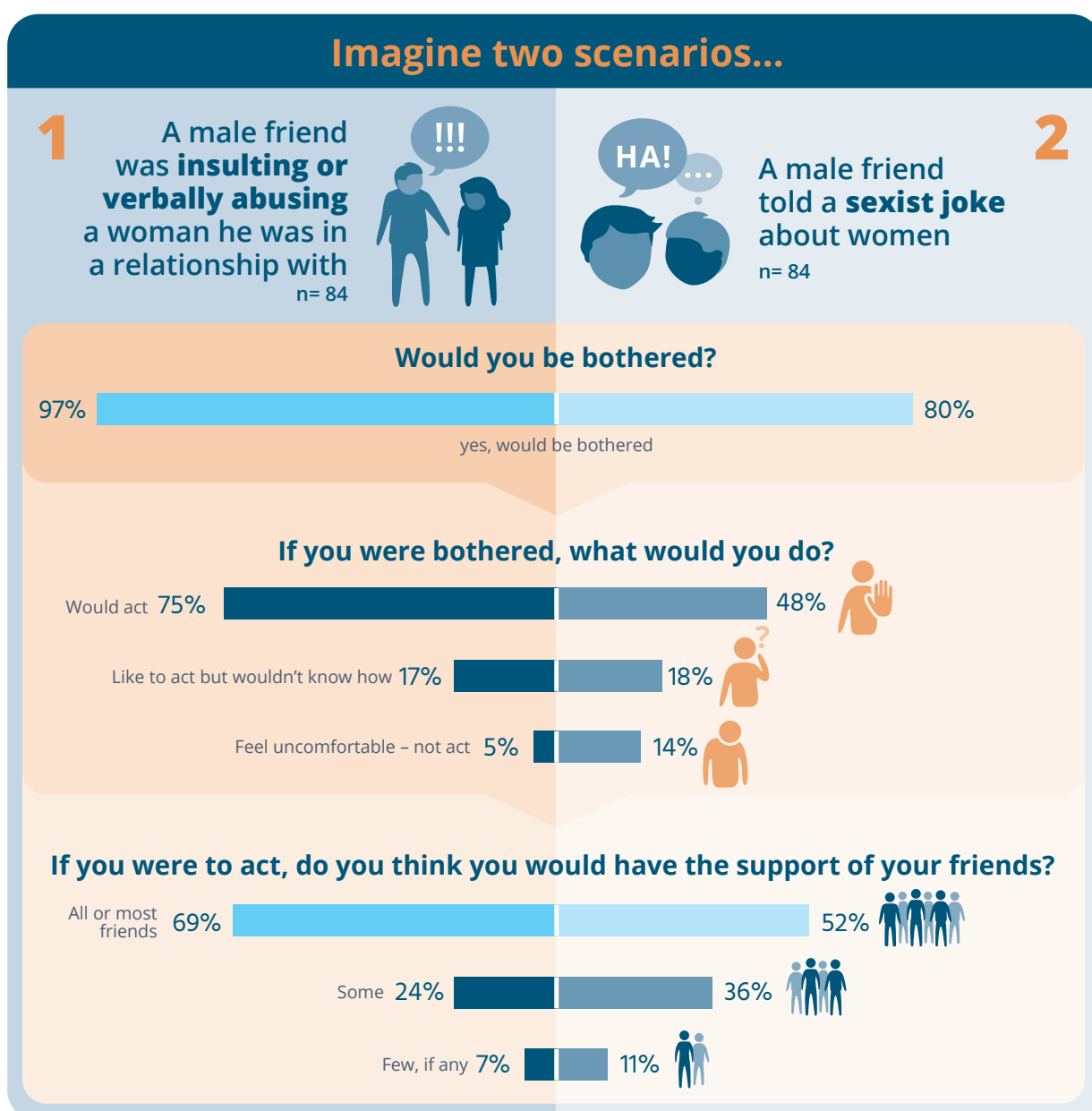
Δ All results in this figure should be treated with caution because they are based on a small number of responses (i.e. between 30 and 100). See 'Approach to analysis' in Chapter 3 for further explanation.

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[18] The term 'promising' is used in this context because more research and evaluation are required to explore whether positive changes achieved through bystander programs in the short term are sustained. There has also been some debate in the literature about the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary bystander programs. For further discussion see DeKeseredy (2018) and contributions to the December 2018 issue of *Violence Against Women* (Volume 24, Number 15).

The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people say they would act or like to act when witnessing abuse or disrespect towards women:

- Nearly all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents would be bothered if they heard a male friend insulting or verbally abusing his partner.
- A smaller proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel bothered when a male friend tells a sexist joke than when they witness verbal abuse.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people appear to underestimate the support they are likely to receive

from their friends if they act (i.e. more people say they would be bothered than those who felt they would have the support of all or most of their friends if they acted to express disapproval).

Gender and sample differences

There were no statistically significant differences between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous samples or between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men.

Overall differences between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australians

In the sections above, differences between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous samples for individual questions have been noted. In this section overall differences between these two samples are investigated using the composite measures of understanding of violence against women, attitudes to gender equality, attitudes to violence against women, and intention to act if witnessing abuse and disrespect of women in a social setting. For each measure, the sample is divided into three categories – high, medium and low levels of understanding and attitudinal support for gender equality, high medium and low levels of endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women, and high, medium and low levels of intention to act. The proportions in the categories for each of the samples are compared. As variation occurs primarily in the high and low categories, only this data is presented.

There are no significant differences between the samples overall on any of the measures. However, in the case of the measures of understanding and attitudes towards gender equality, men in both samples and women in both samples tend to be more similar to each other than to persons of the opposite sex in their own sample. For example, on the measure of understanding, women in both samples were more likely to be classified as having a higher level of understanding than non-Indigenous men, while men in both samples were more likely to be classified as having a low level of understanding than women in both samples.

The only difference between the samples in the measure of attitudes towards violence against women was that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men were more likely to be classified as having a high level of endorsement of these attitudes than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and non-Indigenous women.

While there were gender differences in the non-Indigenous sample in the Intention to Act measure (with men being more likely to be classified as having a low intention to act than women), there were no gender differences in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample on this measure.

