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# YOUNG MINDS, OLD BIASES

# THE GENDER BASED VIOLENCE CRISIS



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### Contact

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## INTRODUCTION

Young Women's Alliance (YWA) is an ACNC-registered charity aiming to improve young women's life outcomes through data and consultation-driven policies and programs. We focus on the critical but tumultuous decade of 18-28. During this decade, women face heightened risks of gender discrimination, sexual assault, political marginalisation, economic insecurity, and life-ending violence, yet lack the social, political, or financial capital to counter these challenges.

YWA has completed a 2-year research project which included a listening tour, gender survey, long-form interviews, expert consultations, engagement with men's behavioural change practitioners, and literature reviews. The research project has been guided by distinguished academics at eight Australian universities - Australian National University (ANU), University of New South Wales (UNSW), Griffith University, University of Queensland (UQ), University of Sydney (USyd), Monash University, University of Western Australia (UWA), and the University of Melbourne, as well as three overseas universities - Stanford University, University of Oxford, and University of Cambridge. It has culminated in two reports: '**Young Minds, Old Biases: The Gender Based Violence Crisis**' which focuses exclusively on gender-based violence (GBV), and the '**Young Women's Policy Submission**' a compelling picture of young Australian women's lives across ten core areas, including GBV.

This report, '**Young Minds, Old Biases: The Gender Based Violence Crisis**' examines young people's relationships, sex lives and experiences of disrespect and violence. The evidence reveals:

- Statistically significant disparities between young women and men. For women, heightened vulnerability snowballs into disadvantage in other life areas; for men, early sexist views compound in educational and workplace settings, and can manifest in violent behaviour.
- YWA's original psychological risk profile of young men is more highly correlated with GBV perpetration than the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI), a validated indicator of likelihood to engage in violent behaviour.<sup>1</sup>
- A stark reality exists where 90% of interviewed women see sexual violence and/or assault as inevitable in their lifetime (if it had not already occurred); a matter of 'when' not 'if,' expressing that violence is synonymous with womanhood.
- Significant gender disparities in perceptions of sexuality-related education, with men rating the education they received on sex and consent as significantly better than women, a concerning gap in preparedness prior to formative sexual experiences.
- YWA's original Gender and Relationship Distress Score, a 12-item measure, indicates that more than 1 in 5 young women (21.8%) experience significant gendered distress in their intimate relationships.

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<sup>1</sup>Ambivalent Sexism is a theoretical framework that identifies sexism as consisting of two sub-components: hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. This framework posits that sexism can manifest not only in overtly negative ways but also in seemingly positive forms that still reinforce gender inequality. Hostile Sexism refers to openly negative attitudes and stereotypes about women. It is characterised by beliefs that women are inferior to men, manipulative, or seeking to dominate men through feminist ideologies or sexuality. Hostile sexism often manifests as misogyny, where women are viewed with contempt and subjected to discrimination, harassment, or violence for not conforming to traditional gender roles. Conversely, Benevolent Sexism involves attitudes that may appear positive but are actually harmful, as they reinforce traditional gender roles and imply that women are weak and in need of protection. While Benevolent Sexism may seem more benign, it ultimately supports gender inequality by placing women in a subordinate position. Together, these components form ambivalent sexism. Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) is a 22-item measure for identifying sexist perceptions, attitudes, and opinions.

- Systemic inequities, exacerbated by demographics, particularly a regional-urban divide in access to essential sex education, with 59.9% of women in remote and regional areas facing severe issues compared to 52.3% in major cities.
- Divergent perspectives on solutions: women rate harsher consequences for gender violence as the most effective intervention (7.76 out of 10) to reduce GBV, while young men across demographic groups rate feeling better about themselves and having more life purpose as the best prompt (8.38 out of 10) for behaviour change.

After establishing an evidence base, the report presents young people's preferred solutions for addressing these challenges. It concludes with YWA's policy recommendations to affect tangible change. The objective is to issue a set of comprehensive recommendations targeting multiple intervention points: from enhancing consent education and establishing coordinated research agendas with philanthropic buy-in, to approaches like 'Designing Your Life' courses, trauma-informed services for young men, targeted social media campaigns addressing gender equality misconceptions, and mitigations for feminist backlash.

The surge in GBV in Australia has been alarming, with 30% more women being killed by a current or former partner in 2024, than the same time last year.<sup>2</sup> As of 29th July 2024, 48 women have been killed as a result of GBV.<sup>3</sup> A youth focus is crucial as a significant number of the recent, alleged perpetrators have been under the age of 30;<sup>4</sup> young women are disproportionately affected by physical and sexual assault and violence;<sup>5</sup> and personal distress related to sexual issues impacts 50% of young Australian women.<sup>6</sup> Attitudinal and behavioural studies also suggest that the narrative of linear progress — that younger generations are becoming more progressive in belief and behaviour — is incorrect, with some young men holding more conservative or similarly conservative views about gender roles compared to their older counterparts, and perpetrating high levels of violence.<sup>7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14</sup> These statistics underscore the urgency and relevance of this report.

The YWA team is eager to assist further with policy, intervention, and/or programs, leveraging our network, research, and expertise. Specifically, YWA seeks to contribute to the implementation of Australian state and federal plans and strategies — Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality,

<sup>2</sup> Knaus, C. (2024, April 29). 30% spike in rate of Australian women killed by intimate partner last year, data shows. *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2024/apr/29/30-spike-in-rate-of-australian-women-killed-by-intimate-partner-last-year-data-shows>

<sup>3</sup> "The number of women who die in gendered violence is collated and published by Destroy the Joint's Counting Dead Women and Femicide Watch's Red Heart Campaign for figures on the number of women killed across the nation." (ABC News, *Eleven more women have died violently in 2024 compared to the same time last year*, April 2024).

<sup>4</sup> Violent porn, online misogyny driving gendered violence, say experts. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/violent-porn-online-misogyny-driving-gendered-violence-say-experts-20240426-p5fmx9.html>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> "Most Young Women Unhappy, Stressed about Their Sex Lives: Study." 2020. Monash University. February 25, 2020. <https://www.monash.edu/news/articles/most-young-women-unhappy,-stressed-about-their-sex-lives-study>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Intimate partner violence among Australian 18-19 year olds. *Australian Institute of Family Studies*.

<https://aifs.gov.au/research/commissioned-reports/intimate-partner-violence-among-australian-18-19-year-olds>

<sup>9</sup> Media Release: NCAS Young Australians. *ANROWS*. <https://www.anrows.org.au/media-releases/media-release-ncas-young-australians/>

<sup>10</sup> Sexual strangulation can mean minutes to death, yet half of young people do it. *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/sexual-strangulation-can-mean-minutes-to-death-yet-half-of-young-people-do-it-20240620-p5i9.html>

<sup>11</sup> Sexual violence 'disturbingly common' as research shows one in five admit to it. *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/sexual-violence-disturbingly-common-as-research-shows-one-in-five-admit-to-it-20240709-p5js7v.html>

<sup>12</sup> Young Australians confused about consent and control in the age of Tinder and Snapchat. *ANROWS*.

<https://www.anrows.org.au/media-releases/young-australians-confused-about-consent-and-control-in-the-age-of-tinder-and-snapchat/>

<sup>13</sup> Prevalence of sexual violence perpetration in Australia. *ABC News*.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-07-09/prevalence-of-sexual-violence-perpetration-in-australia/104076618>

<sup>14</sup> Wescott, S., Roberts, S., & Zhao, X. (2023). The problem of anti-feminist 'manfluencer' Andrew Tate in Australian schools: Women teachers' experiences of resurgent male supremacy. *Journal of Gender Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2023.2292622>

the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022 - 2032, the Action Plan addressing GBV in higher education, Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission Strategic Plan 2023-26, NSW Women's Strategy 2023-2026, Victoria's gender equality strategy and action plan 2023-2027, WA's Plan for Gender Equality, Queensland's Women's Strategy 2022-27, NT Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025, South Australia's Women's Equality Blueprint 2023–2026, ACT Women's Plan 2023-26, among others.

\*Note: The report adopts a certain binary in framing young men in the context of GBV perpetration and young women in the context of GBV exposure; this is based on statistical evidence of perpetration and exposure rates by gender.. YWA acknowledges that these roles are somewhat fluid and not strictly binary. However, for the purposes of this analysis and report, this framing has been adopted without a shame-inducing or antagonistic approach.



## METHODOLOGY

This report is informed by research from YWA’s primary and secondary methods. All primary research methods involved young Australians (ages 18-28) currently residing in Australia.

The National Listening Tour, which featured online and in-person events, was attended by 12,000 young people. Listening tour speakers included high-profile Australian women in media, politics, and academia; Annabel Crabb, Chanel Contos, Dr. Jenna Price, Jessie Stephens, and Lilian Ahenkan. Data collection on personal views and political opinions was completed through event-based surveys.

