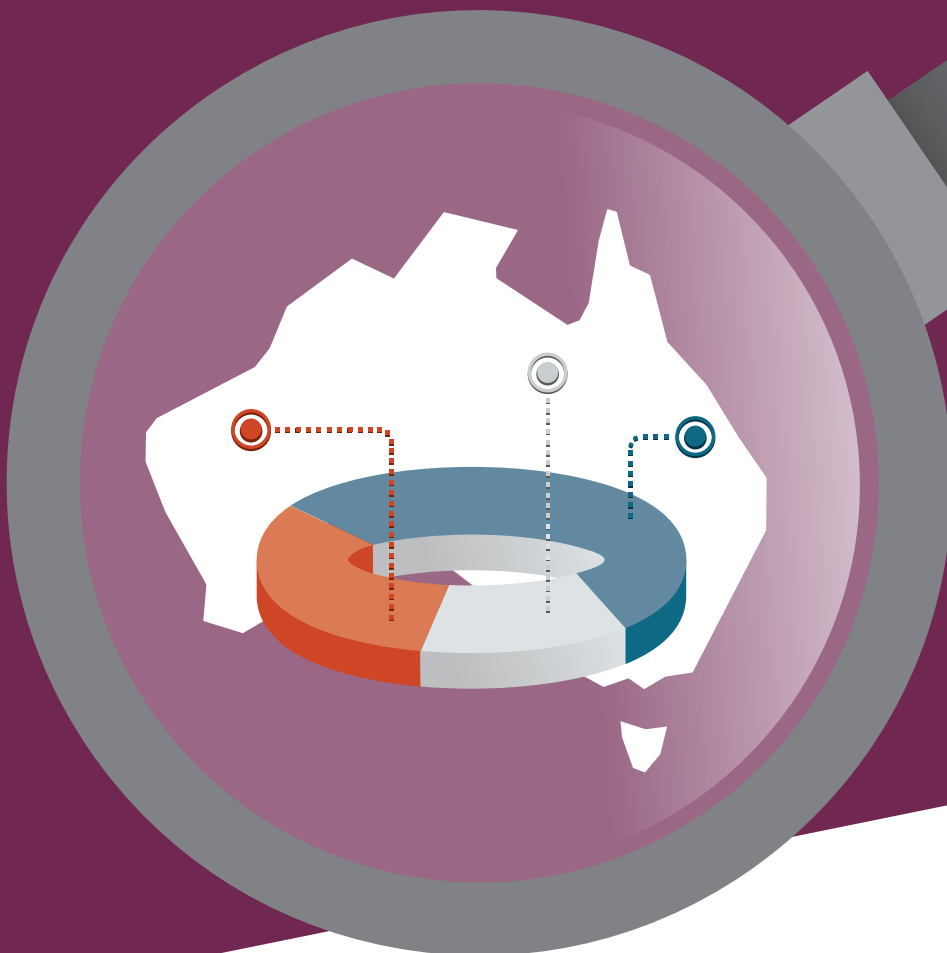


A summary of:

Tracking progress in prevention

A national monitoring report
on progress towards the primary
prevention of violence against women
and their children in Australia





What is primary prevention?

Primary prevention aims to stop violence against women from occurring in the first place. It works to change the deep-seated gendered drivers of this violence, and the underlying social condition of gender inequality in which it arises. While response and early intervention approaches work with individuals who are already experiencing or perpetrating violence (or at risk of doing so), primary prevention is a whole-of-population approach that aims to deliver a future where all women and their children live free from violence.

‘Australia is currently ideally placed to create the nationwide cultural and systematic change needed to end violence against women and their children. We have one of the world’s strongest research and practice bases – established over a decade of bipartisan leadership at national and state levels – and are one of the few countries to have developed and begun implementing substantive policy frameworks to stop violence against women and their children before it starts. While we have much to learn from the international evidence ... we also have much to contribute to it and, with the right planning and commitment, we are poised to lead the world on the issue.’

Our Watch, Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth. (2015). *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia.*

Developing a national picture of progress towards the primary prevention of violence against women

This is a high-level summary of the report *Tracking progress in prevention*, a major new publication developed by Our Watch. *Tracking progress in prevention* is the first report developed in Australia that is designed to monitor national progress towards primary prevention of violence against women. To our knowledge, it is also a world first.