Figure 4-6: Relative understanding of violence against women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-indigenous samples, 2017 (%)
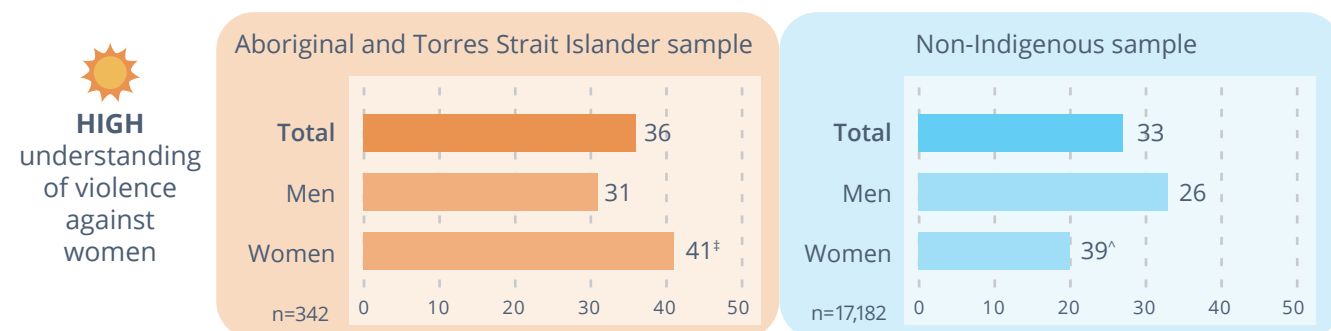

HIGH understanding of violence against women

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample (n=342): Total 36, Men 31, Women 41‡

Non-Indigenous sample (n=17,182): Total 33, Men 26, Women 39^

Figure 4-7: Relative attitudinal support for gender equality, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-indigenous samples, 2017 (%)

HIGH support for gender equality

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample (n=342): Total 23, Men 18Ω, Women 28‡
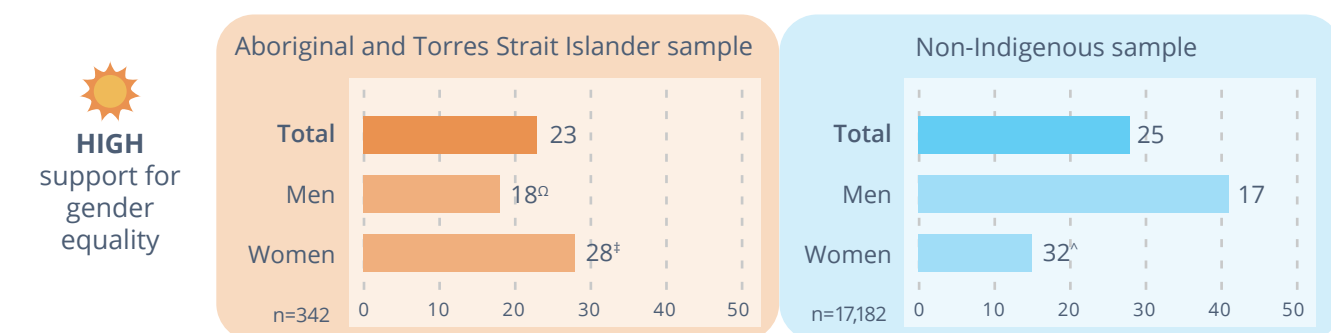
Non-Indigenous sample (n=17,182): Total 25, Men 17, Women 32^

Figure 4-8: Relative attitudinal support for violence against women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-indigenous samples, 2017 (%)
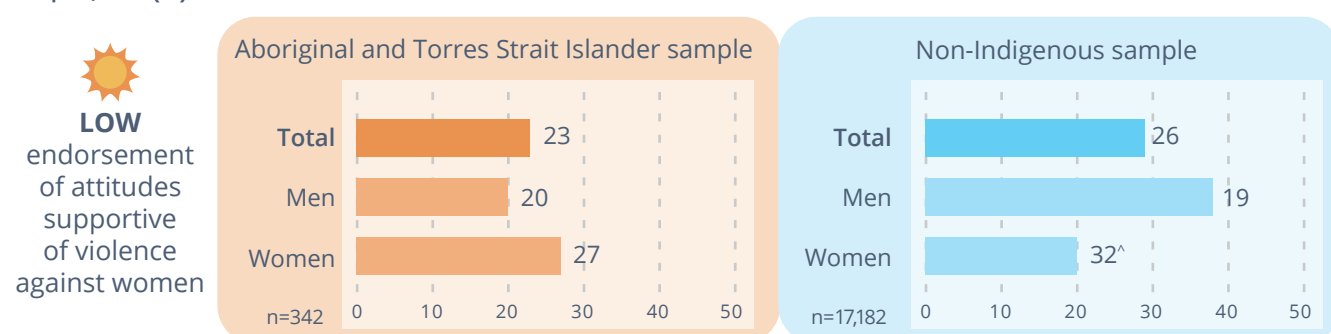

LOW endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample (n=342): Total 23, Men 20, Women 27

Non-Indigenous sample (n=17,182): Total 26, Men 19, Women 32^

Figure 4-9: Relative intention to act, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-indigenous samples, 2017 (%)

HIGH intention to act

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample (n=84): Total 24Δ, Men 34Δ, Women 18Δ

Non-Indigenous sample (n= 4,323): Total 23, Men 18, Women 28^
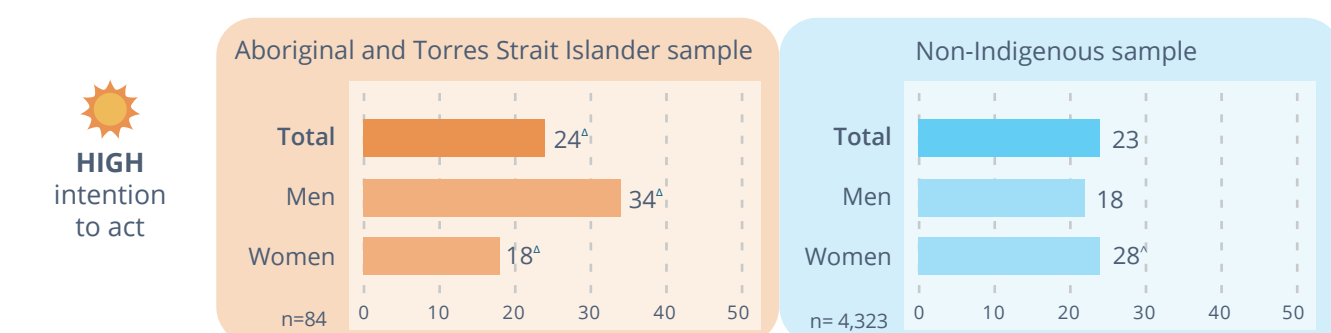
Note: The categories show the proportion of respondents in the high or low categories relative to one another. They do not represent the absolute proportion of respondents in a given category.

