

Primary prevention of violence against women and children

Violence against women is now widely recognised as a global problem and one of the most widespread violations of human rightsⁱ.

The United Nations (1993) define violence against women 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 deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.'*

Domestic violence is generally understood as gendered violence, and *'is an abuse of power within a relationship or after a separation when one partner in an intimate relationship attempts by physical or psychological means to dominate and control the other'*ⁱⁱ.



WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Violence is gendered

	Men	Women	
Are at risk	in public spaces and licensed premises from men they don't know. ⁱⁱⁱ	in the home from men they know. ^{iv}	Women are more likely than men to -^{vii} <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear for their lives. • Suffer more severe forms of violence. • Received medical attention.
Use violence	as an expression of self-perceived 'rights or 'entitlements' of male household leaders over other family members ^v	in self-defence ^{vi}	

Violence is Prevalence – evidence indicates that violence against women is common.

Number of Australian women	Boyfriend or husband
One in three women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15. ^{viii}	Nearly one in five women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. ^{ix}
	Over a third of women who have ever had a boyfriend or husband report experiencing at least one form of violence during their lifetime from an intimate male partner. ^x

Violence is Serious – violence against women has very serious consequences for individual women, their families and the wider community.

Death	Poor health	Exposing children	Homelessness
In Australia from 1989-98 57% of female homicides were perpetrated by an intimate partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women report poorer physical health overall, are more likely to engage in practices that are harmful to their health.^{xi} • leading contributor to the total disease burden of women aged 15-44 years. 	Women experiencing violence reported that the violence was witnessed by children in their care. ^{xii}	Family violence has been identified as a significant cause of homelessness amongst women.

Violence Costs – Violence against women has massive economic costs

Australian Economy	Australian Businesses	Victoria	Savings
The cost to the Australian economy is estimated to be \$13.6 billion in 2008-09 and, if there is no reduction in current rates, it will cost the economy an estimated \$15.6 billion by 2021-22. This is more than the 2008 stimulus to address the Global Financial Crisis (\$10.4 billion)	Australian businesses are losing at least \$500 million per year because of the effects of intimate partner violence. Victims take just under \$30 million per year in sick leave. Associated staff turnover costs a further \$6 million annually.	The costs per year in Victoria associated with violence against women exceed \$3.4 billion dollars ^{xiii}	Preventing violence for just one woman would mean avoiding over \$20,766 in costs ^{xiv}

Violence is Preventable

“The causes of interpersonal violence affecting women are complex; however, there is increasing evidence linking both the perpetration of violence and its continuance with individual, organisation, community and societal-factors. There is an emerging international consensus that many of these factors can either be modified or eliminated and hence that there are significant prospects for preventing this problem.”^{xv}

Research shows that the most significant determinants of violence against women are:

- the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women
- an adherence to rigidly defined gender roles ^{xvi}.

To Prevent violence against women before it occurs, actions need to

- promote equal and respectful relationships between men and women
- foster non-violent social norms and reducing the effects of prior exposure to violence (especially on children)
- improve access to resources and systems of support .^{xvii}

PRIMARY PREVENTION

Men’s use of violence against women is a significant public health issue with serious social, economic and health consequences for women, their families and communities.

Primary prevention seek to prevent violence before it occurs, by addressing the determinates. In this case the determinates of violence against women are the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women and an adherence to rigidly defined gender roles.

While primary prevention of violence is an emerging area of practice worldwide, there is a growing consensus that it is possible to prevent violence against women before it occurs.^{xviii}