The report explores change over a significant decade in Australia's recent history: 2009 to 2019. This monitoring period deliberately corresponds to the decade in which Australia has had a *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children* (released in 2010), and in which primary prevention efforts in Australia have been emerging and beginning to build momentum.

Measuring progress towards the prevention of violence against women is not as simple as monitoring prevalence rates or tracking changes in individual attitudes towards violence or gender equality. The innovative methodology developed in this report demonstrates the critical importance of devising measures and indicators that can help assess changes to the complex and interrelated sets of social norms, practices, systems and structures that together drive and reinforce violence against women, and perpetuate gender inequality. The report collates a breadth of data – both quantitative and qualitative – identified as relevant to 17 monitoring domains, and analyses it against over 40 quantitative indicators and other measures.

This comprehensive approach makes clear where progress has or hasn't yet been made, and whether or not this aligns with the expected rate of change. It shows how progress in different areas is interrelated, which helps identify critical dependencies. It also highlights gaps which, unless addressed, will hinder future progress. Perhaps most importantly, it identifies clear opportunities to advance progress.

This report, the first of its kind, is designed to act as a template for future monitoring. Its main aim is to provide a baseline for future monitoring efforts, rather than to give a definitive assessment of change in this short period. There have been significant, even world-leading developments in this decade, but it is only in the longer term, with ongoing monitoring against this baseline, that we would expect to see significant change against the measures in the report, and meaningful, sustained, population-level outcomes.

What does the report tell us about progress in primary prevention?

Prevention is possible, and we are already beginning to see change

Violence against women is not inevitable but is preventable. A society where women and their children live free from violence is possible. To achieve the long-term social transformation that will make this future a reality, we need to identify and dismantle the underlying drivers of this violence.

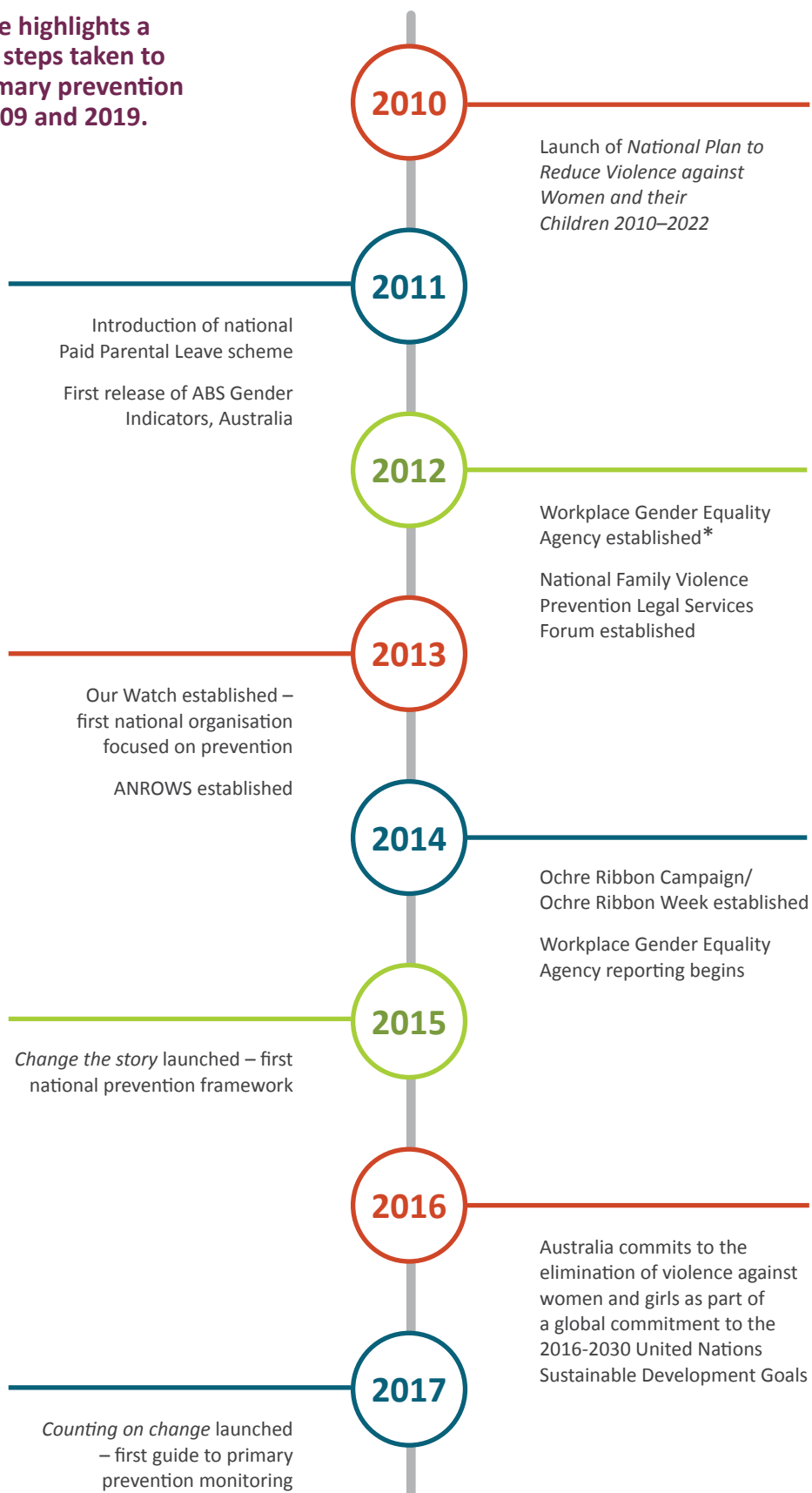
As the timeline on the following page shows, between 2009 and 2019, many positive steps have been made towards this long-term goal. Australia has mapped out a clear path towards change. We are beginning to challenge and change some of the historically entrenched beliefs and behaviours that drive violence against women and their children, and the social, political and economic structures, practices and systems that support them.