^ Difference between men and women within the sample is statistically significant, p ≤.01 and reaches the 0.2 Cohen's threshold.

‡ Difference between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and non-Indigenous men is statistically significant, p ≤.01 and reaches the 0.2 Cohen's threshold.

Ω Difference between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and non-Indigenous women is statistically significant, p ≤.01 and reaches the 0.2 Cohen's threshold.

Δ All results in this figure to be treated with caution because they are based on a small number of responses (i.e. between 30 and 100). See 'Approach to analysis' for further explanation.

Demographic factors influencing understanding and attitudes

The previous sections explore knowledge and attitudes in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample as a whole, as well as among men and among women. This section examines differences among other groups within the sample and for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders in various contexts. Again, this is done by comparing the proportion of people in the higher and lower categories of knowledge and attitudinal support for violence and gender equality. This information is useful because it can help to target efforts to prevent violence against women.

This included comparing respondents by:

- age (in three categories, 16-24 years, 25-64 years, and 65 years and older);
- the remoteness of the area they live in (major city, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote) – to enable sufficient base sizes, inner and outer regional areas were analysed as a single category, as were remote and very remote areas;
- whether they lived in a city versus elsewhere in the state or territory;
- whether they were personally disadvantaged[19] or lived in a disadvantaged area[20] – again, to enable sufficient base sizes the two most disadvantaged areas were compared with the three most advantaged areas; and
- their level of education (secondary or below, trade, certificate or diploma, tertiary or above).

The differences were mainly found for the measure of attitudinal support for violence against women (the CASVAWS).[21] For the measures of age and education, the differences were substantial, whereas for other demographic measures they were small:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with secondary education or below were more likely than those with higher levels of education to have a high level of attitudinal support for violence against women.
- Those living in capital cities (as opposed to other areas) were more likely to have a low level of endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women.
- When areas were compared by degree of remoteness, those in major cities were more likely to have a low level of endorsement of attitudes supporting violence against women when compared with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in inner and outer regional areas.
- Respondents aged 65 years and older were more likely to have a lower level of support for gender equality than those aged 16-24 years. They were also more likely to have a high level of attitudinal support for violence against women than those aged 25-64. In contrast, those aged 25-64 were more likely to have a higher level of support for gender equality than people in the older age group. Those aged 25-64 were also more likely to have a higher level of understanding than the younger 16-24 age group.
- There were no differences on any of the measures for either the personal or area level measures of disadvantage.

Results for different demographic measures are not reported for the Intention to Act Construct for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample owing to the small sample size for the questions included in this measure.

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[19] The indicator of personal disadvantage was adapted from *Dropping off the edge* (Vinson, Rawsthorne, Beavis, & Ericson, 2015). To calculate a score, a number of data items were used to 'count' the number of indicators. These included secondary education or below, living in a remote or very remote area, living in a postcode with the highest level of disadvantage, being unemployed or unable to work, being in a single parent household or living alone, and having a self-reported disability. These indicators are summed together to create a score ranging from 0-6.

[20] This was measured using the Socioeconomic Index for Areas (SEIFA) score developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This index summarises information about the economic and social conditions of people and households within an area, including both relative advantage and disadvantage measures. Quintiles have been used, with a low score indicating most disadvantaged and a high score most advantaged. This index takes into account area-based factors such as occupational status, educational attainment, home ownership, employment status, jobless households, disability status and the proportion of lone parent households.
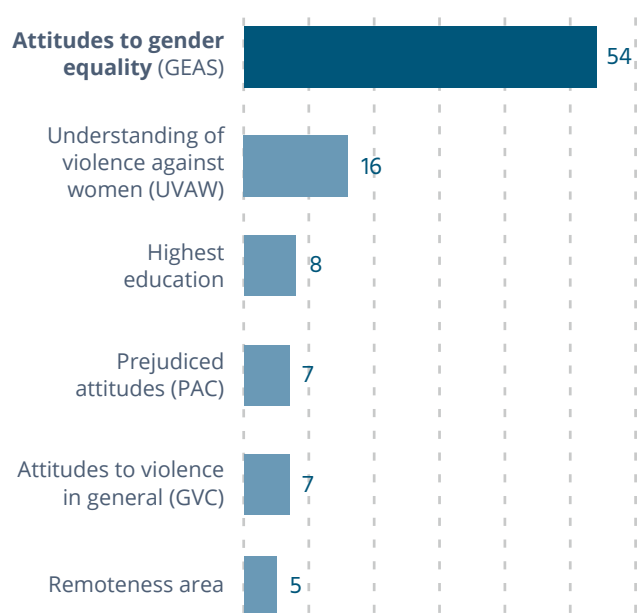
[21] 'High' and 'low' classify respondents relative to one another. It would be wrong to say that any group has a high or low level of support in absolute terms.

Predictors of attitudinal support for violence against women

A statistical technique (multiple linear regression analysis) was used to assess which factors measured in the 2017 NCAS were the strongest predictors of attitudinal support for violence against women in the sample. This technique measures the strength of influence of each factor after the influence of other factors has been taken into account. All the demographic, contextual and attitudinal factors in the survey were included in the analysis.