The National Gender Survey recorded 3,000 responses. It was a nationally representative sample focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons to ensure their perspectives and experiences were sufficiently documented. In the final survey sample, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders persons were 8.7% of the total sample; based on national census data, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons make up 3% of the Australian population. The survey was administered in two rounds through Qualtrics, an internationally renowned research and survey company, and responses were collected through cluster and stratified sampling from a market research panel. Postcode and demographic data were collected to support comparative analysis of specific population segments. The questionnaire was structured by ten core life areas - education, career, self-esteem, health, sex, relationships, family/friends, Australian society, political agency, and policy - and included both closed-ended and open-ended response options. Long-form responses were specifically utilised to collect data on effective interventions for primary prevention and early intervention on GBV.

Qualitative data was collected through 60-minute long-form interviews with 300 young women and men across all Australian states and territories. Participants were sought through outreach to youth and gender groups, schools, universities, TAFEs, and word-of-mouth. A self-interview method was used, with participants provided a structured interview guide including instructions for completion, questions to respond to, and a sample timeline for submission. Participants were able to utilise both audio and visual formats to complete the interview. This design encouraged honesty and candour on the varied topic areas. This sought to increase the accessibility of the interview process and enable participants to more comfortably navigate potentially complex and personal topics. Interview participants completed a demographics form prior to the interview, and their responses enabled filtering to disadvantage-specific questions. The interviews focused on educational experiences, life challenges, mental and physical health, sexual assault, gender violence, gender norm formation, effective models of consultation, and policy and systems change. After completing an interview, female participants were asked to complete an exercise wherein they listed their gendered experiences, inspired by Laura Bates’ ‘Everyday Sexism’ project. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Male and female participants who completed the interview received an incentive of AU \$60; female participants who completed the interview and submitted the list exercise received AU \$60-100 (final amount based on the completeness of their list submission).

The Literature Review involved theme-specific searches, collection, review, and analysis of 812 academic articles. Articles were focused on publications primarily between 2000 and 2024. The geographic scope mainly included high-income countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and the United



Kingdom. Identified articles were organised by theme and reviewed for the extent to which they addressed the following questions:

### **GBV and Prevention**

1. Why do young men hold poor views about women, and what are interventions or policies to stop these views from developing or turning into harmful actions against women?
2. What is effective in the primary prevention of sexual assault (women)?
3. What is effective in the primary prevention of sexual assault (men)?
4. How does society encourage men to form poor views of women?
5. Is there a link between men holding poor views about women and violent, discriminatory, or oppressive behaviour towards women?
6. What are optimal interventions and intervention points in young women's and men's lives to prevent gender-based discrimination and violence?
7. Why do young women not contact police regarding gendered violence issues? How can this be improved?
8. What are the factors leading to young men engaging in sexual violence?
9. What are the factors that deter young men from engaging in domestic family sexual violence (DFS)?
10. What is a successful model for women to engage with men's behavioural change program practitioners to reduce violence?
11. Have educational programs regarding consent in universities been successful in developed countries? What improvements are needed?
12. Have educational programs regarding consent in schools been successful in developed countries? What improvements are needed?

### **Gender Equality and Economic Policies**

13. What are effective interventions for achieving gender equality?
14. What are effective policies for achieving gender equality?
15. How have gender-equal societies been created?
16. What policies create economic equality for women?
17. What labour market inefficiencies exist in high-income countries like Australia and how can they be addressed?
18. Has gender mainstreaming failed?
19. Why has gender equality not been achieved despite policy and investment?
20. Can a strong economy and socialist policies work together?
21. Does it make business sense to provide Universal Basic Income (UBI) to women experiencing violence in developed countries?
22. What are the most impactful policy solutions preferred by young people to address gender inequality?
23. What policy solutions to address gender inequality are preferred by young adults?
24. What are the most effective strategies in de-segregating industries by gender?

## **Wellbeing and Support Systems**

24. What is affecting young men's wellbeing, and how can their wellbeing be supported?
25. What is affecting young women's wellbeing, and how can their wellbeing be supported?
26. What makes the period of 18-28 rife with gender-based discrimination and violence for women in Australia or in English-speaking developed countries (OECD/Developed Countries)?
27. What are the strengths of the government support systems/services for young women in Australia?
28. What are the weaknesses of the government support systems/services for young women in Australia? How can these be improved? Is it done better in other OECD countries?
29. How can we achieve relationship equality for women?

## **Education and Career Outcomes**

30. How do government policies in OECD countries support gender equality in education?
31. What are the most effective government policies for improving career outcomes for young women?

## **Housing and Health Policies**

32. What are the most effective strategies to increase crisis and transitional housing options for women and children escaping DFV and older women at risk of homelessness, especially in OECD/Western economies?
33. What are the most effective government policies for improving health outcomes for young women in OECD/Western economies?

## **Monitoring and Evaluation of Gender Policies**

34. What are the gaps in current monitoring and evaluation of gender policies in Australia? What are the gaps in current monitoring and evaluation of gender policies in OECD countries?
35. What evaluation methods or structures have been effective in monitoring, evaluating, and optimising government policies on gender equity in Australia?

## **Family and Educational Influences**

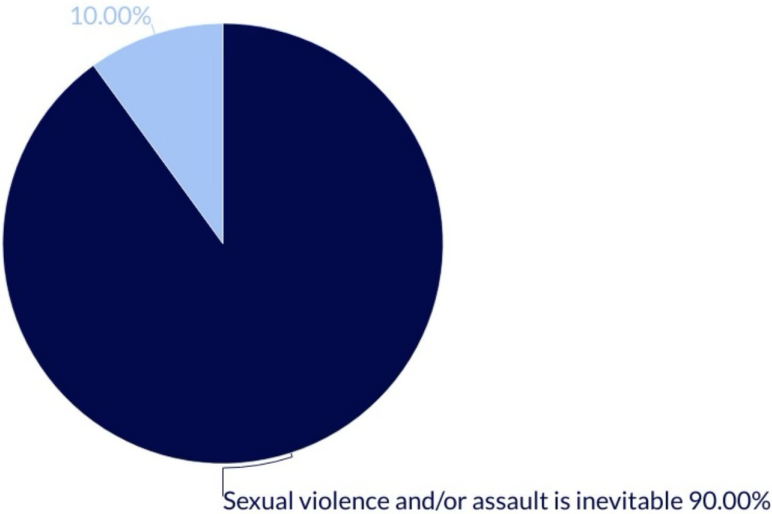
36. How do early family and educational experiences influence financial independence, career success, and overall life outcomes for women in Australia?
37. How does gender affect various life areas to create a cycle of disadvantage for young women?

## **Engagement and Policy Development**

38. What are highly effective models for engaging young women to develop and implement government policies?
39. Has the increasing focus on 'consultation' and 'participatory research' by state and federal governments improved policy outcomes in Australia?
40. What economic models and methods of value measurement support more provision of public goods by the government? How can a strong welfare state and a strong economy co-exist?

\*Further information about methodology, including sample numbers and proportions and weighted numbers and proportions by demographic, is available in a separate Methodology Report.

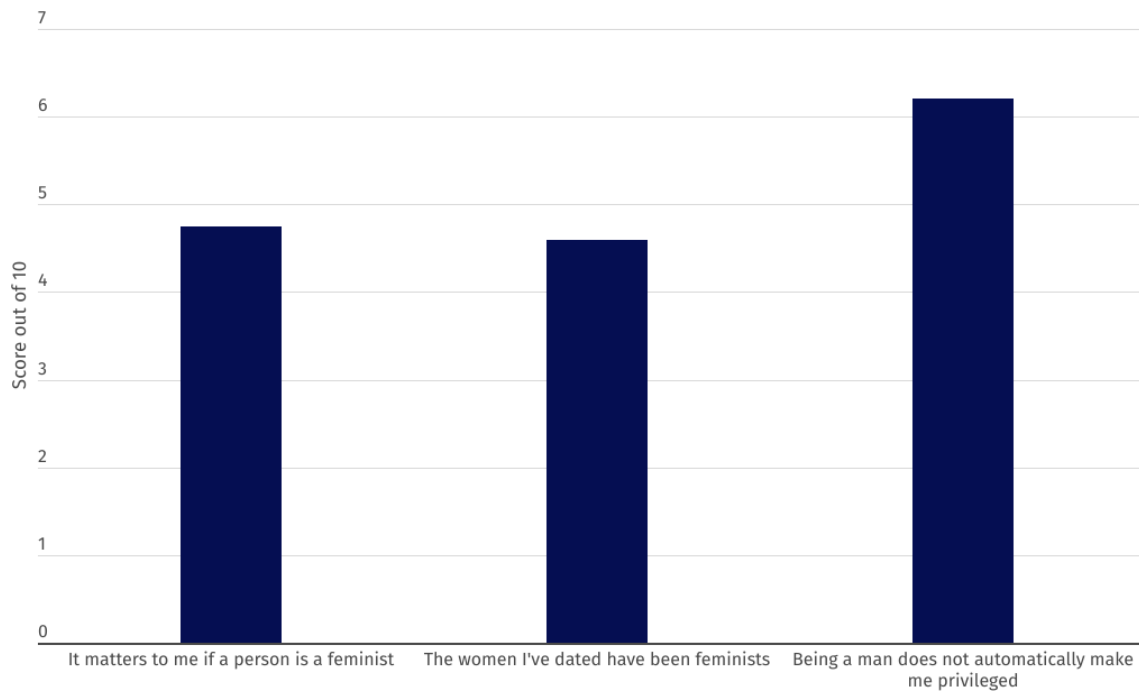
**KEY VISUALISATIONS**



90% of women interviewed see sexual violence and/or assault as inevitable, not a possibility; a matter of 'when' not 'if.'

