

# 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.

