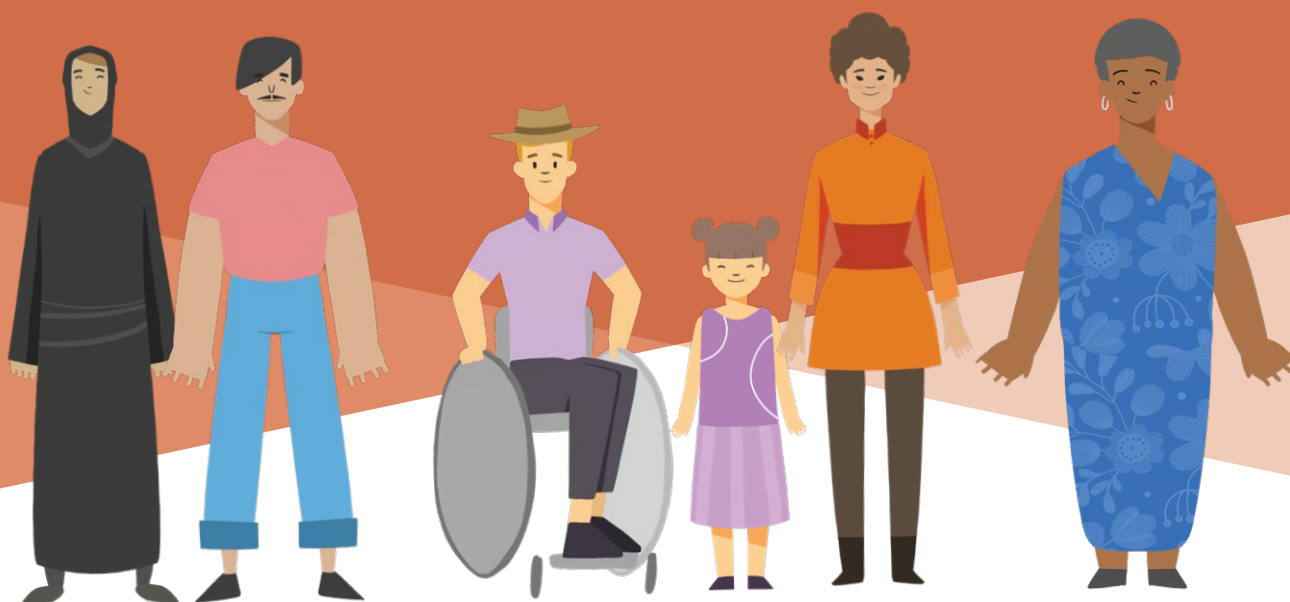


Fact sheet series: The role of local government in preventing violence against women

All information sheets are available for download,
or you can download individual sheets:

1. [Violence against women](#)
2. [Prevention of violence against women](#)
3. [Why gender matters](#)
4. [The role of local government in preventing violence against women](#)
5. [Getting started](#)
6. [Communicating the issue and raising awareness](#)
7. [Embedding prevention of violence against women into council business](#)
8. [Council leadership and decision-makers](#)
9. [Council as a workplace](#)
10. [Council as a service provider](#)
11. [Council as a community connector](#)
12. [The role of community spaces and places](#)



For more information on actions that local government can take to
promote gender equality and prevent violence against women go to:
<https://localgov.ourwatch.org.au/localgovtoolkit/>

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.
Visit www.dss.gov.au for more information.



Fact sheet 1.

Violence against women



Introduction

This series of 12 fact sheets has been developed by Our Watch in conjunction with the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and all state and territory local government associations. We acknowledge and thank all representatives for their input and guidance into their development. In particular, we acknowledge the generosity of the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) for sharing resources they have previously created as a basis for the development of these fact sheets.

These fact sheets provide an overview of and introduction to the role that local government can play in the primary prevention of violence against women. They are relevant for councils and council staff at various stages of their prevention work. For more detailed information about the role of council in prevention, visit Our Watch's [Prevention toolkit for local government](#). At times, language and concepts that are specific to the work of preventing violence against women, and gender equality are used. For more in-depth definitions of these and other relevant terms, see the glossary of terms on page 133 of [Change the story](#).

What is violence against women and how prevalent is it?

The term 'violence against women' encompasses different types of violence, including domestic and family violence, intimate partner violence, sexual

harassment and sexual assault. It includes physical, sexual, financial, social, emotional, psychological, spiritual and technological abuse, and stalking. Non-physical abuse is common, but can be harder to recognise, and is often not well understood. See ABC Everyday, '[Explaining coercive control in abusive relationships](#)' and Relationships Australia, [What is coercive control?](#)

Violence against women is far too common. It has widespread and significant effects for women across all communities. On average, one woman a week is killed in Australia by her intimate partner or ex-partner (while others are killed by men who are not intimate partners), and approximately four in five victims killed by an intimate partner are women.¹ Homicide is a tragic and visible aspect of violence against women, but the issue goes much deeper. In Australia, police deal with a family violence matter on average every two minutes². In addition:

- 1 in 3 women report experiencing physical or sexual violence, or both, from a man they know
- 1 in 4 women has experienced emotional abuse by a partner
- 1 in 2 women has experienced sexual harassment
- 1 in 5 women has experienced sexual violence.³
- Intimate partner violence is the greatest health risk factor for women aged 18 to 44 and contributes more to the burden of disease than any other risk factor.⁴

¹ Fitz-Gibbon, K., & Segrave, M. (2021, 1 March). [A woman is still being killed each week in Australia. We need federal leadership](#). *Guardian*.

² Blumer, C. (2015, 5 June). [Australian police deal with a domestic violence matter every two minutes](#). ABC News.

³ ANROWS. (2018). [Violence against women: Accurate use of key statistics](#).

⁴ Ayre J., Lum On, M., Webster K., & Moon, L. (2016). [Examination of the burden of disease of intimate partner violence against women: Final report, 2011](#). (ANROWS Horizons, 06/2016). ANROWS; Webster, K. (2016). [A preventable burden: Measuring and addressing the prevalence and health impacts of intimate partner violence in Australian women](#). (ANROWS Compass, 07/2016). ANROWS.



We say that violence is gendered because the patterns of perpetration and victimisation differ between genders. In addition, 95% of violence experienced by people of any gender is perpetrated by men.⁵

[Fact sheet 6](#) contains suggestions for where to find up-to-date statistics on the prevalence of violence.

What are the impacts of violence against women?

Violence against women has significant and ongoing impacts on individuals, families and communities. Children can be impacted by family violence even before birth, and early exposure to family violence can cause lifelong physical and mental health issues.⁶ Victim-survivors of violence can experience a raft of physical, psychological and financial impacts, some lifelong. While not all women will experience violence in their lifetime, most live with the daily threat of violence, and are taught, as girls, how to avoid being victims of violence. For more information about some of the impacts of violence against women, see:

- Our Watch's Prevention in Action website – [What is violence against women?](#)
- ANROWS – Fast facts – [Impacts of family, domestic and sexual violence](#)
- ANROWS poster displaying [how intimate partner violence affects quality of life](#)
- a wheel displaying [how violence affects children](#).

How does gender inequality drive violence?

[Change the story](#) is Australia's shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women. It identifies that gender inequality creates the social context in which violence against women occurs. There are four types of gender inequality that are linked to higher levels of violence against women. These are known as the **gendered drivers (causes) of violence**. For more information on the role that gender plays in violence, see [Fact sheet 3](#) and watch the [Change the story video](#).

Gendered violence isn't the same for everyone

While gender inequality drives the widespread violence experienced by Australian women, not everyone experiences this in the same way. Other inequalities and power imbalances affect how different women experience violence and whether they have access to adequate supports. This is linked to discrimination in the forms of colonialism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism and classism. Because of this, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disabilities and trans women are more likely to experience violence and the violence they experience is likely to be more severe.⁷ Prevention work must be intersectional and consider the diverse lived experiences and inequalities experienced by different women. Watch a short explanatory video on '[what is intersectionality](#)' and the importance of intersectional approaches to equality work.

The gendered drivers of violence against women

Driver 1.

Condoning of violence against women

Driver 2.

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

Driver 3.

Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity

Driver 4.

Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control

⁵ Diemer, K. (2015). ABS Personal Safety Survey: Additional analysis on relationship and sex of perpetrator. University of Melbourne.

⁶ Davey, M. (2015, 14 July). [Family violence can affect children even before birth, Royal Commission told](#). *Guardian*; Murdoch Children's Research Institute. (2021, 21 April). [Children exposed to intimate partner violence twice as likely to have poorer language skills and mental and physical health](#). Institute News.

⁷ Our Watch, [Quick facts](#).



Fact sheet 2.

Prevention of violence against women



What is primary prevention?

Primary prevention aims to stop violence against women before it starts. It addresses the drivers (causes) of violence, rather than the effects. This approach seeks to transform the social behaviours, attitudes and beliefs that uphold gender inequality. [Change the story](#) is a national framework that identifies **eight essential actions** needed to address the gendered drivers of violence and prevent violence against women.

Primary prevention sits alongside other approaches to addressing violence against women. For example, response and recovery approaches support individuals who have already experienced or used violence. Early intervention targets groups who are at higher risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence. **Primary prevention is a whole-of-population approach that works across multiple levels and settings in society.**

These approaches are closely linked and mutually reinforcing. Local governments that work in a number of different ways across their community are well-placed to act on primary prevention.

ACTION 1.
ESSENTIAL
Challenge the condoning of violence against women

ACTION 2.
ESSENTIAL
Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships

ACTION 3.
ESSENTIAL
Build new social norms that foster personal identities not constrained by rigid gender stereotypes

ACTION 4.
ESSENTIAL
Support men and boys to develop healthy masculinities and positive, supportive male peer relationships

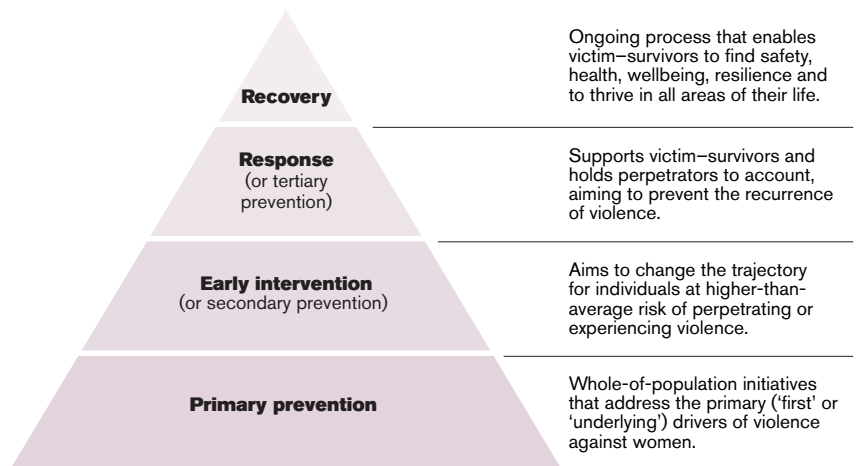
ACTION 5.
ESSENTIAL
Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life

ACTION 6.
ESSENTIAL
Address the intersections between gender inequality and other forms of systemic and structural oppression and discrimination, and promote broader social justice

ACTION 7.
ESSENTIAL
Build safe, fair and equitable organisations and institutions by focusing on policy and systems change

ACTION 8.
ESSENTIAL
Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys, in public and private spheres

Eight essential actions to address the gendered drivers of violence and change the social context in which it occurs



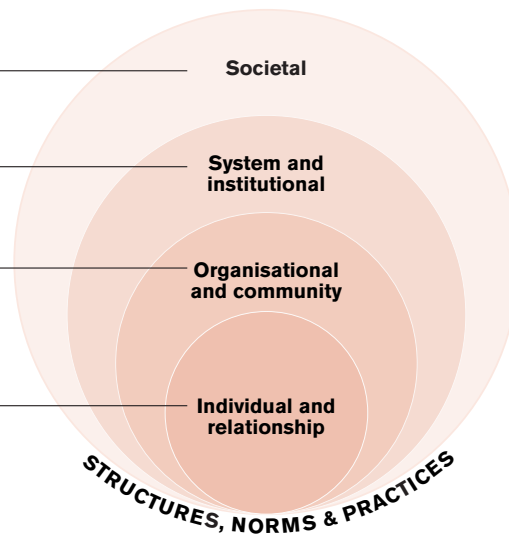
The relationship between primary prevention and other work to address violence against women



The socio-ecological model of violence against women

Examples of structures, norms and practices found to increase the probability of violence against women, at different levels of the social ecology.

Dominant social norms supporting rigid roles and stereotyping, or condoning, excusing and downplaying violence against women.
Failure of systems, institutions and policies to promote women's economic, legal and societal autonomy, or to adequately address violence against women.
Organisation and community norms, structures and practices supporting or failing to address gender inequality, stereotyping, discrimination and violence.
Individual adherence to rigid gender roles and identities, weak support for gender equality, social learning of violence against women, male dominance and controlling behaviours in relationships.



What do we mean by a 'whole-of' approach?

Primary prevention activities work to challenge and transform gender inequality across all levels of society and across a range of settings in which people live, learn, work, socialise and play. Because gender inequality is enforced by social structures, norms and practices, it must be addressed across whole populations. (See the diagram above for examples of structures, norms and practices that increase the probability of violence against women.)

'Whole-of' approaches are highly desirable when developing municipal strategies for the prevention of violence against women. Local government can take a whole-of-council, whole-of-workplace and whole-of-community approach to primary prevention that seeks to engage everyone in the population, community, organisation, association or group. These approaches recognise that change is complex and requires multiple actions, including policy, practice and structural change.

Effective violence prevention can be slow-moving and requires action over the long term.

While a whole-of-community approach might not be feasible for councils that have only recently started to work on the primary prevention of violence against women, early-stage prevention initiatives can be a simple first step. [Fact sheet 5](#) has ideas on how to start small and get the ball rolling.

See MAV's [Local government guide for preventing family violence and all forms of violence against women](#), which takes a whole-of-council approach to embedding primary prevention initiatives.

What are gender norms, practices and structures, and how are they relevant?

Gender norms are ideas, attitudes, beliefs, values or 'rules' about how girls and boys, women and men *should* think, behave and act. People learn these 'rules' early in life. **Practices** represent the ways these norms are acted out in everyday life, and **structures** refer to systems, policies and laws that direct our behaviour. These dominant and restrictive ideas perpetuate gender inequality across our society.

Examples of **gender norms** include the belief that women should be the primary carers of children, and the expectation that 'boys don't cry'. **Practices** could include women taking on a disproportionate amount of low-paid or voluntary caring work, and differences in childrearing practices for boys and girls. **Structures** include pay differences between men and women, and jobs traditionally held by women being paid less than jobs traditionally held by men.¹ Together, these position men as having power over women. Primary prevention activities seek to challenge and transform gender norms, practices and structures that entrench gender inequality.

¹ Our Watch. (n.d.). [The link between gender inequality and violence against women](#). Our Watch.



Fact sheet 3.

Why gender matters



What is gender?

Gender and sex are different concepts that can be incorrectly interchanged.¹ Sex is assigned at birth (female/male) based on a set of biological features. Gender refers to the roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that are learned and considered appropriate for women and men, girls and boys (for example, blue is for boys, pink is for girls; boys shouldn't cry and should be tough while girls should be caring and pretty). Gender expectations vary between cultures and can change over time.²

The [Genderbread Person](#) is a helpful teaching tool for breaking the big concept of gender down into bite-sized, digestible pieces.

Femininity and 'feminine' traits are often treated as inferior to masculinity and 'masculine' traits. Likewise, men who express 'feminine' traits or women who express 'masculine' traits can be put down. For example, in many cultures, nurturing and caring are valued as feminine traits and considered necessary for mothers to display, while fathers are expected to be the breadwinners, and stoic. Men are encouraged to be assertive leaders, while women who display these attributes can be referred to as 'bossy' or 'aggressive'. These social roles can create inequality, such as when decision-making and financial control rests only with men, in the family unit or in workplaces.

What is gender inequality?