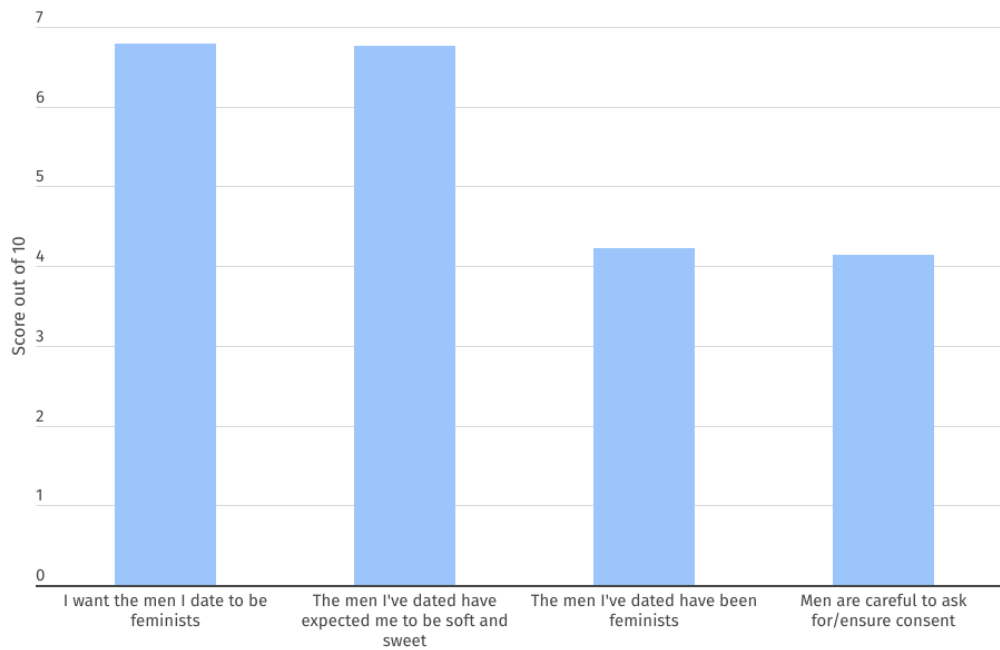
21.8%

21.8% of women interviewed experience gender and relationship distress



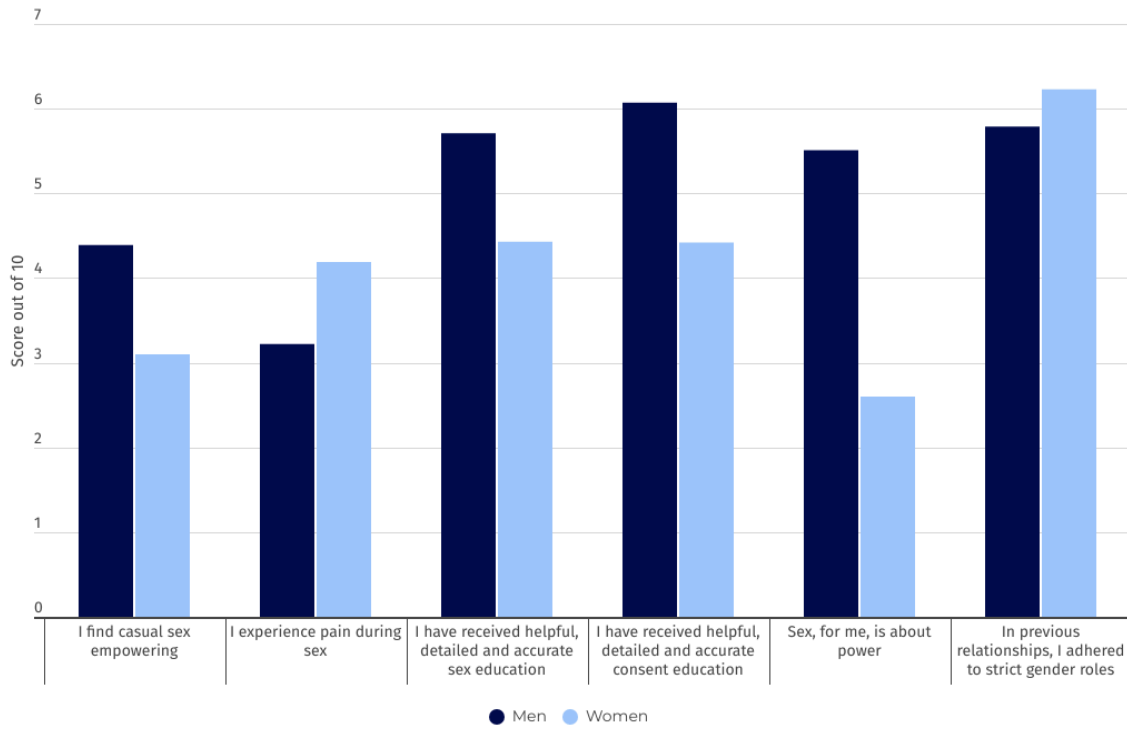
(Note: Mean agreement scores on a 0-10 scale)

**Key takeaways from YWA survey (men)**



(Note: Mean agreement scores on a 0-10 scale)

**Key takeaways from YWA survey (women)**



(Note: Mean agreement scores on a 0-10 scale)

Key differences in YWA survey (men & women)

## KEY DEFINITIONS

Gender-based violence (GBV): Gender-based violence (GBV) encompasses harmful actions aimed at individuals or groups due to their gender. This violence arises from entrenched gender inequality, power imbalances, and harmful societal norms. GBV includes various forms of abuse such as physical, sexual, psychological, and economic. While women and girls are disproportionately affected, men, boys, and LGBTQIA+ individuals can also be victims.<sup>15</sup>

Intimate partner violence (IPV): Intimate partner violence (IPV) encompasses any behaviour within a current or former intimate relationship that results in physical, sexual, or psychological harm.<sup>16</sup> IPV is a subset of GBV that specifically involves violence or abuse between current or former intimate partners.<sup>17</sup>

Domestic violence (DV): Domestic violence is a broader term that includes IPV but also extends to violence among family members or others living in the same household. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, emotional abuse, and psychological abuse aimed at asserting control or domination over another individual<sup>18</sup>, whether they are a partner, child, or elder; and involves a range of violent behaviours between current or former intimate partners, where one partner seeks to dominate and control the other.

These terms are often used interchangeably because they describe related phenomena that frequently occur together and share underlying causes; the overlap is particularly evident in the following ways:

- **Shared Dynamics:** All three terms involve dynamics of power and control, often manifesting in similar forms of abuse, such as physical, emotional, or sexual violence. This commonality makes it practical to discuss them together in many contexts.<sup>20 21</sup>
- **Intersectionality:** Intersectionality highlights how different forms of discrimination and identity factors (such as race, class, sexual orientation) intersect, affecting individuals' experiences of violence. This framework helps in understanding how GBV, IPV, and DV can be compounded by other social inequalities, making them interrelated in practice and impact.<sup>22 23</sup>
- **Policy and Advocacy:** In efforts to address these issues, policies and advocacy often group these forms of violence together to ensure comprehensive strategies that address the root causes and

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<sup>15</sup> UN Women Australia. Types of violence against women and girls. <https://unwomen.org.au/types-of-violence-against-women-and-girls/>

<sup>16</sup> DSS (Department of Social Services) (2022) *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*. DSS, Australian Government.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations Population Fund Asia-Pacific Regional Office. *kNowVAWdata Key Terminology*. UNFPA, 2021.

<https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/kNowVAWdata%20Key%20Terminology.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Hughes, Rhidian, and Robert Mann. "Needs-Led Services." *Encyclopedia of Evidence in Health and Social Care*, edited by Jeremy Jolley, Springer, 2019. [https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-89999-2\\_49](https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-89999-2_49)

<sup>19</sup> AIHW. 2018. "Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia."

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/d1a8d479-a39a-48c1-bbe2-4b27c7a321e0/aihw-fdv-02.pdf.aspx?inline=true>.

<sup>20</sup> USA for UNFPA. *What is Gender-Based Violence (GBV)?* UNFPA, 2021. <https://www.usaforunfpa.org/what-is-gender-based-violence-gbv/>

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Population Fund Asia-Pacific Regional Office. *kNowVAWdata Key Terminology*. UNFPA, 2021.