Figure 4-10a shows the six strongest predictors of attitudes towards violence against women in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample. Having a low level of support for gender equality is the strongest predictor of attitudinal support for violence against women, followed by having a low level of understanding of violence against women and having secondary education or below. This pattern contrasts with that for the national sample (Webster et al., 2018a). In the national sample, education was less influential than the measures of prejudice and support for violence in general. Area remoteness is not an influential factor in the community as a whole but is among the top six factors in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample.
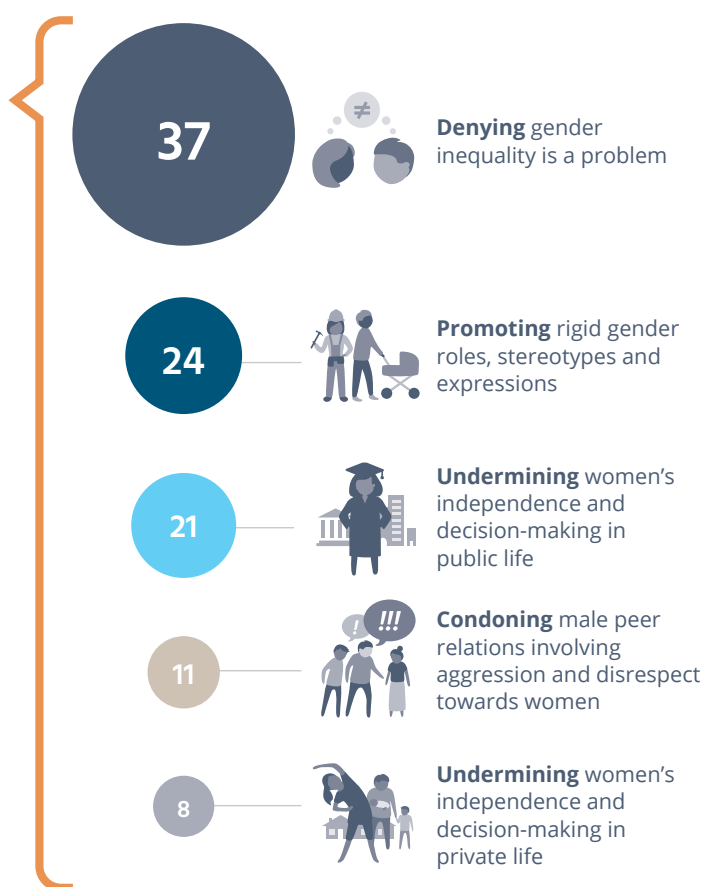
The analysis also investigated the extent to which attitudes within each of the themes in the gender equality measure predict whether people hold attitudes supportive of violence against women. Attitudes 'Denying gender inequality is a problem' and 'Promoting rigid gender roles, stereotypes and expressions' have the first- and second-strongest influence on attitudes towards violence against women, after the influence of the other themes was taken into account (see Figure 4-10b). This is the same as the national sample. Attitudes in the theme of 'Undermining women's independence & decision-making in private life' were the least influential in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample. In contrast, in the national sample 'Condoning male peer relations involving aggression & disrespect towards women' was the least influential.

The analyses above involved examining factors within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status was also included in the multivariate model in the national sample (Webster et al., 2018a). Unsurprisingly, given the minor differences between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians overall, identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander was not a predictor of attitudes in the population as a whole.

Figure 4-10a: Top 6 predictors of attitudinal support for violence in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample, 2017 [§]

Predictor	Value
Attitudes to gender equality (GEAS)	54
Understanding of violence against women (UVAW)	16
Highest education	8
Prejudiced attitudes (PAC)	7
Attitudes to violence in general (GVC)	7
Remoteness area	5

Figure 4-10b: Influence of gender equality themes in predicting attitudinal support for violence, 2017 [¤]

Value	Theme
37	**Denying** gender inequality is a problem
24	**Promoting** rigid gender roles, stereotypes and expressions
21	**Undermining** women's independence and decision-making in public life
11	**Condoning** male peer relations involving aggression and disrespect towards women
8	**Undermining** women's independence and decision-making in private life

[§] These figures are expressed as a percentage of the variance explained by the model. The percentage of variance explained by the model overall is 51%. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

[¤] These figures are expressed as a percentage of the variance explained by the model. The percentage of variance explained by the model overall is 45%. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Questions asked only of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents

The questions in the NCAS are all framed to ask respondents about violence perpetrated by men and affecting women in general, rather than violence affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities particularly.

Respondents who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people were also asked two further sets of questions. These were developed in collaboration with an Expert Group of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders with special expertise in addressing family violence (see Appendix 1). The first set of questions was designed to gauge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents' knowledge of factors that may lead to violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls. The second set asked respondents their views about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls reporting to the police.

The approach to analysing these questions was the same as for the questions in the main NCAS questionnaire.

> In some communities, especially small communities, if the woman makes a report, it can come back on her. You have to be very confident in yourself to report.
>
> **– Workshop participant**

Knowledge of factors leading to violence

Many factors contribute to violence against women. Some of these lie with individuals (e.g. the ability to control one's anger, alcohol misuse), whereas others lie in organisations and communities we all interact with on a day-day basis (e.g. norms disrespecting women) or in the wider society (e.g. the representation of violence in the media or poverty). For many years there has been a focus on working with individuals and families affected by violence to address factors at the individual level. However, in recent decades, there has been increasing recognition of the need to also address contributing factors in environments people interact with on a day-to-day basis in organisations, communities and society-wide institutions such as the media (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015; Michau et al., 2015; Our Watch et al., 2015; VicHealth, 2007; 2011; WHO, 2002).
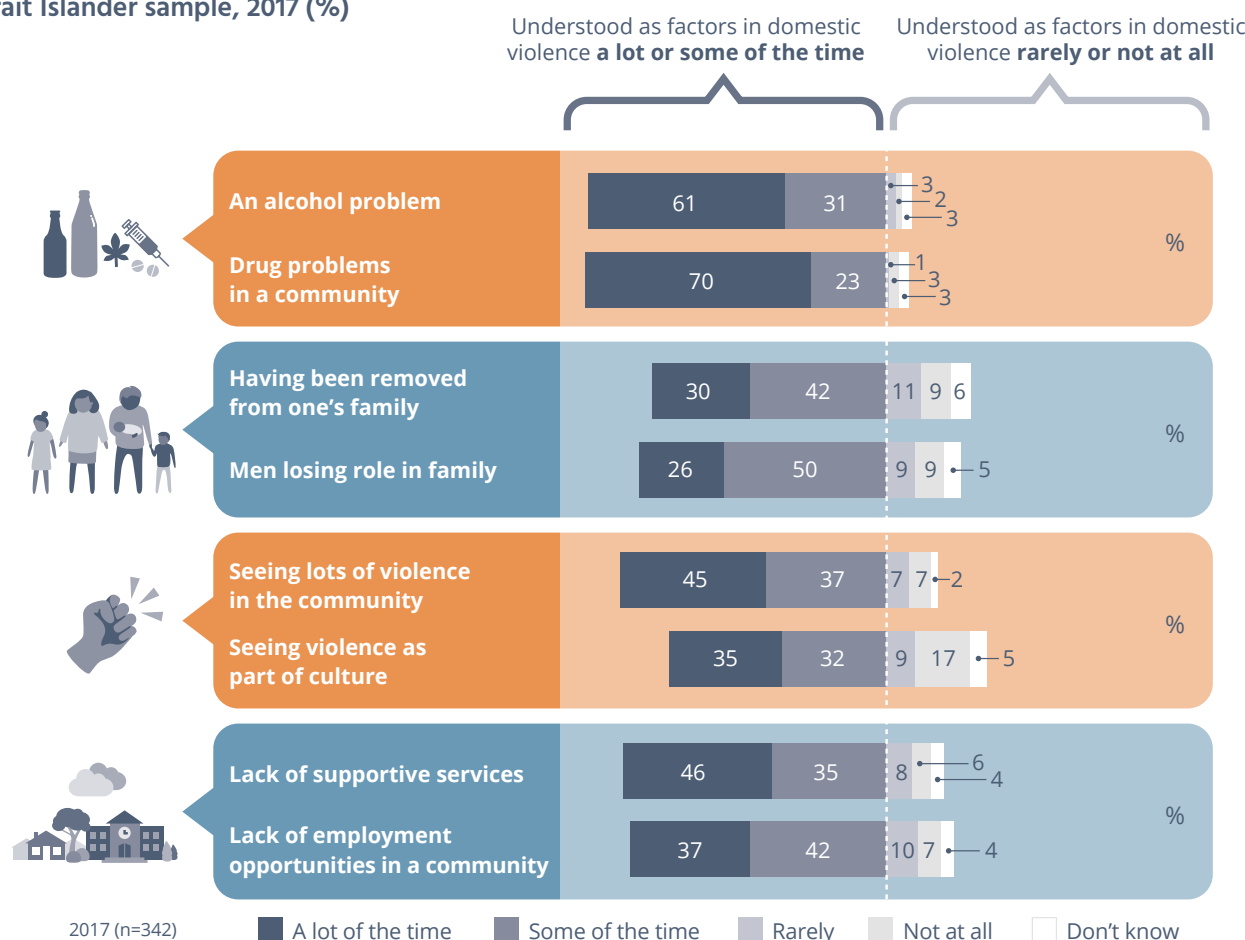
A number of such factors have been identified in the literature as contributing to violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls (Cripps & Adams, 2014). There are limitations to the extent to which knowledge of contributing factors can be thoroughly explored in the context of a 20-minute telephone survey. However, eight factors commonly raised in the literature as contributing to this violence were included as options (see Figure 4-11).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars and community leaders reject the view that there is normative support for violence against women (or indeed violence in general) that is unique to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture (Davis, 2012; Langton, 2018; NT Board of Inquiry into Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, 2007). Reflecting this, it is important to note that the option concerned with 'culture' was deliberately worded to explore respondents' views about whether *seeing* violence as part of culture would lead to violence (not whether they thought it *was* part of their culture and therefore a contributing factor). Further, this statement did not specify any particular culture (recognising that all Australians are exposed to many different cultures in communities, organisations and society-wide institutions, each of which may reflect support for violence).