Gender inequality is the unequal value afforded to men and women and the unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunity between them. It has its origins in historical and contemporary laws,

policies and social norms that have constrained the rights and opportunities of women. Women and men generally experience different access to resources, power and decision-making opportunities, and different responsibilities and benefits. Gender stereotypes continue to be perpetuated and reinforced at all levels of society through our structures, practices and social norms. While some of these have changed in recent times, others continue in both formal and informal ways.

Gender *equality* seeks to transform these differences and its goal is equal outcomes for everyone. Gender *equity*, on the other hand, relates to the processes required to achieve this equality. Challenging conventional understandings of gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality is an essential part of preventing violence against women.

Why is language important?

These fact sheets mostly use binary language that assumes only two categories of sex and gender. While neither sex nor gender exist in set categories, this language sits within current community understandings. For this reason, binary language can frame discussions about violence against women, as it conveys the overwhelmingly gendered nature and dynamics of violence perpetration and victimisation.³ Nevertheless, it's important to acknowledge that there are people whose experiences and identities are not captured by binary language. Where possible, we should use inclusive language that does not reinforce gender binaries to reflect the experiences of those who do not fall within a binary framing⁴ for example, gender diverse people⁵.

¹ Gahagan, J. (2021, 14 July). [The difference between sex and gender, and why both matter in health research](#). *The Conversation*.

² Our Watch. (2021). [Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia](#) (2nd edn). Our Watch.

³ Our Watch. (2021). *Change the story*.

⁴ Our Watch. (2021). *Change the story*.

⁵ See - [Men in focus evidence review](#), glossary pg 102 for a definition of gender diverse



Likewise, language used to describe violence against women often focuses on the experiences of those who are cisgender and heterosexual. While there is significant overlap between the drivers (causes) of violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people and the drivers of violence against women, there are also unique and additional factors driving this violence. This relates to how LGBTIQ bodies, people and relationships are seen as less valid, healthy or worthy in our society.⁶ See Rainbow Health Australia's [Pride in Prevention Messaging Guide](#) for information on how to support communications and engagement in preventing family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities.

What role does gender play in violence?

We say that violence is gendered because 95% of violence experienced by people of any gender is perpetrated by men.⁷ In addition, women and men's experience of violence is very different, based on their gender. Also, higher levels of violence against women are consistently associated with lower levels of gender equality in both public life and personal relationships.⁸ It is in this way that gender inequality provides the social context in which violence against women occurs.

How can men play a role in prevention?

Not all men perpetrate violence. But the attitudes, actions and inactions of men that condone or ignore violence, put women down or perpetuate gender inequality are a significant part of the problem. Often without realising it, and to varying degrees, men are privileged by, benefit from and participate in the structures, norms and practices that drive gender inequality and, in turn, men's violence against

women. Men (and some women) remain complicit in the problem when they do nothing to challenge and transform gender inequality and the drivers of violence against women, and continue to benefit from them. For more information about engaging men in prevention efforts, see [Men in focus practice guide: Addressing masculinities and working with men in the prevention of men's violence against women](#).

How can councils prevent violence against women?

Councils are uniquely placed to influence people's lives where they live, learn, work, socialise and play, from the early years to old age. They play a critical role in supporting different communities to thrive and experience good quality of life. Councils can help to prevent violence against women through promoting gender equality and addressing the drivers of violence against women – see [Fact sheet 1](#) for more information. Councils can start with simple actions to advance gender equality, such as an assessment of internal culture, policies, services and facilities. This analysis is referred to as 'applying a gender lens', or a gender audit. It can reveal where there are differences in attitudes towards women and men and the opportunities afforded to them.

Acknowledging these differences and challenging discriminatory practices are all important to prevention work. See [Fact sheet 4](#) for more information on council's role in preventing violence against women. [Fact sheet 5](#) contains guidance for councils that are newer to this work.

An example of applying a gender lens is Horsham Rural City Council's (Vic) [gender impact assessment](#) of their Community Grants Program, to improve access for people of diverse genders and identities.

⁶ Carman, M., Fairchild, J., Parsons, M., Farrugia, C., Power, J., & Bourne, A. (2020). [Pride in Prevention: A guide to primary prevention of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities](#). Rainbow Health Victoria, La Trobe University.

⁷ Diemer, K. (2015). ABS Personal Safety Survey: Additional analysis on relationship and sex of perpetrator. University of Melbourne.

⁸ Our Watch. (2021). *Change the story*.



Fact sheet 4.

The role of local government in preventing violence against women



Preventing violence against women is everyone's responsibility and requires commitment from all levels of government, different sectors, and members of the community.¹ As the closest level of government to the community, local government is uniquely placed to prevent violence against women.

What are the benefits of prevention for local government?

Local governments play an important role in enhancing the health, connectedness and safety of every resident in their community. This role aligns with the goal that all women, families and communities live free from violence. In addition to this, councils benefit from engaging in prevention by:

- achieving an accessible, inclusive and productive workplace culture by implementing gender equality policies and practices, making councils better places for everyone to work in
- becoming an employer of choice, appealing to a wider range of prospective employees
- increasing the capacity of women from diverse backgrounds to enter senior roles, thereby bringing new perspectives to leadership that can help councils be agile, effective and responsive
- improving community representation and civic participation in council decision-making
- reducing socioeconomic barriers for many community members through more equitable programming, planning and resource distribution
- complying with legislative reforms such as [Respect@Work](#)

- increasing community trust as councils become better able to meet community needs and the expectation of equality for all genders, ages, identities and abilities.

The cost of violence against women and their children in Australia was calculated at \$22 billion in 2015–16.² Therefore, preventing violence against women also has significant financial benefits. There is much evidence that when women are given equal opportunity to participate, community and economic wellbeing increases.³

How can councils play a role in prevention?

A key way to create a culture that is safe, respectful and inclusive for councillors and council staff and the whole community is to consider how council decisions, policies, programs and services will meet the needs of women, men and gender diverse people. This can easily be included in normal processes for developing policies, programs and services that impact communities and council itself as a workplace. As outlined in MAV's [Local government guide for preventing family violence and all forms of violence against women](#), councils have four domains of influence to prevent violence against women. These are:

- council leadership and decision-makers
- council as a service provider
- council as a workplace
- council as a community connector.

Each of these domains is showcased in more detail in Fact sheets 8–11.

¹ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (2019). [Fourth Action Plan—National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022](#)

² Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (2016). [The cost of violence against women and their children in Australia: Final report.](#)

³ Workplace Gender Equality Agency. (2018). [Workplace gender equality: The business case.](#)



What are some practical actions that councils can take?

Practical actions that councils can take include:

- elected representatives and executive leaders showing leadership and modelling gender equality through their language, actions and decisions
- developing and implementing council policies, services, programs and partnerships that focus on gender equality and utilise a [gender lens](#)
- providing guidance and support for community-level prevention, which could include community campaigns, events, grants and other types of social infrastructure
- facilitating community consultations that are accessible to people with a wide range of perspectives, and ensuring that everyone has a way to voice their views (don't assume that certain people should not or do not want to be involved in having a say on a certain issue)
- using data that identifies gender, race, religion, sexuality, disability status and socioeconomic background demographics to address social inequalities in the population that you work with.

These and other steps can help to ensure that council decision-making includes a focus on gender equality, within a wider vision for a safe, thriving and inclusive community.

How can partnerships help in prevention work?

Working together is key to preventing violence against women across Australia. Councils are not expected to be the experts on prevention, they can collaborate with specialist family and domestic violence services and women's organisations to complement and support each other's work. Most councils work with community partners and specialist services to implement council plans and deliver services. This includes, but is not limited to, community-based organisations, contractors, emergency services,

workplaces and business organisations, schools and neighbouring councils. Partnerships can increase reach, relevance and success of prevention initiatives.

Many councils establish their own advisory groups comprising specialist organisations and community members focused on areas including emergency management, disability access, economic development, the environment, positive ageing, multiculturalism, and community wellbeing and safety. These advisory groups can integrate a focus on the essential actions to prevent violence against women. Councils can also establish advisory groups focusing specifically on gender equality.