<https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/kNowVAWdata%20Key%20Terminology.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> García-Moreno, Claudia, et al. "Understanding and Addressing Violence Against Women: Intimate Partner Violence." *World Health Organization*, 2015. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4916258/>

<sup>23</sup> Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria State Government. *Victorian Family Violence Data Collection Framework: Intersectionality and Family Violence*. Victorian Government, 2020.

<https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-family-violence-data-collection-framework/intersectionality-and-family-violence>



provide support to all affected individuals, regardless of the specific type of violence they experience.<sup>24 25</sup>

Accordingly, in this report, all terms are used, at times distinctly and other times interchangeably, as appropriate.

## ADDITIONAL DEFINITIONS

Sexual violence<sup>26</sup> encompasses the occurrence, attempt, or threat of non-consensual sexual acts experienced by individuals aged 15 and older. It is measured by combining experiences of sexual assault and sexual threat.

Sexual assault: Any non-consensual act of a sexual nature carried out against a person through physical force, intimidation, or coercion. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Rape and attempted rape
- Aggravated sexual assault (involving a weapon)
- Indecent assault
- Penetration by objects
- Forced sexual activity without penetration
- Attempts to force a person into sexual activity

Sexual threat: Face-to-face threats of sexual acts that the targeted person believes are both feasible and likely to be carried out.

Physical violence<sup>27</sup> encompasses the occurrence, attempt, or threat of physical assault experienced by individuals aged 15 and older. It is measured by combining experiences of physical assault and physical threat.

Physical assault: Any incident involving the use of physical force with the intent to harm or frighten a person. This includes assaults that occur during robberies, in the line of work (e.g., while working as a security guard), at school, or overseas. Physical assault includes, but is not limited to:

- Pushing, grabbing, or shoving
- Slapping
- Kicking, biting, or hitting with a fist
- Hitting with an object capable of causing harm
- Beating
- Choking

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<sup>24</sup> NSW Government. *NSW Domestic and Family Violence Plan 2022-2027*. Department of Communities and Justice, 2022. <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/documents/service-providers/domestic-and-family-violence-services/NSW-Domestic-and-Family-Violence-Plan-2022-2027.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Our Watch. *Guidelines for Reporting on Violence Against Women and Their Children*. Our Watch, 2021.

<https://www.ourwatch.org.au/media-and-reporting/resources/guidelines-for-reporting>

<sup>26</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Sexual Violence, 2021-22*. ABS, 2022.

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/sexual-violence/2021-22>

<sup>27</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Physical Violence, Latest Release*. ABS, 2023.

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/physical-violence/latest-release#definition-of-physical-violence>

- Stabbing with a knife
- Shooting with a gun
- Any other type of physical assault

Physical threat: Any face-to-face verbal and/or physical expression of intent (or suggestion of intent) to inflict physical harm, which the targeted person believes is both feasible and likely to be carried out.

Physical threats include:

- Threatening or attempting to hit with a fist or any potentially harmful object
- Threatening or attempting to stab with a knife
- Threatening or attempting to shoot with a gun
- Threatening or attempting to physically harm in any other way

Emotional abuse<sup>28</sup> includes behaviours that can severely impact a person's mental health and emotional well-being. These behaviours include:

- Verbal Abuse: This involves yelling, insulting, or swearing at the victim.
- Gaslighting: Manipulating someone to doubt their own perceptions, feelings, or sanity.
- Isolation: Restricting the victim's freedom, limiting their contact with others, or controlling their movements.
- Financial Abuse: Controlling or taking the victim's money or belongings, preventing them from working or studying.
- Social Abuse: Damaging the victim's relationships or reputation, monitoring their activities.
- Threats and Intimidation: Making the victim feel afraid or threatened, including threats to harm themselves or others

Financial abuse<sup>29</sup> can include restricting access to money, controlling household spending, preventing the victim from working, or using their financial resources without consent. These actions can lead to feelings of entrapment and dependency, which are common outcomes of emotional abuse as well.

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<sup>28</sup> ReachOut Australia. *What is Emotional Abuse?* ReachOut, 2023.

<https://au.reachout.com/challenges-and-coping/abuse-and-violence/what-is-emotional-abuse>

<sup>29</sup> MoneySmart. *Financial Abuse*. Australian Securities and Investments Commission, 2023.

<https://moneysmart.gov.au/living-in-retirement/financial-abuse>

## THE SITUATION

GBV is endemic, with young women disproportionately affected by physical and sexual assault. Among youth, particularly young men, problematic attitudes towards consent and gender equality persist. Early sexual experiences are marred by dissatisfaction, pressure to conform to unrealistic standards, and the negative influence of pornography; this pattern often continues into adulthood. Personal distress related to sexual issues impacts 50% of Australian women (ages 18-39).<sup>30</sup>

### 1. Violence Against Women

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is the greatest contributor to illness, disability and premature death for Australian women aged 25-44.<sup>31</sup> An ANROWS study using the ‘burden of disease’ metric,<sup>32</sup> a globally recognised method for evaluating the impact of injuries and illnesses, and comparing various risk factors, found that IPV accounts for an estimated 5.1% of the disease burden among Australian women aged 18-44 years, higher than any other risk factor in the study, including tobacco use, high cholesterol, and illicit drug use.<sup>33</sup> The same study noted that IPV is the greatest contributor to the health disparity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and non-Indigenous women of child-bearing age (ages 18 to 44). Further intersectional disadvantage is evident in that family and domestic violence hospitalisation rates are 33x higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women than for non-Indigenous women, and 48x higher for women in remote areas than those in cities.<sup>34 35</sup>

Further, in 2022, 86% of sexual assault victims were under 34 years old, with 56% under 18 and 30% aged 18-34.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, 22% of women have experienced sexual violence since age 15.<sup>37</sup> Generational differences are evident: 51% of women born between 1989 and 1995 report experiencing sexual violence in their lifetime, compared to 34% of those born between 1973 and 1978, and 26% of those born between 1946 and 1951.<sup>38</sup> Experiences of sexual harassment also show a clear age gradient: 38% of women aged 18 to 24, 17.4% of women aged 35 to 44, and 7.1% of women aged 55 and over report such experiences.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> “Most Young Women Unhappy, Stressed about Their Sex Lives: Study.” 2020. Monash University. February 25, 2020.

<https://www.monash.edu/news/articles/most-young-women-unhappy-stressed-about-their-sex-lives-study>.

<sup>31</sup> AIHW. 2018. “Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia.”

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/d1a8d479-a39a-48c1-bbe2-4b27c7a321e0/aihw-fdv-02.pdf.aspx?inline=true>.

<sup>32</sup> The ‘burden of disease’ metric is a comprehensive measure used to assess the impact of diseases and injuries on a population. It combines the effects of both morbidity (illness and disability) and mortality (premature death) to provide a holistic view of health loss within a community. This metric is crucial for understanding public health challenges and guiding policy decisions. The primary metric used to quantify the burden of disease is the Disability-Adjusted Life Year (DALY), which represents the loss of one year of “healthy” life due to either premature death or living with a disability. DALYs are calculated by summing two components: Years of Life Lost (YLL), which measures the years lost due to premature death, and Years Lived with Disability (YLD), which represents the years lived with a health condition or its consequences, weighted by the severity of the condition. The burden of disease can be categorised into non-fatal burden (captured by YLD) and fatal burden (captured by YLL). Additionally, the attributable burden refers to the portion of the disease burden that could be prevented if specific risk factors were eliminated, highlighting the role of modifiable risk factors like smoking or obesity in contributing to the overall disease burden.

<sup>33</sup> ANROWS. (2016). Intimate partner violence contributes highest health risk for women aged 18-44 years.

<https://www.anrows.org.au/media-releases/intimate-partner-violence-contributes-highest-health-risk-women-aged/>

<sup>34</sup> “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.” 2024. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. July 19, 2024.

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/population-groups/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people>.

<sup>35</sup> “Factors Associated with FDSV.” 2024. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. July 19, 2024.

[https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/understanding-fdsv/factors-associated-with-fdsv/#:~:text=In%202021%E2%80%99322%2C%20the%20rate,2\)%20\(AIHW%202023b\)](https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/understanding-fdsv/factors-associated-with-fdsv/#:~:text=In%202021%E2%80%99322%2C%20the%20rate,2)%20(AIHW%202023b)).

<sup>36</sup> “Young Women.” 2024. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/population-groups/young-women>.

<sup>37</sup> “Personal Safety, Australia, 2021-22 Financial Year.” 2023. Australian Bureau of Statistics. Australian Bureau of Statistics. March 15, 2023.