There is no known survey research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on their understanding of factors contributing to violence against women and girls. However, prior research with people drawn from the community as a whole shows that people tend to be more inclined to attribute violence to characteristics of individuals, rather than to broader social factors (O'Neil & Morgan, 2010). This is a tendency found in community understanding of a range of social issues, not just violence (Stangor, 2011). This is worth keeping in mind when interpreting the results of these questions.

Respondents were asked about the extent to which they believed the selected conditions led to violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls 'a lot of the time', 'some of the time', 'rarely' or 'not at all' (Figure 4-11).

Figure 4-11: Knowledge of factors leading to violence against women and girls in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample, 2017 (%)

Understood as factors in domestic violence **a lot or some of the time**

Understood as factors in domestic violence **rarely or not at all**

An alcohol problem — 61 | 31 | 3 | 2 | 3

Drug problems in a community — 70 | 23 | 1 | 3 | 3

Having been removed from one's family — 30 | 42 | 11 | 9 | 6

Men losing role in family — 26 | 50 | 9 | 9 | 5

Seeing lots of violence in the community — 45 | 37 | 7 | 7 | 2

Seeing violence as part of culture — 35 | 32 | 9 | 17 | 5

Lack of supportive services — 46 | 35 | 8 | 6 | 4

Lack of employment opportunities in a community — 37 | 42 | 10 | 7 | 4

2017 (n=342) ■ A lot of the time ■ Some of the time ■ Rarely ▫ Not at all □ Don't know

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Box 4-11: Key findings

Knowledge of factors contributing to violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Most respondents identified each of the factors as being implicated a lot or some of the time, indicating that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a good understanding that multiple factors can contribute to violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls.

Of the eight factors presented, the four most likely to be identified as implicated in violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls 'a lot of the time' were:

- drug problems in a community (70%);
- an alcohol problem (61%);
- lack of supportive services (46%); and
- seeing lots of violence in the community (45%).

Respondents were less inclined to identify the other factors put to them as being implicated 'a lot of the time'. Thirty-seven percent identified lack of employment opportunities in a community, 35 percent identified seeing violence as part of a culture, 30 percent identified having been removed from one's family and 26 percent identified men losing their role in the family as factors in violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls 'a lot of the time'.

There were no differences between men and women for any of the factors. However, there were a small number

of demographic differences. These were assessed for each of the categories described in 'Demographic factors influencing attitudes above with the rest of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample.

- Respondents aged 16-24 years (9%) were more likely than respondents in all other age groups (1%) to say that having an alcohol problem is rarely a factor leading to violence against Indigenous women and girls, and were less likely to say that lack of employment opportunities in a community are a factor leading to violence against Indigenous women and girls 'a lot of the time' (20% compared with 43%).

- Those aged 65 years or more (12%) are more likely than respondents in all other age groups (2%) to answer 'don't know' when asked about the degree to which drug problems in a community are a factor leading to violence against Indigenous women and girls, and are more likely (50%) than all other age groups (24%) to say that men losing their role in families would lead to violence against Indigenous women and girls 'a lot of the time'.

- Those from remote and very remote communities (57%) are more likely than those in all other areas (33%) to say that lack of employment opportunities in a community is a factor leading to violence against Indigenous women and girls 'a lot of the time'.