Examples of prevention in local government

- Our Watch webinar, [Councils and Communities](#) – for staff working across a wide range of areas who have the opportunity to lead and support prevention initiatives in their communities.
- Inner West Council (NSW), [Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan](#) – acknowledges that gender inequality sets the underlying context for domestic and family violence and ensures that gender equity is built into the council's operations, recruitment, planning, policy and strategy work.
- City of Salisbury (SA), [No More Excuses](#) (page 21) – a whole-of-community project where council partnered with local specialists to deliver respectful relationships programs in primary and high schools, and bystander workshops for council staff and community, and conducted a gender equity audit on council policies and workplace culture. They also funded grants for local advocacy and support groups, and programs related to gender equality and preventing violence.
- City of Greater Bendigo (Vic), [Coalition for Gender Equity](#) – a diverse collective of 41 organisations and groups (as at May 2022) in the public, private and community sectors, dedicated to advancing gender equity and the prevention of violence against women.

Fact sheet 5. Getting started



What do I need to know before making a start?

Take time to build your own understanding of violence against women, what drives it and its relation to other inequalities. See [Fact sheets 1](#) and [3](#) for more information. Understanding the facts about the prevalence, impacts and drivers of violence will help to build the case for action. Familiarise yourself with Our Watch resources such as [Change the story](#), [Changing the picture](#) and [Workplace Equality and Respect](#).

It is also important to understand the community you are working with. What are the demographics of the people living in your municipality? Remember that gender inequality and violence is not experienced in the same way by all women (or men) and ensure you take an [intersectional](#) approach to this work. Include demographic data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally diverse backgrounds, people living with disabilities and LGBTIQ people. See profile.id.com.au for community profile information. Consider the ways that discrimination and disadvantage can affect people in the workplace and in their community. Address gender inequality along with other forms of discrimination such as racism, colonialism, ableism, homophobia and religious discrimination.

See Our Watch's [Practice guidance: Equality and respect for all women – an intersectional approach](#).

Who do I involve?

Get leaders and councillors on board and gain council endorsement of, and commitment to, the prevention of violence against women. This could include allocating resources to a primary prevention activity or creating a statement of commitment from council leadership. It may first require gender equality champions within council to work together to present your case collectively.

See the Municipal Association of Victoria's [Prevention of violence against women leadership statement](#).

How do I develop my prevention practice?

Prevention work may be new to many and it will take some time for everyone to understand the role they can play in their position at council. Create opportunities for staff training and professional development. Training providers in each state and territory and nationally include, but are not limited to:

ACT	YWCA Canberra
NSW	Refer to New South Wales Collaboration on Primary Prevention of Gender-Based Violence
NT	Tangentyere Family Violence Prevention Program and Dawn House Incorporated
Qld	WorkUp and Women's Health and Equality Queensland
SA	Working Women's Centre
Tas	Engender Equality
Vic	Safe and Equal and Women's Health Victoria
WA	Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing
Australia-wide	People with Disability Australia Multicultural Centre for Women's Health Rainbow Health Australia Full Stop Australia Our Watch, Prevention in Action



How do I support myself and others when talking about violence?

Undertaking prevention work may prompt disclosures from people who are currently or have previously experienced or used violence. It's normal to feel concerned when someone discloses their experience, and it is important to know the basics of how to respond. For some guidance, refer to Our Watch's practice guide on [responding to disclosures](#) and Safe and Equal's [responding to disclosures](#) resource. Some of the organisations listed on the previous page provide training on responding to disclosures, particularly in the workplace.

Always provide relevant contact numbers for victim-survivors such as [1800RESPECT](#) and your state- or territory-specific referral service for perpetrators of violence. Many councils have trained staff or an EAP service that can support you during the course of this work, if you find it has a personal impact.

What resources are available for local governments?

The Our Watch [Prevention toolkit for local government](#) outlines activities that councils might undertake and it provides examples of council initiatives in primary prevention. Other examples are provided in these fact sheets of successful prevention initiatives undertaken within the [domains of councils' influence](#). Connect with other councils in your region and with your local government association for support and to find out what's already happening.

Where do I start?

Start small and be realistic about what you can achieve. Many councils start with an internal audit of their own policies and culture and begin determining where they can influence awareness and attitudes. Your approach doesn't necessarily need to be a new program or initiative. You can integrate the [essential actions](#) into activities that you are already doing. Choose projects or areas where there are opportunities, resources, interest, community pressure or leverage points. You might even want to start a prevention initiative in a setting where there is little or no activity in your community already. Involve willing participants and tailor your approaches to what works best with your audience. Ideas include:

Running a playgroup aimed at dads, Dads of Moreland (see [MAV GE, PFV and VAW Network](#))

- ensuring that children's books at the library challenge rigid gender stereotypes (see [Beyond Princesses and Pirates](#))
- confirming that toilets and change facilities at council facilities cater to people and parents of all genders and people of all abilities
- observing annual days such as the [International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#) and the [16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence](#)
- promoting public messaging such as the [Doing Nothing Does Harm](#) campaign
- undertaking gender impact assessments or audits drawing on specific tools. See [gender impact assessment toolkit and templates](#).

Change is a slow process. Take one step at a time and then build on it. Celebrate successes. Remember that we can't 'fix' everything – it is about beginning a process of reflection and action. It is about building the capacity and understanding of those you are working with at council and in the community to undertake and continue the work themselves, into the future.

What if I experience resistance?

Backlash and resistance are an inevitable part of prevention work. Resistance shouldn't necessarily be seen as a problem – it can actually be a positive sign that change work is happening, and a useful energy to work with. Consultation to develop appropriate messaging is one important way of reducing resistance, as is using effective interpersonal skills so as to be curious and constructive, without shaming. See Our Watch's [practice guide to dealing with backlash](#); Respect Victoria, [Understanding, monitoring, and responding to resistance and backlash in organisational and institutional settings](#); Eastern Health, EDVOS and QUT, [Engaging men: Reducing resistance and building support](#); Safe and Equal [Facing resistance in your work](#); and VicHealth [\(En\)countering resistance: Strategies to respond to resistance to gender equality initiatives](#).

Women's Health West's [Speaking publicly about preventing men's violence against women: Curly questions and language considerations](#) can help you prepare for common responses when speaking about preventing violence against women and gender equality.



Fact sheet 6.

Communicating the issue and raising awareness



Preventing violence against women involves challenging and transforming deeply embedded practices and structures that reinforce gender inequality, as well as changing deeply held individual beliefs and actions.

What are the messages that we need to get across?

If constructed carefully, messages about preventing violence against women, and the role that everyone can play in this, can be very effective in motivating individuals, organisations and communities to take action. However, if not framed well, our messages can be unintentionally harmful and entrench unhelpful attitudes. Key messages to communicate include:

- *why* violence against women is an important issue
- *why* action needs to be taken
- *how* everyone, including councils, can play a role in preventing violence against women.

What types of messages are most engaging and effective?

When developing your messages, find a balance between presenting the problem and conveying the solutions and essential actions to prevent violence against women. Think about how you can appeal to the values of people in your community as a way to help build the case for action. Promoting positive and solutions-focused messages about the importance and benefits of preventing violence, and the role that we can all play, allows people to connect with hope for change. See [Fact sheet 4](#) for more on this.

See VicHealth's [Framing gender equality: Message guide](#) and shEqual's [Gender equality in advertising and communications: Guidelines for local government](#) for ideas on communicating your message.

Messaging that is relevant and appealing to your audience might involve promoting **women's rights to respect and safety** and **women and girls being of equal value to men and having a right to equal access and outcomes**. It might involve talking about how **rigid gender stereotypes hold people back, limit their opportunities in life and reduce their health and wellbeing**. Think about the best ways to get people on board within your local context. Test your messages with a sample group before finalising them.

For examples of ways that councils can share positive messages in support of taking action to prevent violence against women download the communications templates from the [Prevention toolkit for local government](#).

How can I engage people to prevent violence against women?