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release#data-downloads>.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

## 2. Dangerous Beliefs

The 2021 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)<sup>40</sup> revealed persistent problematic beliefs. Only 27% to 43% of young respondents demonstrated progressive attitudes and understanding of GBV and inequality. Notably, young people were less likely to strongly reject attitudes minimising violence, with only 54% strongly disagreeing that domestic violence is excusable if the perpetrator later expresses regret, compared to 73% of older (25 or older) respondents.<sup>41</sup>

Gender disparities in attitudes persist among young people, contributing to the perpetuation of violence. Young men (48%) were significantly more likely than young women (25%) to believe that women exaggerate gender inequality.<sup>42</sup> Almost 1 in 3 young people agreed that women prefer male dominance in relationships, a view more prevalent among males with 34% of young men holding this view compared to 18% of young women.<sup>43</sup>

These concerning attitudes continue with consent and sexual assault. Approximately 28% of young people believe that extreme sexual arousal may prevent a man from recognising a woman's lack of consent, while 12% see no harm in sexist jokes.<sup>44</sup>

## 3. Sexual Experiences and Well-being

Young women's sexual experiences are characterised by dissatisfaction, pressure, and negative emotional outcomes. Research indicates higher levels of regret, loneliness, and negative self-perception following casual sexual encounters among women than men.<sup>45</sup> 50% of young women (ages 18-39) report sexually-related personal distress (feeling guilty, embarrassed, stressed or unhappy about their sex lives), including issues such as low sexual self-image, arousal, desire, orgasm, and responsiveness dysfunctions.<sup>46</sup>

The pressure to please partners in heterosexual encounters leads young women to engage in unwanted sexual activities. This dynamic is exacerbated by the internalisation of submissive roles, fear of rejection, limited education on or practice in sexual self-advocacy or assertiveness, and societal expectations.

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<sup>40</sup> "Findings for Young Australians NCAS ANROWS."

[https://irp.cdn-website.com/f0688f0c/files/uploaded/ANROWS%20-%20NCAS%20Youne%20People%20Sub-Report%202023%20\(DIGITAL\)%20-%20FINAL.pdf](https://irp.cdn-website.com/f0688f0c/files/uploaded/ANROWS%20-%20NCAS%20Youne%20People%20Sub-Report%202023%20(DIGITAL)%20-%20FINAL.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> McGregor, Viv. 2023. "Media Release: NCAS Findings for Young Australians - ANROWS - Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety." ANROWS - Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. December 12, 2023.

[https://www.anrows.org.au/media-releases/media-release-ncas-young-australians/#:~:text=For%20example%2C%20young%20men%20\(48,aspec%20of%20violence%20against%20women](https://www.anrows.org.au/media-releases/media-release-ncas-young-australians/#:~:text=For%20example%2C%20young%20men%20(48,aspec%20of%20violence%20against%20women).

<sup>43</sup> "Findings for Young Australians NCAS ANROWS." n.d.

[https://irp.cdn-website.com/f0688f0c/files/uploaded/ANROWS%20-%20NCAS%20Youne%20People%20Sub-Report%202023%20\(DIGITAL\)%20-%20FINAL.pdf](https://irp.cdn-website.com/f0688f0c/files/uploaded/ANROWS%20-%20NCAS%20Youne%20People%20Sub-Report%202023%20(DIGITAL)%20-%20FINAL.pdf).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> McKeen, Billie E, Ryan C Anderson, and David A Mitchell. 2022. "Was It Good for You? Gender Differences in Motives and Emotional Outcomes Following Casual Sex." *Sexuality & Culture* 26 (4): 1339–59. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-022-09946-w>.

<sup>46</sup> "Most Young Women Unhappy, Stressed about Their Sex Lives: Study." 2020. Monash University. February 25, 2020.

<https://www.monash.edu/news/articles/most-young-women-unhappy-stressed-about-their-sex-lives-study>.

Women describe feelings of vexation, humiliation, and being treated as sexual objects; they struggle to say “no” to sexual partners due to fear of retaliation and societal expectations.<sup>47 48</sup>

Further, women who regularly scrutinise their appearance, and whose self-esteem is informed by their appearance, tend to be less sexually assertive and more self-conscious during intimate moments, resulting in diminished sexual satisfaction.<sup>49</sup>

#### 4. Impact of Pornography

Women criticise pornography for promoting unrealistic and harmful sexual behaviours, which they feel pressured to mimic.<sup>50 51</sup> The consumption of pornography by both short-term and long-term partners shapes women’s sexual encounters, leading to dissatisfaction, negative emotional outcomes, and sexual violence. Many women express discomfort with its content and the roles it assigns to women; noting the pornographic ‘sphere’ seeps significantly into real life.<sup>52 53</sup>

Studies have investigated the relationship between pornography consumption and violence against women, revealing significant associations:

- A study found a significant association between pornography use and sexual coercion among men high in hostile masculinity and sexual promiscuity, who also consumed more violent sexual content.<sup>54</sup>
- Research shows that pornography use among young Australians is associated with harmful attitudes and behaviours, including risky sexual behaviours, greater sexual objectification of women, rape myth acceptance, and sexual coercion and aggression.<sup>55</sup>
- Studies have shown that women who experience IPV (particularly sexual) report that pornography played a role in their abuse. Perpetrators sometimes use pornography as a manual for abuse, forcing their partners to watch it to coerce them into specific sex acts.<sup>56</sup>
- A meta-analysis of 22 studies identified clear evidence that pornography consumption increases physical and verbal sexual aggression. The association was significant across different countries and demographics.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Mónica Fernández-Ruiz, Olga María López-Entrambasaguas, Jose Manuel Martínez-Linares, and José Granero-Molina. 2023. “Young Women’s Attitudes and Concerns Regarding Pornography and Their Sexual Experiences: A Qualitative Approach.” *Healthcare* 11 (21): 2877–77. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11212877>.

<sup>48</sup> “APA PsycNet.” 2024. Apa.org. 2024. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fvio0000198>.

<sup>49</sup> “Most Young Women Unhappy, Stressed about Their Sex Lives: Study.” 2020. Monash University. February 25, 2020. <https://www.monash.edu/news/articles/most-young-women-unhappy,-stressed-about-their-sex-lives-study>.

<sup>50</sup> Tarzia, Laura, and Meagan Tyler. 2020. “Recognizing Connections between Intimate Partner Sexual Violence and Pornography.” *Violence against Women* 27 (14): 2687–2708. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801220971352>.

<sup>51</sup> Mónica Fernández-Ruiz, Olga María López-Entrambasaguas, Jose Manuel Martínez-Linares, and José Granero-Molina. 2023. “Young Women’s Attitudes and Concerns Regarding Pornography and Their Sexual Experiences: A Qualitative Approach.” *Healthcare* 11 (21): 2877–77. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11212877>.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Ashton, Sarah, Karalyn McDonald, and Maggie Kirkman. 2019. “Pornography and Women’s Sexual Pleasure: Accounts from Young Women in Australia.” *Feminism & Psychology* 29 (3): 409–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353519833410>.

<sup>54</sup> Malamuth, N. M., Addison, T., & Koss, M. (2000). Pornography and sexual aggression: Are there reliable effects and can we understand them? *Annual Review of Sex Research*, 11(1), 26-91. doi:10.1080/10532528.2000.10559784

<sup>55</sup> Wright, P. J., Tokunaga, R. S., & Kraus, A. (2016). A meta-analysis of pornography consumption and actual acts of sexual aggression in general population studies. *Journal of Communication*, 66(1), 183-205. doi:10.1111/jcom.12201

<sup>56</sup> Lim, M. S. C., Agius, P. A., Carrotte, E. R., Vella, A. M., & Hellard, M. E. (2017). Young Australians’ use of pornography and associations with sexual risk behaviours. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 41(4), 438-443. doi:10.1111/1753-6405.12678

<sup>57</sup> DeKeseredy, W. S., & Corsianos, M. (2016). *Violence against women in pornography*. Routledge.

Despite these risks, violent pornographic content is widespread. Studies show up to 90% of pornography depicts violence and disrespect towards women.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, an analysis of 304 scenes from popular porn videos found that 88% of scenes contained physical aggression (e.g., spanking, gagging, slapping), and 48% contained verbal aggression (e.g., insults, threats).<sup>59</sup> Women were the targets of aggression in 94% of these scenes, showing pleasure, neutrality, or submission in response.

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<sup>58</sup> Chrisafis, A. (2023). Online pornography breaks French law, equality watchdog says. *The*

*Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/27/online-pornography-breaks-french-law-equality-watchdog-france>

<sup>59</sup> Bridges, A. J., Wosnitzer, R., Scharrer, E., Sun, C., & Liberman, R. (2010). Aggression and sexual behavior in best-selling pornography videos: A content analysis update. *Violence Against Women*, 16(10), 1065-1085. doi:10.1177/1077801210382866

# PRIMARY RESEARCH

## 5. YWA Survey Findings

In the YWA survey, respondents were asked to rate a battery of statements on a 10-point scale, with select statements displayed in various tables below.

### 5.1 Sex Life

Men find casual sex more empowering, view sex as being about power, and receive better education on sex and consent. Conversely, women indicate they lack adequate sex and consent education and more often experience sex as painful or disempowering.