Attitudes to reporting to the police

A key strategy in reducing the impact of violence against women has been to hold perpetrators of this violence to account (COAG, 2011). One means of achieving this is to encourage reporting through the criminal justice system. The police also have an important role in providing immediate protection for women and their children.
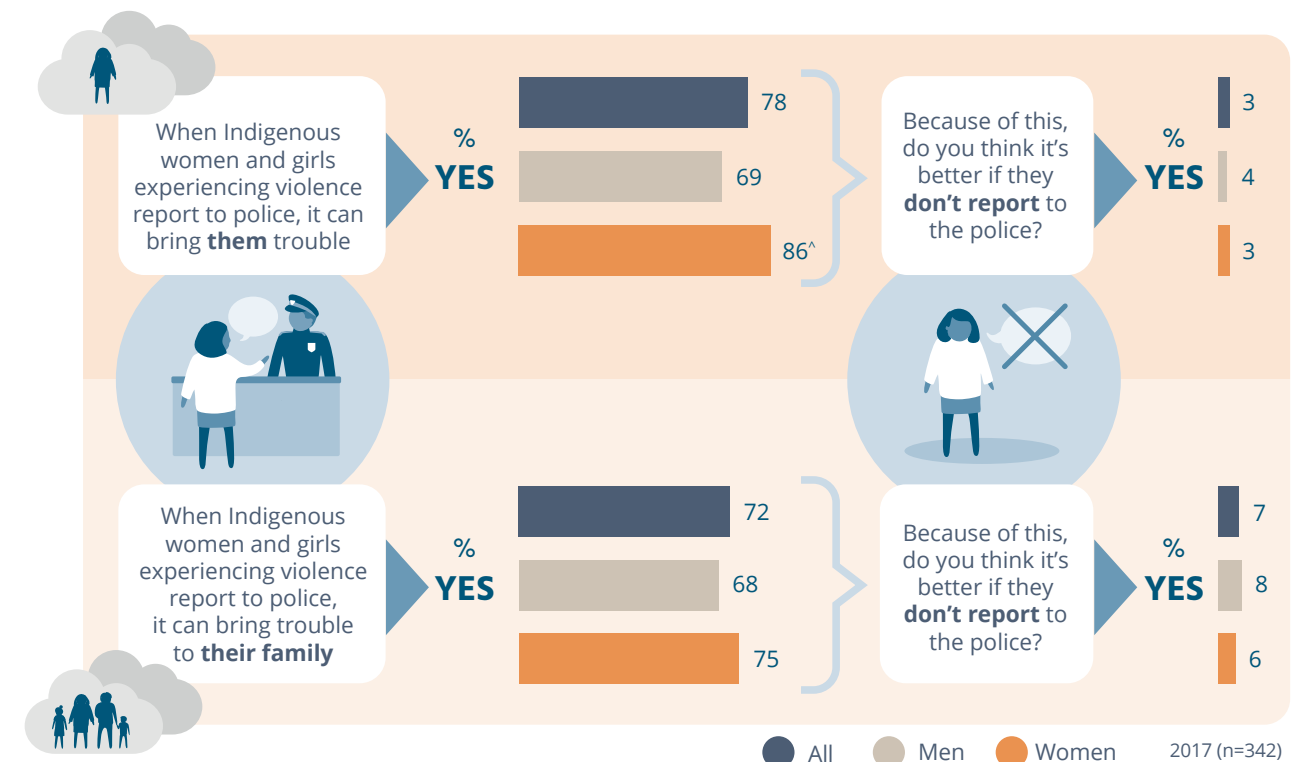
However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women face a number of barriers to disclosure and reporting to police, including:

- fear of institutional racism (Spangaro et al., 2016);
- lack of cultural safety (Spangaro et al., 2016);

- a reluctance to access the criminal justice system in response to family violence because of the ways in which Indigenous people have been negatively treated in the past (Atkinson, 2002; Cox, Young, & Bairnsfather-Scott, 2009);
- a fear that their children will be removed if violence is reported to police (McGlade, 2012; Spangaro et al., 2016); and
- a fear of homelessness (Days, 2011).

To investigate attitudes towards reporting in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, respondents were asked whether reporting would bring trouble to women or their families. If they agreed that it would, they were then asked whether they agreed women should still report to the police.

Figure 4-12: View of the consequences of reporting violence to the police and level of support for reporting, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample, 2017

^ Difference between men and women within the sample is statistically significant, p ≤.01 and reaches the 0.2 Cohen's threshold.

Box 4-12: Key findings
Attitudes towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls reporting violence to the police

A large proportion agreed that if Indigenous women and girls experiencing violence report to police it can bring them (78%) or their family (72%) trouble.

- Despite this, only a small proportion agreed that women should not report to the police. Four percent of those agreeing that reporting would bring trouble agreed that it was better not to report because it would bring trouble to women and girls themselves, and 7 percent agreed that it was better not to report because of the trouble it would bring to their families.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (69%) are less likely than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (86%) to agree that when Indigenous women and girls experiencing violence report to police it can bring them trouble.

- Those from remote and very remote areas (39%) are nearly twice as likely as those from all other areas (18%) to *disagree* that when Indigenous women and girls experiencing violence report to police it can bring trouble to their family.
- People in more advantaged areas (i.e. those from areas in quintiles 3-5) are more likely (81%) to agree that making a report can bring trouble to their family than people in the most disadvantaged areas (64%).
- There were no other demographic differences in responses to these questions.

5 Conclusion

The findings: Factors to keep in mind

The 2017 NCAS was developed, implemented and analysed using rigorous, well-accepted methods and procedures. It has a large sample size and includes both mobile and landline interviewing. This helps ensure the sample is as diverse and representative as possible. As a periodic survey, the NCAS is able to measure changes in knowledge and attitudes over time.

The NCAS is designed as a survey that can be delivered to everyone in the population. This is a strength in that it can help to identify groups that may require particular attention in prevention relative to the population as a whole. However, a drawback is that it is difficult to tailor questions and approaches to address issues of concern to smaller groups within the population. Further, since the questions in the main survey refer to men and women in general, it cannot be known whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents had men and women from the community as a whole in mind when answering these questions, or men and women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in particular.

It is not possible to reach everyone contacted by the randomly generated telephone numbers. Approximately half (49%) of those reached agreed to participate. The technical term for this is the 'cooperation rate'. The response rate is a more exacting standard, which takes into account all randomly generated numbers that were called and could have resulted in an interview.[22] That is, it includes all numbers that were never answered, not just those where someone answered. The response rate for NCAS was 17 percent. This is comparable, if not better than other similar surveys across the world (Dutwin & Lavrakas, 2016; Keeter, Hatley, Kennedy, & Lau, 2017; Kohut et al., 2012; Riggle, Rostosky & Reedy, 2005; Shih & Fan, 2008). Response rates are challenging to interpret in a rapidly changing telecommunications era where many people screen unknown phone numbers and never answer the calls made. Sample weighting was used to correct the impact of any known imbalances in the sample.

As in any survey, some groups may be underrepresented in the data and, as indicated above, sample weighting was used to correct any known imbalances. In the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample, people from very remote areas were underrepresented. It is hard to reach people in remote communities, particularly for surveying on sensitive issues. Specially designed research is needed to access Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants in very remote communities.