Communicating the nature and the extent of violence against women might be an important first step in councils' prevention work, and can build the case for council to take action. Many people in council and in the community may be surprised to learn how commonly women experience different forms of violence, and they may not know what behaviours and actions constitute violence against women, and what drives this violence. People in council and in the community might need to know:

- **what violence against women is and how prevalent it is**
- **its impacts on individuals, families and communities**
- **the drivers (causes) of this violence** and that **this violence is preventable**
- **the essential actions we can all take** to stop it from happening in the first place.



Particularly for men, it can be eye-opening and shocking to learn about all the things that women and girls do (and are told to do) in order to stay safe from violence. Placing responsibility on men to stop the perpetration of violence, rather than putting the responsibility on women to protect themselves from violence, is an example of an essential action to challenge the condoning of violence against women.

It's important to understand the evidence in order to be prepared to address commonly held myths and misunderstandings about why violence against women occurs. Helpful resources include:

- [Fact sheet 1](#) and [Fact sheet 2](#) for more information.
- a detailed definition of [violence against women](#)
- 1800RESPECT, [What does domestic and family violence involve?](#)
- Our Watch, [Unpacking violence: A storytelling resource for understanding nonphysical forms of abuse and the gendered drivers of violence against women.](#)

For the most up-to-date data on the prevalence of violence against women:

- Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), [Violence against women: Accurate use of key statistics](#)
- Our Watch, [Quick facts](#)
- Safe and Equal, [Family violence statistics.](#)

Support for people who have experienced violence

Always include referral information to relevant support services for people who have had or are having personal experiences of violence against women. [1800RESPECT](#) is a good starting point for victim-survivors of violence. Promote your state- or territory-based service for men who choose to perpetrate violence. [Fact sheet 5](#) includes links to help you prepare to respond to disclosures.

Case studies

- [Whitsunday Regional Council](#) and [Mount Isa City Council](#) (Qld) participate in the domestic violence awareness campaign [Red Bench Relay](#).
- Wollongong City Council (NSW), [I Belong in the Gong](#), is a community safety campaign tackling anti-social behaviour and encouraging inclusion for all, particularly women from diverse backgrounds.
- North Sydney and Willoughby City Council, in partnership with the Lower North Shore Domestic Violence Network (NSW), have a youth-produced podcast: [Mates and Dates](#).
- Randwick, Waverley, Woollahra and Bayside Councils (NSW) have the [We're Better Than That campaign](#) and [Facebook page](#). It uses a strengths-based approach that supports men to communicate effectively, reach out for help when they need it and be an active bystander.
- Victorian councils [participated](#) in the [2020 16 Days of Activism campaign](#), including Surf Coast Shire's [Respect Is ... video campaign](#).
- [Communities free from violence – local government leading change](#) case studies (2018–22).
- Kingborough Council (Tas), with other greater Hobart councils, promoted the [Doing Nothing Does Harm](#) campaign as a part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.
- City of Charles Sturt (SA) used art to raise awareness of the impacts of domestic and family violence as community capacity building in the [Act of Love project](#) and [The Clothesline Project](#).
- Moreton Bay Regional Council (Qld) launched the [Recognise and Reach Out](#) prevention campaign, developed in collaboration with the Moreton Bay Domestic and Family Violence Network.

Despite our best efforts, resistance can be a normal response to communicating new and complex ideas and challenging the status quo. [Fact sheet 5](#) has more information on dealing with backlash and resistance.



Fact sheet 7. Embedding prevention of violence against women into council business



Every area of council can play a role in the long-term systemic and cultural change needed to prevent violence against women. A [‘whole-of’](#) approach to prevention means taking coordinated and complementary actions across different levels of council and the community, seeking changes at the personal, organisational and community levels. Ways to prevent violence against women in the [four domains that council can influence](#) are interwoven throughout these fact sheets. Fact sheets [8](#), [9](#), [10](#) and [11](#) respectively are dedicated to each domain. Different ways that council can embed prevention of violence against women into its core business include the following.

Getting your house in order

You may need to build your council’s internal capacity to prevent violence against women and promote gender equality. This might include training, building awareness of the causes (drivers) of violence against women and skilling up internal advocates to lead the work. Councils can create action teams made up of staff able to lead activities on preventing violence against women. See MAV’s booklet [Communities free from violence](#) for information about [Yarra Ranges Council](#) and [Nillumbik Shire Councils’](#) gender equity advocates programs.

Leadership engagement

See [Fact sheet 5](#) and [Fact sheet 8](#) for more ideas on getting leadership on board with your council’s prevention work.

Community consultation

Ensure your community consultation framework includes processes that consider and document the needs and perspectives of women and men from diverse backgrounds, with diverse needs.

Strategy and policy

Local government provides multiple opportunities to embed the essential actions to prevent violence against women into policy and practice. Councils’ strategic documents, such as the council plan or health and wellbeing plan, are increasingly expressing a commitment to gender equality as a key prevention strategy. These strategic documents allow annual reporting and provide the opportunity to reflect on, measure and build on the effectiveness of actions. More specific council strategies and policies, such as the [youth strategy](#), [sport and recreation strategy](#), [community safety strategy](#), [emergency management](#) or [early years plan](#), also provide scope to include tailored actions into these functions of council.

Raising awareness

There are many opportunities to raise awareness and promote consistent messages about councils’ commitment to preventing violence against women, internally and in the community. Ensure messages are expressed in accessible language with translations as required. See [Fact sheet 6](#) for more ideas.



Human resources

Many council employees have access to family violence policies and/or leave provisions for women experiencing family violence in their Enterprise Bargaining Agreements. Encourage staff to participate in free online e-learning provided by [DV-alert](#) to build understanding about family violence. Include messages and initiatives about the prevention of violence against women in staff induction or orientation sessions. For an example of a free, publicly available prevention and response induction pack developed by a consortium of Victorian councils in conjunction with the MAV, see [Liberate for Equality](#).

Local laws

There is a strong link between family and domestic violence and the abuse and neglect of animals.¹ Your council can include provisions in your animal management strategy for accommodating pets when a woman needs to go to a refuge. Ensure your local laws officers know how to identify violence and make appropriate referrals to family and domestic violence organisations. Contact [FVREE](#) or your local state- or territory-based domestic and family violence training provider for information on the most appropriate training for staff, and see [Fact sheet 5](#) for suggestions. In addition to training, and supporting the housing of animals during periods of relocation, strategies could include updating policies and operating procedures and developing partnerships with the local Police Family Violence Unit.

Sustainability and long-term nature of the work

Short-term, project-by-project approaches to primary prevention will not have a lasting effect. A consistent, coordinated and sustained approach across all sectors and all levels of government is required to change attitudes, practices, structures and norms. Longer-term funding ensures that activities are embedded across the council and are more likely to be sustained.

Measuring progress and celebrating success

A key part of successful implementation of prevention initiatives is monitoring progress, measuring outcomes, celebrating successes and capturing learnings along the way. Celebrating even the small wins can be motivating and important. Working with your team to set realistic expectations of what is achievable with current resources, and developing a plan accordingly, will support sustainability.

Councils may be new to formal monitoring and evaluation related to gender equality and preventing violence against women. During the development of your activity, consider how you will define success, what it is you hope to achieve, and how you will measure your progress. Consider whether there are existing processes within council that already measure similar outcomes that the team can build upon or utilise, such as staff or community satisfaction surveys. Consider how the team will celebrate success and share learnings.

Case studies

- Information about a range of prevention initiatives funded by the Victorian government 2018–2020 grants program – [Communities free from violence: local government leading change report and video](#).
- Blue Mountains City Council (NSW) – [Gender Equity Strategy 2021–2026](#), to raise awareness and promote gender equity across the organisation and in the wider community.
- Mornington Peninsula Shire (Vic) – [Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2030](#), outlining principles, strategies and actions in their community, their workplace and the services they offer.
- Merri-bek City Council (Vic) – [Gender Equality Commitment](#), promoting equality and inclusion through collaboration across council and partnerships with organisations and the community.

¹ Domestic Violence NSW. (2020). [Animals and people experiencing domestic and family violence](#).



Fact sheet 8.

Council leadership and decision-makers



Leadership in local government is crucial to prevent violence against women. Leadership support helps to get the issue on your council's agenda and to keep it there. Leaders can be councillors, senior or middle managers, or council officers who are passionate and informed about the issue and can garner support and motivate people. They can reinforce prevention messages in their teams, within their networks and in their communities and look for opportunities to implement initiatives and strategies.