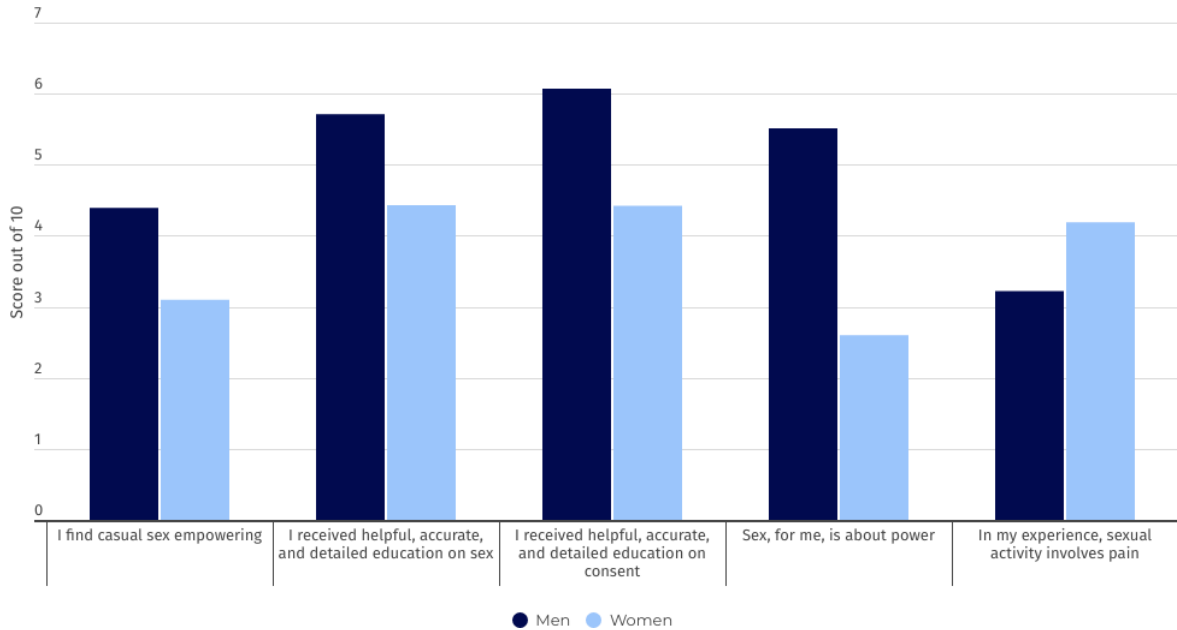
Table 1: Sex Life by gender

| Sex Life<br>Variable  | Gender Identity |             |
|---|-----------------|-------------|
|   | Men             | Women       |
| I find casual sex empowering                                    | 4.39 (5.00)     | 3.10 (3.00) |
| I received helpful, accurate, and detailed education on sex     | 5.71 (6.00)     | 4.43 (4.00) |
| I received helpful, accurate, and detailed education on consent | 6.07 (6.00)     | 4.42 (4.00) |
| Sex, for me, is about power                                     | 5.51 (5.00)     | 2.60 (2.00) |
| In my experience, sexual activity involves pain                 | 3.22 (3.00)     | 4.19 (4.00) |

(\*Note: Mean (Median))



Figure 1: Sex Life by Gender



## 5.2 Relationships

Traditional gender roles remain prevalent, with emphasis on following expected norms and behaviours for each gender in, typically heterosexual, relationship settings. Women note that men expect them to be soft and sweet; men note that women expect them to be strong and independent.

Women express a higher desire for control in their romantic relationships than men. When asked to explain their desire for control, women say it helps them mitigate emotional pain; in past relationships, a lack of control has led to anxiety, insecurity, and abandonment. Men, on the other hand, emphasise the benefits of control, particularly being able to have and do what you want, how you want, and when you want.

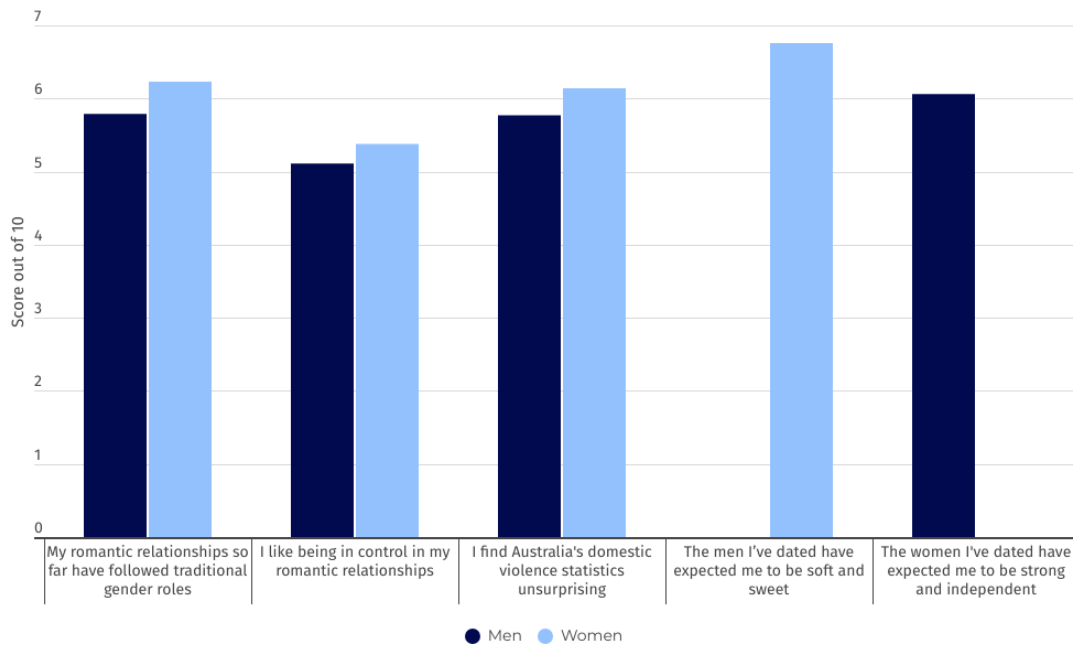
On current domestic violence statistics in Australia, women find these less surprising than men, however, both genders are unsurprised.

Table 2: Relationships by gender

| Relationships<br>Variable   | Gender Identity |             |
|---|-----------------|-------------|
|   | Men             | Women       |
| My romantic relationships so far have followed traditional gender roles | 5.79 (6.00)     | 6.23 (7.00) |
| I like being in control in my romantic relationships                    | 5.11 (5.00)     | 5.38 (5.00) |
| I find Australia's domestic violence statistics unsurprising            | 5.77 (6.00)     | 6.14 (6.00) |
| The women I've dated have expected me to be strong and independent      | 6.06 (6.00)     | -           |
| The men I've dated have expected me to be soft and sweet                | -               | 6.76 (7.00) |

(\*Note: Mean (Median) - indicates the question was not asked of this gender)

Figure 2: Relationships by gender



### 5.3 Contributing Factors - Men are Better than Women

Survey respondents were asked to score which factors most contribute to the belief that men are better and deserve more rights and/or opportunities than women. Respondents scored them in the following order (most to least contribution):

(\*Note: All scores out of 8. Mean scores reported for the total gender sample.)

#### 1. Gender Roles (specific roles or jobs society expects women and men to do)

Gender roles significantly influence attitudes towards gender inequality. Both men and women score traditional gender roles as the highest contributing factor (5.67 for men; 5.39 for women) as these roles deem that men should dominate leadership and decision-making, while women should occupy supportive and caregiving roles.

#### 2. Sexualisation of Women (seeing women sexualised across various mediums)

The sexualisation of women is a significant contributing factor. Men (5.19) score it higher than women (4.49). This disparity suggests that men are more likely to be aware of female sexualisation in society and to regard this as an indication of women's inferiority. Higher-income males, in particular, rate this factor significantly higher, indicating that socio-economic status may exacerbate these attitudes.

#### 3. Economic Systems (financial structures where men are at the top)

Men (5.06) score economic systems slightly higher than women (4.69). Thus, current economic systems, which favour men, contribute to the belief that they deserve more rights and/or opportunities than women.

#### 4. Insecurity (feelings of confusion and inadequacy about men's role in a progressive society)

Insecurity is a notable factor. Men score this 4.58 compared to women who score it 4.31. However, among males, those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent score insecurity as a lower factor compared to non-Indigenous males. Cultural and identity factors may influence the level of insecurity felt by different groups as others acquire rights and power, and the extent to which they aspire for social recognition.

#### 5. Religion (some religious texts promote male leadership and authority)

Religion also influences beliefs about gender roles and superiority. Both genders score this factor similarly (4.40 for men; 4.28 for women).

#### 6. Copying Others' Behaviour (learning and copying the behaviour of male figures)

Copying others' behaviour propagates gender inequality. Men (4.50) score this higher than females (4.16); demonstrating how social learning and peer influence inform gender inequality.