We are heading in the right direction towards our long-term goal, and we need to stay the course

The changes we've seen in this first decade are encouraging – we are starting to build the foundations for future success, and we have enough evidence to know that we are heading in the right direction. But there is still much to do. The transformative social change we are striving for will not happen overnight – it's a long-term goal. We need to stay the course, consolidate our progress, and work together to continue filling identified gaps in our shared national approach. This report demonstrates what we've achieved to date and identifies opportunities to further advance our progress into the future.



This timeline highlights a selection of steps taken to support primary prevention between 2009 and 2019.



*The Workplace Gender Equality Agency replaced the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency. The associated *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* introduced a requirement for relevant employers to report against gender equality indicators.

What progress have we seen?

Early positive signs that we are building strong foundations for prevention

Progress on primary prevention since 2009, which provides critical foundations for longer-term change, includes:

- ✓ Release of the first *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*, with prevention a prominent element in the plan and subsequent Action Plans.
- ✓ Establishment of primary prevention organisation Our Watch, with an explicit mandate to develop and lead a national approach to prevention.
- ✓ Establishment of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety to produce evidence on violence against women and their children (including but not limited to prevention research).
- ✓ Launch of *Change the story*, a world-first national framework for primary prevention.
- ✓ Increasing recognition of the need to explicitly address the underlying drivers of violence against women and promote gender equality, to create sustained, population-level reduction in violence against women.
- ✓ Visible political and civil society leadership creating an enabling environment for progress towards nationwide cultural and systematic change to prevent violence against women.
- ✓ Policy reform across the country, with Commonwealth and most state/territory governments identifying primary prevention as a priority in policies related to violence against women, domestic and family violence, and/or sexual violence, and some beginning to allocate specific funding to prevention programs, approaches and initiatives.
- ✓ Increased prevention programming, with proven and promising techniques implemented across a range of settings.
- ✓ An emerging multiskilled, primary prevention workforce, implementing prevention initiatives and building the capacity of others to contribute to a shared, national approach.
- ✓ Organisations established under the National Plan, peak bodies, women's health and gender equality organisations playing an essential role by developing shared frameworks, conducting research, coordinating efforts and sharing resources.
- ✓ Civil society advocacy groups and specialist organisations continue to address the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that drive violence against women, and to bring these issues to public attention.

This period has also seen critical investments in the development and implementation of monitoring guides, national research agendas and shared data platforms – helping to ensure that progress towards prevention can be monitored over the long term.