The role of council leadership in prevention

The role of council leadership in the primary prevention of violence against women involves:

- being leaders, influencers and, importantly, decision makers
- working with community and responding to community needs and concerns
- advocating externally, including to other tiers of government, to continue to promote and leverage the work that's currently underway, and for future funding opportunities
- modelling positive, inclusive and respectful behaviour and leadership.

Leadership support is critical in working towards preventing violence against women and in having gender equality adopted and embedded into key policies such as the council plan and health and wellbeing plans.

The role-modelling and leadership of elected members plays a critical role in councils' responsibility for the prevention of violence against women. It complements their roles as community leaders and councils' leadership role in this area. Positive, equal and respectful relationships and behaviours should be modelled by leaders, and any disrespectful conduct in the chamber – particularly sexism, sexual harassment,

racism or bullying – should be addressed using appropriate bystander interventions and through the development and implementation of supporting policies and processes.

Given the unique and critical role that the council CEO plays as the interface between the political leadership of council and council staff, securing the commitment of a CEO to support gender equality and violence prevention initiatives is vital. This can ensure commitment of resources and responsibility to do the work across the council, which can lead to more effective and sustainable outcomes.

Local government promoting women's leadership

Despite being just over half of the population, women are often absent or underrepresented in leadership roles, management positions and positions of power, including in local government. This contributes to one of the gendered drivers of violence against women: Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life. The voices and perspectives of women with diverse backgrounds and life experiences are essential to ensure that policy, planning and decision-making best reflect the diversity of communities across Australia.

However, without processes designed to increase women's involvement in decision-making, women will continue to be unequally represented in leadership positions in the community, government and business sectors. Local government is in a unique position to encourage and foster women's leadership, equal representation and decision-making, both within their organisation and through their work with the community, and to provide women with a greater capacity to participate in the development and implementation of legislation, policies and services that affect their lives.

Some suggested activities include:

- reviewing women's representation on council and council committees and establishing annual targets and timelines for achieving gender equity
- setting up a council committee with responsibility for increasing women's participation and/or creating a resourced gender equality portfolio led by a councillor and supported by council officers
- establishing and resourcing a mentoring program involving newly elected women councillors, senior women executives and women officers
- establishing links and partnerships with women leaders and representatives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women with disabilities and LGBTIQ communities, to encourage their participation and leadership
- ensuring that diverse groups of women have the opportunity to participate on council and community decision-making bodies by identifying and rectifying any exclusion barriers – for example, meeting times, lack of childcare, inaccessible venues or lack of transportation.

Case studies

- Our Watch webinar – [Leading the primary prevention of violence against women in local government](#), for councillors and executive staff who have the opportunity to lead initiatives to prevent violence against women in their communities.
- Councillor Chontelle Stone from the City of Cockburn (WA), and president of the Australian Local Government Women's Association WA branch, speaking in the [Building Support in Prevention Violence in WA](#) webinar on why having women in leadership roles helps prevent violence against women.
- [Not in Our Backyard](#) – Queensland's 77 mayors were invited to demonstrate their councils' commitment to addressing domestic and family violence by capturing a photo or a video of themselves with a pledge sign. These pledges featured on the Local Government Association of Queensland website and councils' social media platforms. Support for this campaign sent a strong message to the community that domestic violence will not be tolerated, and that local government is committed to supporting efforts to eradicate it.
- City of Adelaide (SA) – the [I'm Not OK With That](#) campaign featured prominent South Australian leaders in government, business and community speaking about the importance of taking bystander action to prevent violence against women. The campaign also included free bystander workshops delivered to the community.
- City of Mandurah (WA) – this council developed an internal communications plan for staff to better understand their reasons for undertaking domestic and family violence prevention work. Council leadership modelled commitment from the top. [City of Mandurah signs Peel Says No to Violence Pledge for third consecutive year.](#)
- LaTrobe City Council (Vic) – the [Gender Equality Leadership Statement and Action Plan](#) acknowledges council's important leadership role in promoting gender equality within its local community.
- Municipal Association Victoria – the [Women in local government](#) webpage contains information about the Women's Charter and a video of 100 years of women in local government.
- The Victorian [Women Leading Locally](#) program.
- See Our Watch's [Prevention toolkit for local government](#) for more information on setting up a local government working group and engaging leaders in your local government.

Fact sheet 9. Council as a workplace



Local government comprises a significant workforce, with almost 200,000 people employed in 537 councils across Australia, the majority of which (55%) are rural, regional or remote.¹ Most people employed in councils also live locally and have capacity to influence change beyond their workplaces in their communities – for example, in sports clubs, schools and faith-based settings.²

Gender inequality in the workplace

While women's participation in paid employment has increased in recent decades, many gender inequalities continue. Women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions, they experience pay discrimination,³ and workplace gender discrimination and sexual harassment remain significant problems.⁴ As a workplace that connects directly with communities and other levels of government, councils should internally reflect equality and respect in order to support their communities to do so.

Workplace Equality and Respect Standards in local government

Our Watch's [Workplace Equality and Respect](#) resource offers a step-by-step process to guide organisational change to promote and embed gender equality. Below is a brief overview of the five standards that all organisations can work towards, particularly as they apply to the council context.

1. Commitment:

Councils demonstrate an ongoing commitment to workplace gender equality and preventing sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence. Ways they can do this include:

- securing the commitment of elected representatives, CEO and leadership
- dedicating adequate time, staffing and financial resources to prevention work
- developing internal and external communications and campaigns, commitment statements, strategies and action plans.

Examples

- City of Melton (Vic) – [Equality and Respect 2030 Strategy](#)
- City of Ballarat (Vic) – [Prevention of violence and gender equality leadership statement](#)
- Townsville City Council (Qld) – [completion of White Ribbon Australia accreditation.](#)

2. Conditions:

Councils apply an intersectional gender lens to their workplace policies and practices to ensure they are fair and equitable. This can include: reviewing and developing relevant workplace policies and strategies that embed gender equality; unconscious bias training for all staff involved in recruitment; benchmarking and monitoring gender equality indicators against clear goals and targets; and flexible work policies, including parental leave for all parents and carers.

Case study

Bass Coast Shire Council (Vic) removed the difference between primary and secondary carers in its [Equal Parental Leave](#) policy, meaning that mothers, fathers and same-sex partners are now entitled to the same paid leave. The council also set a new industry standard by increasing paid parental leave from 14 to 16 weeks.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020–21). [Employment and earnings, public sector, Australia](#); Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). (2018). [Local government workforce and future skills report Australia.](#)

² ALGA. (2021). [ALGA's position on domestic violence and our call for dedicated funding.](#)

³ Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA). (2022). [Gender pay gap data.](#)

⁴ Judd, B. (2021, 1 March). [Sexual harassment affects workplaces across Australia. So what can we do better?](#) ABC News.



Superannuation contributions are also made for everyone on unpaid parental leave for a full year.

See the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's (WGEA) [Designing and supporting gender equitable parental leave](#) for insights into the benefits and impacts of parental leave for men and partners.

3. Culture:

Council promotes a workplace culture where all people feel safe, confident and supported to actively challenge gender bias and discrimination, gender stereotypes and harmful gender norms without adverse consequences. All leaders and council staff are supported with information, training and opportunities to reflect on how stereotypical and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours might be perpetuating the status quo. Internal and external communications use inclusive language and images that proactively challenge stereotypes and harmful gender norms. Feedback from people about their experiences and perspectives is regularly listened to and acted upon.

Case studies

- At the City of Casey (Vic), 16 staff were recruited from different teams in council and trained as **Champions of Change**. Their role was to be advocates for gender equality and prevention by 'putting gender on the agenda' and organising active bystander training for their teams. This has grown into a group of over 60 staff who continue to meet regularly and advocate for gender equality and prevention.
- At Glenelg Shire Council (Vic), the [Gender Equality Plan](#) drives council's leadership and advocacy role in addressing gender inequities as an employer, service provider and community stakeholder.