#### 7. Porn (seeing men dominate and be violent towards women in porn)

Pornographic content reinforces harmful stereotypes and objectification of women; porn, much of which is violent, shows men being violent towards and/or dominating women. The consumption of porn is a more significant contributing factor for men (4.00) than women (3.83). Notably, males of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent score porn as a higher factor than their non-Indigenous counterparts.

8. Day-to-Day Interactions (among the people I talk to, men are generally better than women)

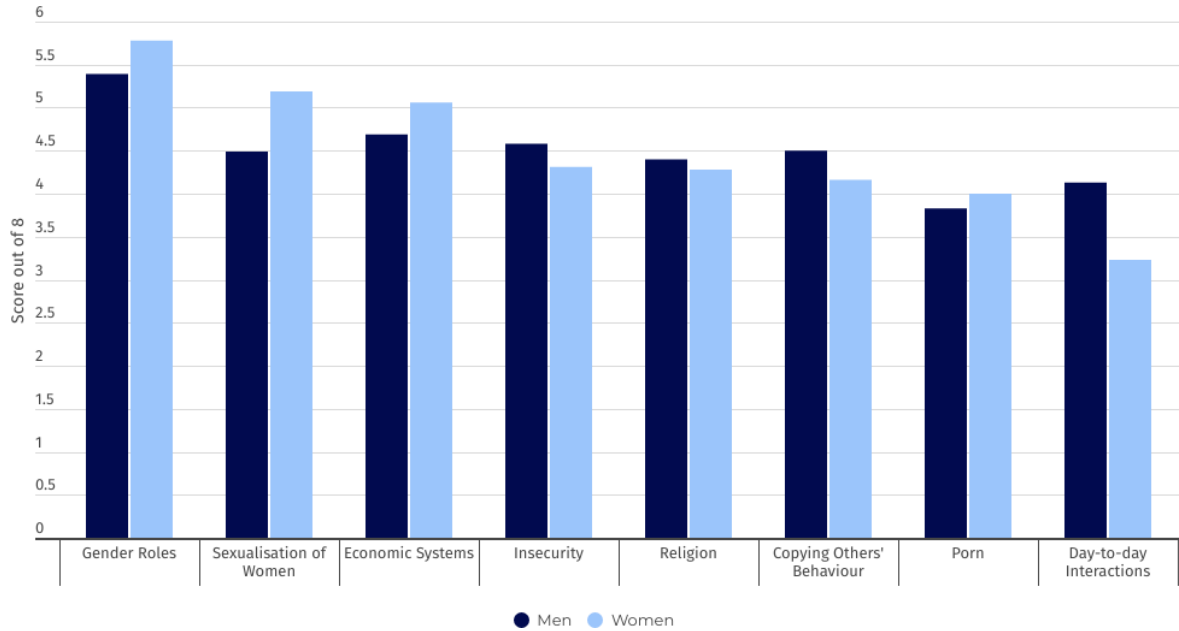
Men (4.13) score day-to-day interactions higher than women (3.23).

Table 3: Factors contributing to the belief that men are better and deserve more rights and/or opportunities than women by gender

| Factors contributing to belief that men are better and deserve more rights and/or opportunities than women | Gender Identity |             |
|--|-----------------|-------------|
|  | Men             | Women       |
| Gender Roles   | 5.39 (5.00)     | 5.78 (6.00) |
| Sexualisation of Women   | 4.49 (4.00)     | 5.19 (5.00) |
| Economic Systems   | 4.69 (5.00)     | 5.06 (5.00) |
| Insecurity   | 4.58 (5.00)     | 4.31 (4.00) |
| Religion   | 4.40 (4.00)     | 4.28 (4.00) |
| Copying Others' Behaviour  | 4.50 (4.00)     | 4.16 (4.00) |
| Porn   | 3.83 (3.00)     | 4.00 (4.00) |
| Day-to-day Interactions  | 4.13 (4.00)     | 3.23 (3.00) |

(\*Note: Mean (Median))

Figure 3: Factors contributing to the belief that men are better and deserve more rights and/or opportunities than women by gender



### 5.4 Intersection of Gender & Australian Society

Rating opinions on societal values and attitudes, again, on a 10-point scale, women express greater concern about how men are raised and the daily oppression they face under the patriarchy. Men are more likely to believe that society values men and women equally. Further, men demonstrate a stronger belief in their ability to influence Australian society.

Both genders agree that social media perpetuates negative gender stereotypes, with men endorsing this more strongly.

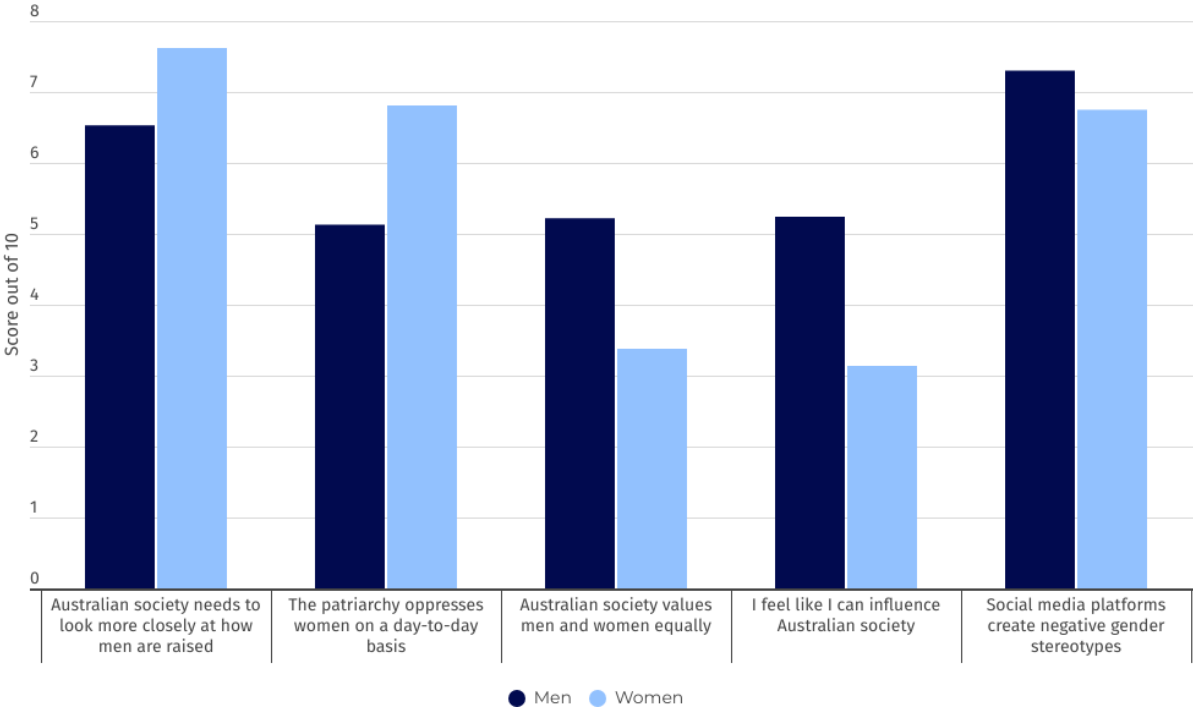
Table 4: Perceptions of Australian Society by gender

| Australian Society<br>Variable                                      | Gender Identity |             |
|---|-----------------|-------------|
|   | Men             | Women       |
| Australian society needs to look more closely at how men are raised | 6.53 (7.00)     | 7.62 (8.00) |
| The patriarchy oppresses women on a day-to-day basis                | 5.13 (5.00)     | 6.81 (7.00) |

|   |             |             |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Australian society values men and women equally           | 5.22 (5.00) | 3.38 (3.00) |
| I feel like I can influence Australian society            | 5.24 (5.00) | 3.14 (3.00) |
| Social media platforms create negative gender stereotypes | 7.30 (7.00) | 6.75 (6.00) |

(\*Note: Mean (Median))

Figure 4: Australian Society by gender



**5.5 Solution Preferences of Men with & without GBV Perpetration**

Preferences of men reporting no perpetration and perpetration of GBV were compared. They were asked in the YWA survey: for you personally, what would be most effective in improving your views about and behaviours toward women?

All men highly value (rating 8 or higher out of 10) “finding a way to feel better about myself and my role in society; having more life purpose,” although men reporting perpetration of GBV value this even more. There appears a universal male desire for personal and societal validation, particularly prevalent among those whose actions perpetuate inequality. Both groups similarly value interventions like being friends

with a different crowd, having more female friends, spending less time on social media, not watching porn, male-led discussion groups, mentorship programs, interactive workshops, media literacy programs, and gender equality festivals.

Additionally, the data reveals other demographic differences:

- Non-White/EU respondents place more importance on finding a way to feel better about themselves and not watching porn compared to White/EU respondents. A media literacy program is significantly more valued by Non-White/EU respondents as an intervention.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents place significantly less importance on finding a way to feel better about themselves, male-led discussion groups, and media literacy programs compared to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.
- Male-led discussion groups addressing issues of masculinity and gender are significantly less valued by respondents from remote or regional areas compared to those from cities.