There is diversity among people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander in terms of linguistic, cultural and kinship associations, social and economic position, geographic location and degree of exposure to urbanisation. Where possible, these factors were considered in the analysis (e.g. by comparing responses between people with different levels of education or people in remote areas versus other areas). However, data were not collected on all possible aspects of diversity within and between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Further, sample sizes were not always sufficient to investigate differences between groups, even when the groups could be distinguished.

Cognitive testing of the questions was undertaken to be sure they were well understood. Specific efforts were taken to engage people identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander in this testing. However, responses to surveys on complex social issues can be influenced by language proficiency, cultural differences and differences in social position. The likelihood of this misunderstanding occurring is greater when research participants come from a very different social background from those conducting the research (Survey Research Centre, 2011).

Some people may also give an answer based on what they believe is socially acceptable, rather than what they really think (Krumpal, 2013; McMahon & Farmer, 2011). This is referred to as 'social desirability bias'. Social desirability bias becomes more likely when research participants and people conducting research share a common culture and social experience. This is because the inclination to give socially desirable answers depends on research participants understanding the social context *of the research*. Since some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents have a very different social experience than other Australians, they may be less inclined to have the understanding of social context required to give socially desirable answers. This could particularly influence findings where comparisons are made between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander samples.

Well-established statistical modelling was used to investigate some of the more complex questions. As with any statistical modelling, some assumptions were made (e.g. in measuring change over time at the overall level). When a relationship is found between two variables (e.g. attitudes and education), it is important to be aware that this does not necessarily mean that one causes the other.

Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are a relatively small proportion of the Australian population and this is reflected in the size of this sample in the NCAS. There were sufficient sample numbers to support many, although not all, analyses. Some findings need to be treated with caution owing to low sample numbers. These have been noted throughout the report. A further consideration is the high threshold used in all NCAS reports to identify results that are statistically significant ($p \leq 0.01$). This threshold was used for all analyses, except for assessing change in the composite measures over time. This high threshold has a particular impact when sample sizes are small. Many of the differences evident in the tables and figures may be statistically significant at a lower threshold of $p \leq 0.05$, which is generally used in social science reporting.

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[22] The American Association for Public Research (AAPOR, 2016) holds the industry standard for calculating response rates and is the formula used for this study. There are four possible AAPOR response rates that can be used to measure the performance of a project. The AAPOR3 calculation is used in NCAS, consistent with previous years.

Sample size also impacted the multivariate models. When identifying predictors from multivariate models, it is usual to take into account two key data outputs. The first of these is the contribution each input makes to variance (shown in this report). The second is the strength and direction of the relationship between the variable being considered and the model inputs (e.g. in this report whether attitudes get more or less supportive of violence against women with age and whether this relationship is strong enough to be statistically significant). In the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample, the relationship between many of the inputs and attitudes supportive of violence against women was not statistically significant. This was the case even when the contribution to variance was substantial. This is likely to be due to the small sample size. However, the bivariate analyses presented in this report (i.e. the analyses involving cross tabulating demographic factors with attitudes towards violence against women) provide further information about the direction and strength of relationships. When interpreted together, results from both the multivariate and bivariate analyses enable us to assess with reasonable confidence the predictive value of the various inputs. More information and methodological details can be found in the NCAS methodology report (Webster et al., 2018b).

Implications for policy and practice

The NCAS can tell us what attitudes people hold, but not why they hold them or why they are changing. However, it does provide some clues. Overall, the findings for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample are very similar to those found among non-Indigenous Australians. This suggests that many of the factors influencing attitudes in the community as a whole also influence those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. For this reason many of the implications discussed in the report of the findings for the community as a whole (Webster et al., 2018a) are also likely to be relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

A multi-level, multi-strategy approach

Further, attitudes, norms and practices in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are not the only ones requiring attention. The attitudes of the community as a whole towards both violence against women and towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also play a key role. The NCAS report for the community as a whole found that people who hold attitudes of prejudice towards others, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, are also more likely to hold attitudes supporting violence against women and gender inequality. This suggests the importance of tackling these other forms of prejudice in the wider community in efforts to reduce violence affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls.

Although as indicated above, attitudes in both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and wider communities are similar, different approaches to addressing them in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities may be required. There is a consensus among those working to address violence against women in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that *how* this work is undertaken is especially important (Blagg et al., 2015; Blagg et al., 2018; Olsen & Lovett, 2016). Principles that ought to underlie this have been developed over many years in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (see, for example, Blagg et al., 2015; Blagg et al., 2018; Olsen & Lovett, 2016). These principles are summarised in *Changing the picture* (Our

Watch, 2018), developed by Our Watch in partnership with key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, as:

- self-determination: community ownership, control and leadership;
- cultural safety;
- trauma-informed practice and practitioner self-care;
- healing focused;
- holistic;
- prioritising and strengthening culture;
- using strengths-based and community strengthening approaches;
- adapting to different community, demographic and geographic contexts;
- addressing intersectional discrimination; and
- non-Indigenous organisations working as allies in culturally safe ways.

Supporting prevention in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Overall, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a good knowledge of violence against women, support gender equality, do not endorse violence against women and are willing to intervene as bystanders. While aware that reporting to the police can be problematic for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their families, a majority agreed that women should nevertheless report violence to the police. The large proportion agreeing that reporting remains problematic for women indicates the importance of continued efforts to address both institutional and community-level barriers to reporting.

> If women have children, they may avoid making a report, because they fear that they will have issues with the children being taken away
>
> **– Workshop participant**

For most questions asked in both 2013 and 2017, there was either no change in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses or an improving trend. There was a positive change in the measure of endorsement of attitudes towards violence against women in the sample between 2013 and 2017. However, there was no change in the measures of attitudinal support for gender equality or knowledge of violence against women.

In this regard, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample stands in contrast to the sample as a whole (Webster et al., 2018a), in which there was a positive change in the majority of questions asked in both the 2013 and 2017 surveys and in all three overall measures. This difference may be due in part to the use of a high threshold for statistical significance in the relatively smaller Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample. However, it was confirmed for the composite measures in this sample at the lower threshold of $p \leq 0.05$.

This suggests that the factors driving positive change in the community as a whole have not had as great an impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This, together with the disproportionate impact of violence on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls discussed earlier, supports the focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls in the *National Plan* (COAG, 2011).