There are positive ongoing commitments to national data collection, monitoring, management and dissemination, and efforts are being made to strengthen whole-of-population data by addressing omissions and methodological limitations. These improvements will enable a more nuanced understanding of violence against women, and help guide more effective action to address the drivers of this violence.

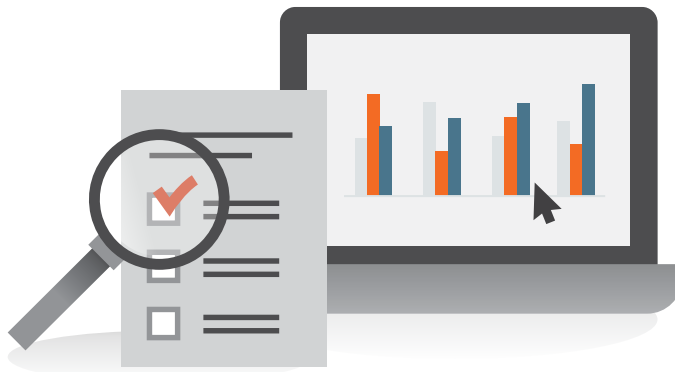
Shifts in attitudes

At the population level, we're starting to see progress towards a shift in attitudes, with continued government investment in the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey allowing progress to be tracked.

For example, this period has seen:

- ✓ A reduction in the proportion of Australians whose attitudes condone or accept violence against women (particularly since 2013).
- ✓ An improvement in attitudes towards women's engagement in public life, with increased support for a broadening of the roles available to women, and greater acceptance of women's full participation in the workforce.

These encouraging attitudinal shifts may be the result of increasing numbers of prevention interventions aimed at shifting individual beliefs and attitudes.



Progress towards gender equality generally

Positive shifts towards gender equality more broadly that were observed over the period include:

- ✓ Increased paid hours of work for women.
- ✓ Increased representation of women in the public and private sectors.
- ✓ Gains in the representation of women in middle management roles.
- ✓ To some degree, increased representation of women in occupations previously seen as 'masculine' or 'men's work'.

This progress towards gender equality has been supported by policy and legislative reform, particularly the introduction of a national Paid Parental Leave scheme, and the establishment of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, to oversee gender equality reporting requirements for employers and improve gender equality in workplaces.

Where has less progress been made?

Change the story, Australia's shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children, tells us that primary prevention needs to:

- address multiple gendered drivers and reinforcing factors of violence
- use multiple strategies and levers
- be implemented in different settings, and
- target change at different levels – individual and interpersonal, organisational and community, system and institutional, and societal.

However, our findings indicate that there are some gaps in current approaches, including:

- ✗ Relatively less investment in, and attention to, prevention interventions that contribute to broad and deep changes across society – changes at the community level, changes to social norms, changes in organisations, and broader structural and systemic change.
- ✗ National implementation efforts not yet having translated into mutually reinforcing activities (either simultaneously or sequentially) across all levels of society.
- ✗ Insufficient development of appropriate and shared evaluative practice that would assess the collaborative impact and shared effectiveness of prevention activity.

The need to address these gaps in our current approach is evidenced by the report's findings of limited progress against a range of indicators, including:

- ✗ Only modest improvements in women's decision-making power.
- ✗ Little evidence of substantial change in the rate of men taking up non-stereotypical caring roles in the home or workforce.
- ✗ Men's continued dominance of leadership positions in public life.
- ✗ Ongoing economic inequality for women, manifesting in the gender pay gap and superannuation gap.
- ✗ Many women continuing to experience discrimination on the basis of race, religion, Indigeneity, disability, sexuality, migration, lone parenthood, and socioeconomic status.

In the attitudinal data, there are also some concerning signs of limited improvement in some areas – for example:

- ✘ Australians are still less likely to recognise non-physical forms of violence than physical forms.
- ✘ There is a persistent mistrust of women’s reports of violence – evidenced, for example, by the proportion who believe that women going through custody disputes often make up or exaggerate claims of domestic violence.
- ✘ A concerning proportion of people hold attitudes which disregard the need for sexual consent in sexual relations.
- ✘ Many men continue to be influenced by the implicit or explicit expectations of their male peers. Such perceptions may encourage sexist behaviour within male peer groups, and may also inhibit men from taking positive bystander action by calling out such behaviour among their peers.