4. Support:

Councils listen to, respect and support people who experience sexual harassment and gender-based violence (including domestic and family violence) through policies and practices

that consider the impact of trauma. Human Resources, executive leaders and managers ensure there are adequate policies and a workplace culture that effectively supports staff who are experiencing violence. It involves delivery of specialised training; establishing and supporting workplace contact officers; developing family and domestic violence leave and sexual harassment policies; and partnering with specialist family and domestic violence organisations.

Our Watch's [Workplace support for staff who experience family violence](#) provides information and examples of policy and practice, as well as examples of what to include in enterprise agreements.

Case studies

- Darebin City Council (Vic) developed [a video](#) outlining their commitment to supporting staff who experience family violence and creating a workplace that is respectful and non-violent.
- The City of Parramatta (NSW) [2022–2025 Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan](#) outlines how council will respond to, and prevent, domestic and family violence within the workplace and the community. This includes training for staff and establishing a working group which works across council to increase prevention capacity.
- See MAV's [council produced resources](#) for examples of policies, strategies and plans.

5. Our business:

Councils promote intersectional gender equality in their external engagement with customers, stakeholders and the community. This standard asks councils to use their reach and influence within communities to apply a gender lens to their partnerships, programs, services and functions in a way that reflects council's commitment to promoting gender equality. Council regularly and publicly reports on their performance against gender equality indicators and their prevention of violence efforts.



Fact sheet 10. Council as a service provider



Councils provide a wide range of services and facilities in partnership with the local community, state and federal government, and other agencies. These include property, economic, human, recreational and cultural services. Councils are also responsible for assets and infrastructure including roads, bridges, drains, town halls, libraries, sport and recreation facilities, community centres, kindergartens and childcare centres. Councils have a role in enforcing state and local laws for environment, public health, traffic, land use planning and animal management. They have significant reach within the community and can use a gender equality lens when planning, implementing and evaluating programs and services.

Why gender is relevant to accessing local government services

Gender affects women and men's experiences of accessing local government services. Other factors such as age, disability, ethnicity, cultural and religious background, socioeconomic status and literacy also shape people's ability to access and use services. Barriers include, but aren't limited to, inaccessible venues; council services or activities being held at times or venues that are not family-friendly or perceived to be safe; communications that use wording or images that unintentionally indicate they are only for one part of the community; and services and programs that promote rigid gender stereotypes. Considering gender and other intersecting factors is crucial when designing services that meet the needs of all people in the community and promote inclusion and equity.

Examples of how local government can advance gender equality through services include the following.

Sport and recreation

Rigid gender stereotypes continue to shape society's attitudes and expectations about what sports people should be interested in and play, including the idea that some sports are feminine or masculine. While women's participation in sport and recreation is increasing, inequalities remain. Councils have the power to influence gender equality in their provision of a wide range of sports and recreation programs and services and infrastructure, and with local sporting organisations through their contractual relationships. Councils can promote and support the participation of women and girls at all levels – as players, coaches, administrators and umpires. Councils can work in partnership and support local sports clubs to promote gender equality and respect through their club cultures, policies and communications. They can undertake an audit of programs and identify opportunities to ensure services and facilities are inclusive of all people – see [Fact sheet 12](#) for more information. Examples include:

- Merri-bek City Council (Vic) – the [Active Women and Girls Strategy](#) addresses inclusivity of women and girls, people with a disability, and people from culturally diverse communities in sport.
- City of Moonee Valley (Vic) – the [Ready, Set, Equity! project](#) aims to increase the visibility, profile, representation and participation of girls and women at all levels of sport.

Early years

Nillumbik Shire Council (Vic) – the [Gender Equity in the Early Years policy](#) recognises the important role that early years services play in promoting gender equity and preventing violence against women.

This sample policy can be adopted, adapted and used by early years services to inspire their own service-specific policies and work in promoting gender equity. Other examples include: City of Darebin (Vic), [Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years](#) project outline and [resource for local government; Level Playground](#), which encourages children to develop personal identities that reflect their true selves and enables them to create healthy, safe and respectful relationships; and Our Watch, [Because Why](#) should gender stereotypes limit our children?

Maternal and child health

Healthability's [Baby Makes 3](#) promotes equality in parenting by increasing the capacity of maternal and child health services to integrate gender equality principles, practices and structures so they can support new parents in ways that challenge rigid gender expectations of parenting. An example of this initiative in Victoria is [Baby Makes 3 in the City of Melton](#). An example of challenging gender stereotypes by creating inclusive parenting groups is from Merri-bek City Council (Vic), [Dads of Moreland](#).

Youth services

A respectful relationships campaign to promote healthy and equal relationships between young people and to reinforce understandings of consent can be developed and delivered by engaging with young people, local partners and a youth advisory group. [Active bystander](#) training can be delivered to encourage young people to take bystander action when they see disrespectful behaviours. Council can support positive male peer relations by working with young men on healthy masculinities.

Aged and disability services

Within aged and disability care, male and female clients may have different needs and preferences and require a workforce that reflects this. Given the high rates of abuse that occur in aged and disability care

services and facilities, abuse prevention policies and training can be developed and delivered for workers and carers. Given that older women experience high rates of homelessness, council services could consider connecting them with other community services such as food vans and outreach support.

Emergency management

Rates of family violence increase after disasters and emergencies, and there are significant differences in how men and women experience and recover from disaster.¹ Through their role in planning for, responding to, and recovering from disasters, councils can ensure that emergency management committees include a range of community organisations, including family and domestic violence organisations and women from different backgrounds. Community consultations can be held at accessible and child-friendly facilities and at places or events where a cross-section of the community will be. MAV's [Gender and emergency management](#) webpage is designed to help councils and their partners improve their understanding of gender and incorporate gender considerations into emergency management policy, planning, decision-making and service delivery. For an example of this, see Macedon Ranges Shire Council (Vic), [Prevention of Violence Against Women in Emergencies Action Plan](#).

Animal management

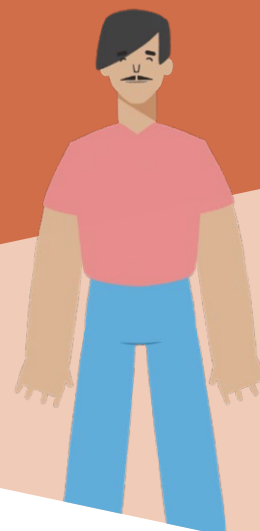
Given the link between animal abuse and family violence,² ensure strategies are in place to address this risk in your animal management services. Strategies could include training local laws officers so that they understand violence against women, recognise risks, and are able to make appropriate referrals; updating policies and operating procedures; developing partnerships with the local Police Family Violence Unit; and supporting housing of animals during periods of relocation following family violence. See MAV's [Responding to family violence: The role of animal management](#) for more information.

¹ Gender and Disaster Australia (GADA). (n.d.). [All on board: Incorporating national gender and emergency management guidelines](#).

² Domestic Violence NSW. (2020). [Animals and people experiencing domestic and family violence](#).



Fact sheet 11. Council as a community connector



Council's role as community connector

Councils can lead by example by modelling gender equality and respect, providing supportive work environments and zero tolerance to violence against women, thus sending a strong message to their partners, stakeholders and the community. Councils have significant reach within the community and existing mechanisms, structures, networks, partnerships, relationships and infrastructure can be utilised to generate a [whole-of community](#) approach.

Councils can apply a prevention focus through their networks and partnerships, and through community prevention campaigns and awareness-raising activities such as 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence (including White Ribbon Day), Elder Abuse Awareness Day, and others.

Councils can also provide the infrastructure to connect diverse community partners through existing networks or by creating and supporting new collaborations that focus on the prevention of violence against women. For example, the City of Greater Bendigo [Coalition for Gender Equity](#) is a diverse collective of 42 member organisations and groups in the public, private and community sectors dedicated to advancing gender equity and the prevention of violence against women. Coalition members collectively employ over 8,500 staff in Greater Bendigo and have direct and regular contact with the community through the delivery of programs, services and facilities.

Key questions

- What partners does council work with, and are they doing any work to promote gender equality or prevent violence against women?

