

# 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

*Keeping women and children safe from family violence  
before, during and after natural disaster*



## So you want to talk about the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence?

Here are some talking points to get you started

### What is the 16 days of activism?

- 16 Days of Activism is a campaign that calls for action against one of the world's most persistent violations of human rights – violence against women.
- It's a global campaign that begins on November 25 ([International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#)) and finishes on December 10 ([World Human Rights Day](#)). These dates were chosen to highlight the links between violence against women with human rights issues – violence (in any form) is a violation of human rights.
- The campaign unites people and organisations around the world to unite to raise awareness about gender-based violence, challenge discriminatory attitudes and call for improved laws and services to end violence against women.
- The global campaign was launched by the Centre for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) at its first Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991. Since then, more than 6,000 organisations from around 187 countries have participated in the campaign.

## Why is it important?

- Globally, violence against women is occurring at alarming rates.
- Violence against women is any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion in public or private life.
- In Australia, the most unsafe place for a woman, is her own home. Women are at greater risk of family, domestic and sexual violence than men – and they are more likely to know the perpetrator (often their current or a previous partner) and the violence usually takes place in their home. Men experience violence too, but are more likely to experience violence from strangers in a public place.
- And one in six women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of a current or former cohabiting partner. This is compared to one in 16 men. It amounts to one police call out every two minutes and on average, in Australia, one woman is murdered per week by a current or former partner.

## Why should I care?

Note: These examples focus on what the drivers of violence against women look like at the individual/relationship level, but they also play out at the organisational /community level, institutional/systemic level and the societal level.

- The statistics in Australia indicate that every single one of us likely knows someone who has been affected by domestic violence.
- It might seem like a problem that is too big, too complex, for you to be able to do anything about it. You might think ‘Well, I’m not violent’ or ‘I respect women’. But, violence against women is preventable and we know that gender inequality sets the necessary social context for it to occur.

## Why should I care? (Continued)

- There are four gendered drivers of violence against women (set out in the [Change the Story National Framework](#)).

These are:

- Condoning of violence against women. This can look like the media highlighting the victim's behaviour more than the perpetrator's violence.
- Men's control of decision making and limits to women's independence in public life and relationships. This includes beliefs that many people hold like "in the workplace, men make more capable bosses than women"
- Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity. This is assuming that women will do the cleaning, cooking or administrative tasks at work, at home or at community events.
- Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women. This can sound like sexist 'locker room talk' that disrespects women - and in this environment is considered harmless and normal.
- For more information, see [Unpacking the Gendered Drivers of Violence Against Women](#).

## What is happening globally?

The theme for this year's global 16 Days of Activism is "[Orange the world: End violence against women now!](#)". This year's global campaign aims to:

- Advocate for inclusive, comprehensive and long-term strategies, programmes and resources to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls in public and private spaces prioritising the most marginalised women and girls.
- Amplify the success stories demonstrating that VAWG is preventable by showcasing effective strategies and interventions to inspire all actors to scale up what works.
- Promote the leadership of women and girls in their diversity and their meaningful participation in policy making and decision making from global to local levels.

## What is happening across Victoria?

- The theme for the [2021 16 Days of Activism state-wide campaign](#) by Respect Victoria and its partners Domestic Violence Victoria and the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria is 'respect women: call it out'.
- A series of small grants will be distributed by Domestic Violence Victoria to Victorian community organisations and councils, to develop and promote local initiatives and engage audience across the state.
- Respect Victoria has also partnered with Safe Steps Family Violence Resource Centre to support the Walk Against Family Violence, a significant annual event that takes place on the first day of the 16 Days of Activism, to take a stand against family violence in all its forms and promote the importance of prevention of this violence.

## What is happening locally?

- The 2021 16 Days of Activism regional campaign by Women's Health Goulburn North East is supporting communities via a coordinated social media campaign centred on eliminating violence against women before, during and after natural disaster.
- This regional campaign is inspired by the work of [Gender and Disaster Australia](#) (formerly Gender and Disaster Pod), a partnership project of Women's Health Goulburn North East. The research work conducted by Gender and Disaster Australia since its inception has demonstrated that there are different vulnerabilities in disaster, which can be determined by gender, and that by recognising and including women's experiences and roles in disaster planning, management and response, communities can better keep women and children safe.

# How can I get involved?

- Attend a local 16 Days event, online or socially distanced. Check out the Women's Health region-wide calendar.
- Join the virtual walk against family violence. Register online at <https://walk.safesteps.org.au/>
- Share our campaign resources on your social media - these resources will be made available on our website.
- Start the conversation around weaving women's rights and gender equality into the everyday life of your team, staff and work culture. Do the same in your home!
- Employ some of the key actions to address the gendered drivers of violence against women in your everyday life, at home and at work. These are:
  - Challenge the condoning of violence against women by thinking critically about media portrayals of violence against women that highlight victim behaviour, rather than perpetrators responsibility.
  - Promote women's independence and decision making. This might mean taking extra steps to ensure women's voices are heard, in the board room and at the dinner table.
  - Challenge gender stereotypes and roles - share the work around the house, don't use phrases that reinforce these stereotypes like 'stop crying like a girl', 'man up' or 'don't be such a girl' - these phrases put pressure on men and boys to hide their emotions and belittle girls and women.
  - Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships. This is where the state-wide 'respect women: call it out' campaign comes in - call it out when you encounter a problematic attitude (if it's safe to do so), such as the false belief that women make up false reports of sexual assaults in order to punish men (held by 42 per cent of people). This is the very reason that victim survivors are afraid to seek help, and the majority either delay or never report sexual assault. Evidence shows that only five per cent of sexual assault allegations are false.

# What services are available?

- 000 - for urgent assistance
- Safe Steps - 24/7 Victorian family violence support service - 1800 015 188
- 1800 Respect - National Sexual Assault, Family and Domestic Violence Counselling Line - 1800 737 732
- Specialist LGBTIQ Family Violence Service - 1800 542 847 or visit [www.withrespect.org.au](http://www.withrespect.org.au)
- No to Violence - anonymous men's referral service for men who use violence - 1300 766 491
- Djirra - 1800 105 303 - Website: [djirra.org.au](http://djirra.org.au) - Djirra Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services is a culturally safe place where culture is celebrated, and practical support is available.
- Rainbow Door - 1800 729 367 - Website: [rainbowdoor.org.au](http://rainbowdoor.org.au) - Rainbow Door is a free specialist LGBTIQ+ helpline providing information, support and referral to all LGBTIQ+ Victorians, their friends and family.
- InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence - 1800 755 988 - Website: [intouch.org.au](http://intouch.org.au) - A specialist family violence service that works with multicultural women, their families and communities.



Looking for more gender equity resources for your organisation, workplace or community?

Check out [www.whealth.com.au](http://www.whealth.com.au) for toolkits, information and research to support you to become a great gender equality activist and prevent violence against women in your community.