Priority issues

In prioritising effort to strengthen knowledge, attitudes and bystander[23] interventions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, there would be benefits in:

- addressing the gaps in knowledge of violence against women, particularly information about help seeking, social factors contributing to violence, the gendered nature and dynamics of intimate partner violence, and the greater risk of sexual assault by a known person compared to sexual assault by a stranger;
- addressing all aspects of gender equality with a focus on challenging rigid gender roles and identities and the idea that gender equality is no longer a problem – the latter is important because, of the five gender equality themes, it was the strongest predictor of attitudes supportive of violence against women;
- promoting attitudes that foster a mutually respectful approach to gender relations, particularly in intimate relationships, families and households, and challenging the idea that women use claims of violence for tactical advantage;
- addressing barriers to bystander action by informing people that they are likely to be supported by more of their friends than they might think, by strengthening their knowledge and attitudes, and by focusing on people who feel uncomfortable and would like to act but say they would not know how;
- addressing excuses for violence against women, particularly excuses involving alcohol – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men are particularly likely to hold such attitudes, which is a concern in light of research showing that holding attitudes excusing violence can be a barrier to accepting responsibility for the use of violence and hence of becoming violence-free (Morrison et al., 2018);
- having a particular focus in work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women on addressing the importance of consent in intimate relationships – 'Disregarding the need for consent' was the only theme in the attitudes towards violence against women component in which women were less likely than men to reject violence-supportive sentiments and the theme on which there were no differences between men and women (based on the composite measure); and
- promoting the importance of police and support services continuing to respond to families in which violence reoccurs – this is especially important given research on intimate partner homicide showing that a history of family violence is not uncommon (Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network, 2018). The barriers to women securing safety from violence are now well documented (for a summary of the literature, see Webster et al., 2018a) and are particularly acute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (Cripps & Adams, 2014).

Supporting communities

The strongest predictors of attitudinal support for violence against women were having a low level of support for gender equality and a low level of understanding of the nature of violence against women. This suggests the importance of improving understanding of the nature of violence against women and supports the need for an approach to prevention that promotes equal and respectful relationships between men and women as key.

Education and area remoteness were also among the top six predictors of attitudes supportive of violence against women in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample. Level of education can be an indicator of disadvantage, but it may also influence attitudes because education is a liberalising force. That is, when people continue in their education, they are exposed to different ideas and world views and this can, in turn, contribute to more positive attitudes on a range of social issues, including attitudes to gender relations and violence against women (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Davis & Greenstein, 2009; Stack et al., 2007). The fact that education makes a substantial contribution to explained variance after controlling for other measures of disadvantage suggests that education is likely to influence attitudes through its liberalising effect rather than because it reduces disadvantage. Education was a relatively more important predictor of attitudes towards violence against women in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample than in the sample as a whole. This suggests that there would be particular benefits in improving access to education among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Further research is required to better understand variation in attitudes in outer regional areas.

The measure of attitudinal support for violence in general is not as robust as the other measures in the NCAS and this needs to be taken into account in considering findings. This measure was among the top six predictors in both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample and in the sample as a whole (Webster et al., 2018a). This supports other research, conducted with a range of communities, showing that such attitudes are associated with attitudes towards violence against women (Diaz-Aguado & Martinez, 2015; Herrero et al., 2017). Some scholars have argued that normative support for violence in general is a key factor in violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls perpetrated within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (see, for example, Jarrett, 2013). The NCAS shows that while attitudes towards violence in general are associated with attitudes towards violence against women, they are less influential than other factors. Best results are likely to be achieved when support for violence in general is addressed alongside the more influential factors of attitudes towards gender equality and understanding of violence against women, and increasing access to secondary and higher education. It is also of note that attitudes towards violence in general are relatively less influential in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample than was found in the NCAS sample as a whole (in which they ranked fourth before education level) (Webster et al., 2018a).

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[23] Noting the strengths and limitations of bystander approaches as discussed on page 34.

Whole community and targeted approaches

The fact that the differences between people based on their demographic characteristics were small for most factors suggests the need for prevention strategies that reach the whole community. There are many factors to consider when making decisions about targeting prevention action, not just attitudes (e.g. the prevalence of violence in a community). However, the survey does show some grounds for targeting:

- men and boys, noting the gender differences found in this sample – men are also the majority perpetrators of violence and certain male peer group cultures have been implicated (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013). Importantly, the majority of men do not perpetrate violence and are potential allies in violence prevention;

- elders, who play important leadership roles in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;

- people with a low level of education; and

- people living in outer regional and remote areas.

> Quite often I am the only man at meetings about preventing family violence. Men are lagging behind but are increasingly playing a bigger leadership role in this area.
>
> **– Workshop participant**

Young Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander people did not vary in significant ways in their attitudes to gender equality and violence against women from people in the sample in older age groups (other than those 65 years and older as discussed in 'Demographic factors influencing understanding and attitudes' in Chapter 4). However, they were less likely than those aged 25–64 to have a high level of understanding of violence against women. A focus on young people is warranted given this finding, that violence has a particular impact when occurring at this life cycle stage, and data showing that young women are especially vulnerable to violence (ABS, 2017).[24]

Further research

Further research is needed, particularly qualitative research, to better understand attitudes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and why they are changing.

Research in regional and remote communities is especially indicated, given both the findings of this survey and the need for tailored research designs that take account of the complexities of conducting research on sensitive issues in remote communities.

There would also be benefits in strengthening the capacity of NCAS to understand the impact of attitudes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through:

- investigating other areas through questions tailored to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents; and

- including further questions administered in the whole sample that investigate attitudes towards violence affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls.

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[24] Particular issues of concern for young people are discussed in a separate NCAS report of findings from respondents aged 16-24 (Politoff et al., 2019).

Appendix 1: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Expert Group members

Name	Position/organisation
Ms Dorinda Cox	Director, Inspire Change Consulting Group
Dr Kyllie Cripps	Senior Lecturer and Scientia Fellow, Faculty of Law, University of New South Wales
Ms Tracey Currie-Dillon	(Then) Chief Executive Officer, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance
Ms Corina Martin	Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Family Law Services, Western Australia
Ms Leanne Miller	Executive Director, Koori Women Mean Business

Appendix 2: Workshop on findings from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample participants

Name	Position/organisation
Dr Mick Adams	Senior Research Fellow, Australian Indigenous Health*InfoNet*, Edith Cowan University
Dr Kyllie Cripps	Senior Lecturer and Scientia Fellow, Faculty of Law, University of New South Wales
Mr David Gallant	Research Fellow, Department of Social Work, School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, University of Melbourne
Ms Corina Martin	Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Family Law Services, Western Australia
Ms Leanne Miller	Executive Director, Koori Women Mean Business
Mr Edward Mosby	Independent Director, ANROWS. Psychologist, Wakai Waian Healing, Rockhampton, Queensland

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