- How can you learn from others doing prevention work (including other councils)?
- Are there opportunities to partner with other organisations or neighbouring councils on joint initiatives?
- Are there local community-based organisations that have specialist services for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disabilities or LGBTIQ communities that you could engage with?
- Who are the family and domestic violence response agencies that you can engage with to ensure the work council does is safe and appropriate, and to ensure support services are available for staff who make a disclosure?
- Are there cross-sector groups or networks you can join for information and knowledge-sharing (local, statewide, national)?
- Have councils engaged with their Local Government Association on this work?

Case studies

- The [City of Parramatta](#) has been working to prevent domestic and family violence within their council and their community for many years. They facilitate community partnerships and action, and advocate for the importance of prevention. This work includes partnerships with many different stakeholders in community: community-based services and organisations; national and community-based sports clubs; businesses, corporations and social enterprises; other

government agencies; paid and voluntary workers; and community leaders and members. Council funds services and organisations through a grants program to deliver additional programs for their clients. The City of Parramatta has also played a leading role in establishing and coordinating a statewide primary prevention network in New South Wales, in partnership with Domestic Violence NSW.

- In NSW, Cumberland Council's [Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan](#) was the winner of the 2021 Addressing Violence against Women and Their Children Award.
- [Local Government Association of Queensland](#) 'community of interest' networks bring together local government officers who are 'champions' for the issue of domestic and family violence. Two networks, representing the community officers and human resource sectors of local government, ensure that there is both an internal and external focus. Forty-four councils are represented across both groups, with the Community Officer Network having representation from 28 councils and the Human Resource Network having representation from 25 councils.
- MAV's [Gender Equality and Preventing Family Violence and All Forms of Violence against Women Network](#) was formed in 2010 and is an inclusive group of local government organisational representatives and key community partners. Its purpose is to provide opportunities for collaboration and leadership in the local government sector by sharing knowledge, developing skills and expertise, and providing networking and peer support opportunities to build the capacity of the sector.
- Central Goldfields Shire (Vic) – [Changing Our Story](#) video, about the council's whole-of-community approach.
- Hobsons Bay City Council (Vic) – gender equity [initiatives in the community](#).
- Yarra Ranges Council (Vic) – gender equity [initiatives with the community](#).
- Mackay Regional Council (Qld) – [Mackay Draws the Line campaign and White Ribbon accreditation](#).
- Mount Isa City Council's (Qld) involvement in and support of [Healthy Families Yarn](#).
- City of Wagga Wagga's (NSW) [theDVproject:2650](#) aimed to educate the community on the causes of violence against women and their children, to promote gender equality and respect, and to challenge rigid gender roles and stereotypes. This included a campaign developed in conjunction with the City of Wodonga (Vic) titled [Reflect Respect – A modern day guide for gentlemen](#) that aimed to challenge social norms, attitudes and behaviours to promote respectful relationships in the community.
- Townsville City Council (Qld) and the Queensland Police Service created a united front against domestic and family violence by signing a [Statement of Commitment](#).
- Cardinia Shire Council (Vic) – [Together We Can](#) program focused on preventing violence against women in workplaces across the shire. Council partnered with local non-profits, governments and small and medium businesses (both their employees and customers), to work on prevention programs.
- [Mornington Peninsula Shire](#) (Vic) and [Hobsons Bay City Council](#) (Vic) are two examples of councils that have worked in conjunction with the Jesuit Social Services' [The Men's Project](#) to implement the [Modelling Respect and Equality \(MoRE\) program](#). The program builds people's skills and knowledge to create change around issues of respect and equality in their community in places that shape the cultures of boys and men, such as sporting clubs, groups, schools, workplaces and other organisations.

Fact sheet 12.

The role of community spaces and places



Council's role in gender equitable planning, design and management of spaces

Planning policies and processes can unintentionally exclude or discriminate against different groups of people in the community and can ignore the fact that women and men use public spaces differently. Cities and towns have historically been planned and designed by men and for men, reflecting traditional gender roles and division of labour. In general, cities and towns are more accessible for heterosexual, able-bodied, cisgender men than they are for women, girls, LGBTIQ people, and people with disabilities.¹

Local government can advance gender equitable land-use planning and design by:

- undertaking a gender audit on existing policies and strategies to improve the understanding of gender equity and how it relates to planning and design
- improving knowledge of how gendered needs can influence building requirements, for example location and access, childcare, baby changing facilities, public toilets, lighting, and accessible facilities
- undertaking gender impact assessments to assist with decision-making and planning
- collecting sex-disaggregated data and research that highlights the different experiences and needs of women and men
- ensuring consultation includes gender equality considerations – see [Fact sheet 3](#) for more information

- considering the criteria for allocating council resources such as halls and centres, sport and recreation facilities, and grants to groups, clubs, associations and community gardens. Do they provide for all genders?

For examples relating to community centres, maternal and child health, youth facilities, community pavilions and aquatic and leisure facilities, see City of Whittlesea (Vic), [Gender equity in design guidelines](#).

Resources

[She's A Crowd](#) offers data insights to local government and city planners to be able to view incidents of gender-based violence in their community. This data can help decision-makers ensure that their policies apply a gender lens and promote the safety of women and gender diverse people.

[YourGround](#) engaged 25 Victorian councils in a social research project, surveying women and gender-diverse people to map their perceptions of safety in open spaces. The aim of the YourGround project was to understand equity and access to, and use of, public spaces, particularly for exercise and recreation.

Monash University's [XYX Lab](#) offers [Gender-Sensitive Training for Inclusive Placemaking](#) online for professionals involved in planning, design and policy-making. It aims to develop a more complex understanding of gender-sensitive issues and the importance of responding to these issues through the creation, maintenance and redesign of public spaces.

A [short video](#) from the City of Edmonton (Canada) illustrates what an intersectional gender lens is, and how it can be applied in open space planning for new developments, projects and rehabilitation.

¹ The World Bank. (2020). [Handbook for gender-inclusive urban planning and design](#).



Transport

Council has a role to play in creating and maintaining transport infrastructure with a focus on access and useability in local communities. People move across areas in very different ways and this movement is strongly influenced by gender and other factors such as physical ability. Disaggregated data and widespread consultation is crucial in council's development of transport strategies, in its provision of infrastructure, planning and development, and in advocacy.

The importance of libraries

Libraries can be important places and resources for women escaping domestic and family violence – see the MAV's [The role of libraries](#) for further information. Council's commitment to preventing violence against women can be promoted on library noticeboards, computer screens, bookmarks and library bags. Events can be held at libraries to recognise significant dates such as 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, International Women's Day, NAIDOC Week, Refugee Week, and International Day of the Girl Child.

Children's books can be procured and promoted that challenge gender stereotypes and rigid gender roles. The [Picture booklist](#) from City of Monash (Vic) provides parents, teachers and carers with a range of stories which provide broader ideas about who girls, boys, women, men and people who identify as diverse genders can be, what they can be interested in, and what they can achieve.

Sport and recreational spaces and facilities

Councils have significant influence over sports and recreation settings through the management of infrastructure, facilities and public spaces. By considering the needs of women and girls in planning and design, councils can ensure that they provide safe, welcoming and inclusive spaces for women and gender diverse people, and people from all backgrounds, with all levels of ability.

When councils are developing or upgrading sporting pavilions, open spaces or recreation facilities, they can consult a range of community members and groups on things like their perceptions of how safe, welcoming and family-friendly the environment is, and whether there are toilets and changing facilities for people of all genders. In developing sport and recreation strategies or grounds allocation policies, councils can analyse the proportion of male and female teams that access council facilities, and whether these are equal. Strategies can be considered to ensure more equal access to these facilities, including ways to support local sports clubs to increase women's and girls' teams – see [Fact sheet 10](#) for an example from Merri-bek City Council.

Case studies

- Glenelg Shire Council (Vic) conducted [gender impact assessments](#) at Portland Leisure and Aquatic Centre to improve the user experience and attract new users of all genders.
- Geelong City Council (Vic) conducted a [gender impact assessment](#) on mountain biking facilities, leading to recommendations for future open space planning.
- Bass Coast Shire Council undertook a [gender impact assessment](#) on its public place names to address the gender imbalance of place naming and recognise the contribution many notable women have played.