Finally, there appears to be a correlation between attitudes supportive of violence against women and other types of discriminatory attitudes, such as racism. The persistence of these is of significant concern, and calls for greater leadership, investment and action. Addressing the drivers and reducing the prevalence of violence against women who experience multiple forms of inequality and discrimination requires a greater focus on the structural and systemic reform necessary to tackle all forms of inequality and discrimination.



Where to from here?

Next steps and future priorities

The foundations to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women have been steadily building during the past ten years.

However, sustained effort is required to establish and consolidate this prevention infrastructure and ensure it is robust enough to drive long-term change. There are also a number of gaps we still need to address, and some areas requiring future focus and investment. Priorities for the next phase of this work include:

- A greater focus on actions to drive institutional, systemic and structural change, including strengthening the gender policy machinery of government.
- Increased investment in, and focus on, evaluation frameworks and strategies to evaluate collective and coordinated primary prevention impact across Australia.
- Development of a deeper and broader understanding of what constitutes research and evidence in primary prevention, and how different types of evidence will be collected and reported on by various stakeholders.
- A stronger focus on masculinity – in particular, an expansion of prevention initiatives that challenge rigid attachment to dominant norms of masculinity and disrupt male peer relations and expressions of masculinity that normalise aggression, disrespect and hostility towards women, and power and control over women.
- Increased actions to support systemic reform which addresses intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality – such as racism or ableism – that play a role in driving violence against women.
- Embedding a gendered approach into work to address inequality and discrimination across all social policy areas.

The report suggests that the next steps in building and extending a strong prevention infrastructure include:

- Establishing a coordinating body or mechanism to measure national progress on an ongoing basis.
- Implementing a national workforce development strategy, including processes for coordination and mechanisms to bring together key stakeholders to inform and contribute to the development of the primary prevention workforce.
- Moving towards longer-term and ongoing funding for primary prevention programs and activities, to reflect the time periods of the frameworks and plans under which they are funded (such as the 12-year period of the current National Plan), in order to support the sustained long-term work that these plans recognise as necessary to prevent violence against women.
- Increased attention to, and investment in, transforming systemic and structural forms of inequality and discrimination that intersect with sexism and gender inequality, to ensure prevention works for all women.
- Establishing and strengthening policy, governance and coordination mechanisms across portfolios, within jurisdictions, and between levels of government, to support coordinated, holistic and more effective efforts across the country.

The importance of ongoing national monitoring

As well as providing a baseline assessment of progress, this report demonstrates what comprehensive national prevention monitoring entails, and provides a suggested framework for collecting, collating and analysing relevant data as part of a comprehensive approach.

It also underlines the critical importance of ongoing, periodic monitoring of prevention efforts at the national level.

We know that a significant and sustained reduction in population-level rates of violence against women is likely to be realised only in the long term. But we must continue to articulate what successful steps towards this ultimate goal look like, and to measure and chart progress against these interim indicators.

If produced on an ongoing, periodic basis (say every five years), national monitoring reports like this one will:

- Make it possible to keep track of our shared progress as a country.
- Highlight positive changes, enabling us not only to celebrate these but to understand what contributed to them, and how these lessons could be applied in other areas.
- Identify dependencies, gaps, limitations to progress and areas needing increased attention and effort.
- Identify opportunities to refine our overall strategy – or specific aspects of it – over time.
- Increase overall accountability and transparency.
- Help all stakeholders to see themselves and their work as part of a larger, collective effort, and to understand the contribution they are making to vital social change.





This is a summary of *Tracking progress in prevention: A national monitoring report on progress towards the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*.

To download the full report, please see the Our Watch website at <http://www.ourwatch.org.au/>

Our Watch is a national leader of primary prevention of violence against women and their children. Our role is to stop violence before it starts. We were established to drive nation-wide change in the structures, norms and practices that lead to violence against women and their children. Our vision is an Australia where women and their children live free from all forms of violence.

Our research and resources to prevent violence against women and their children are continually evolving, so keep an eye out for new resources on our website or sign up to our e-newsletter.

<http://www.ourwatch.org.au/>