Table 5: Most effective measure to improve views about and behaviours toward women by GBV Perpetration Score<sup>60</sup>

| For you personally, what would be most effective in improving your views about and behaviours toward women? | GBV Perpetration |                 |
|---|------------------|-----------------|
|   | Perpetration     | No Perpetration |
| Finding a way to feel better about myself and my role in society; having more life purpose                  | 8.98 (9.00)      | 8.20 (8.00)     |
| Being friends with a different crowd  | 5.56 (5.00)      | 6.26 (6.00)     |
| Having more female friends  | 5.58 (5.00)      | 6.07 (6.00)     |
| Spending less time on social media  | 5.59 (5.00)      | 5.88 (6.00)     |
| Not watching porn   | 5.90 (6.00)      | 5.48 (5.00)     |
| Male-led discussion groups that openly address issues of masculinity and gender                             | 5.70 (5.00)      | 5.47 (5.00)     |
| A mentorship program where men in leadership positions advocate for and demonstrate gender equality         | 5.40 (5.00)      | 5.48 (5.00)     |
| A series of interactive workshops for boys and men facilitated by gender equality advocates                 | 5.39 (5.00)      | 5.23 (5.00)     |

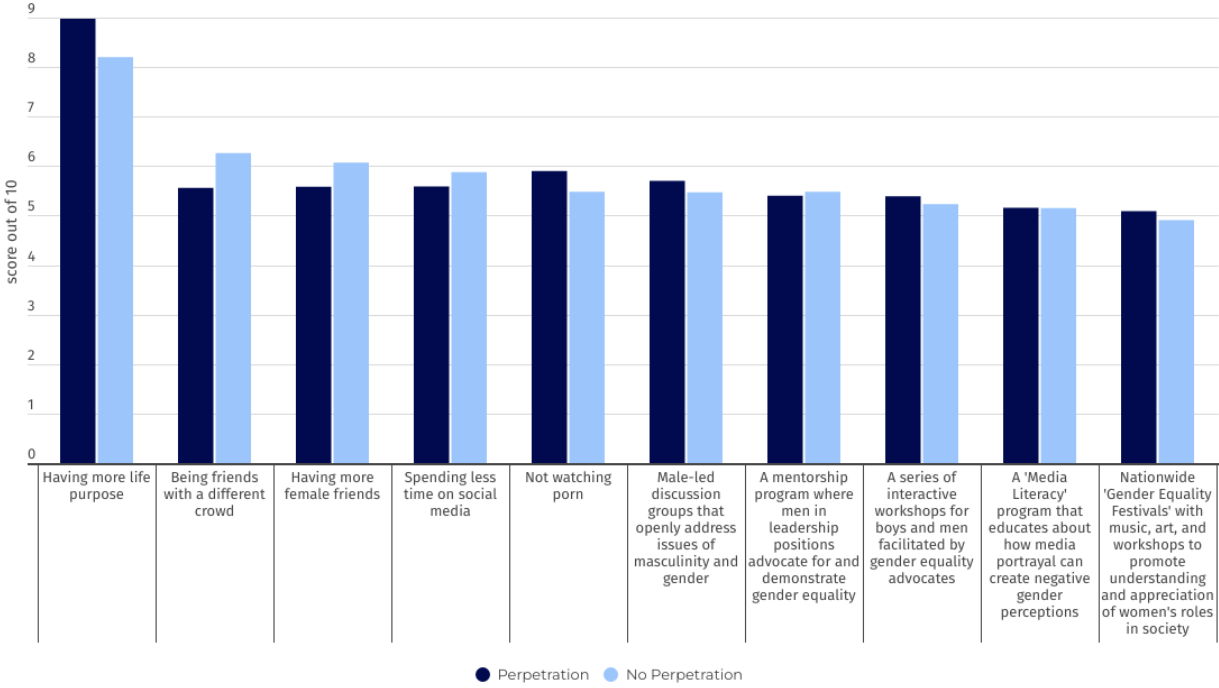
<sup>60</sup>See components of GBV Perpetration Score in 5.11 Correlations Among Composite Scores



|   |             |             |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| A 'Media Literacy' program that educates about how media portrayal can create negative gender perceptions                                   | 5.16 (5.00) | 5.15 (5.00) |
| Nationwide 'Gender Equality Festivals' with music, art, and workshops to promote understanding and appreciation of women's roles in society | 5.09 (5.00) | 4.91 (5.00) |

(\*Note: Mean (Median))

Figure 5: Most effective measure to improve views about and behaviours toward women by GBV Perpetration Score<sup>61</sup>



### 5.6 Solution Preferences of Women

Women’s preferences on effective gender-based violence interventions were sought in the YWA survey by asking: What would be most effective as a gender-based violence intervention?

Harsher consequences for gender-based violence record the highest mean scores (7.91 and 7.58) and median scores (both 9.00) across women with and without a bachelor's degree. This suggests a widespread belief that increased punitive measures are an effective deterrent. The high ranking likely reflects a desire for justice and accountability, as well as a belief that current consequences are insufficient to prevent GBV.

<sup>61</sup> See components of GBV Perpetration Score in 5.11 Correlations Among Composite Scores

Workshops for men teaching responsibilities and respectful behaviour rank second overall, with mean scores of 7.59 and 6.89 for those with and without bachelor's degrees, respectively. This high ranking indicates a recognition that addressing male behaviour and attitudes is crucial in combating gender violence.

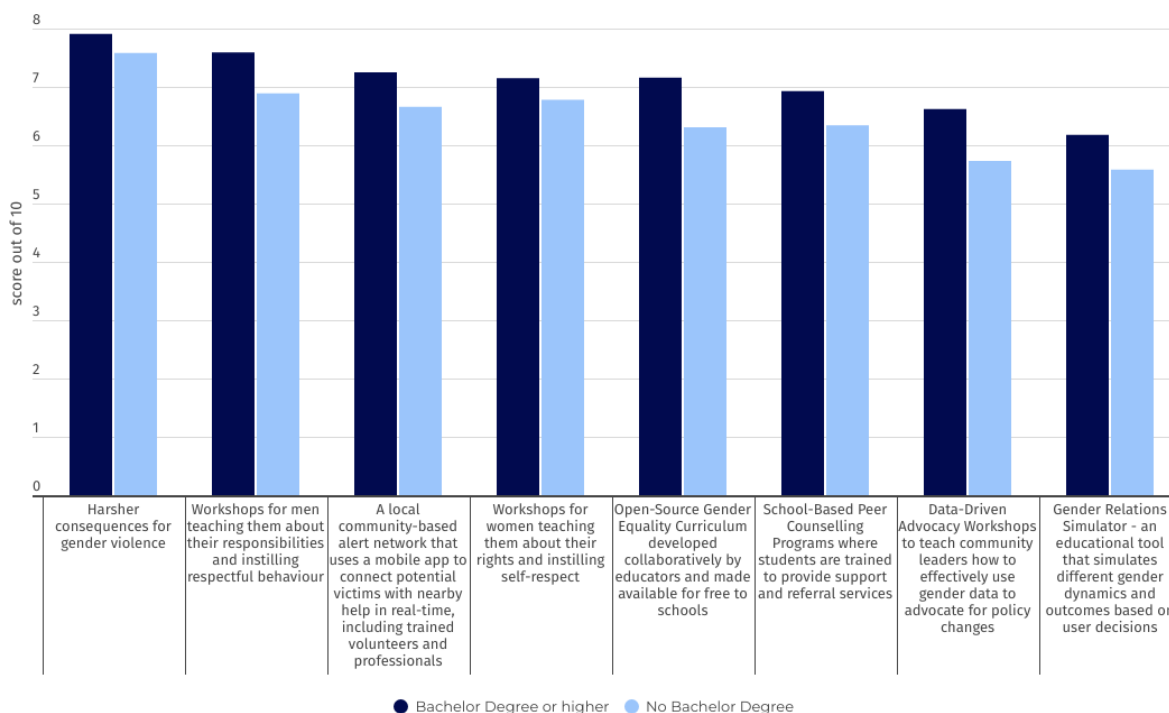
A real-time community alert network (using mobile apps to connect at-risk community members) also receives support across both groups (mean scores of 7.25 and 6.66). Technology-driven solutions can provide immediate, practical assistance to victims; there is a perceived value of community involvement and rapid response in addressing GBV.

Table 6: Most effective gender-based violence interventions

| What would be most effective as a gender-based violence intervention?   | Education Level           |                    |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------|
|   | Bachelor Degree or higher | No Bachelor Degree |
| Harsher consequences for gender-based violence  | 7.91 (9.00)               | 7.58 (9.00)        |
| Workshops for men teaching them about their responsibilities and instilling respectful behaviour  | 7.59 (8.00)               | 6.89 (7.00)        |
| A local community-based alert network that uses a mobile app to connect potential victims with nearby help in real-time, including trained volunteers and professionals | 7.25 (8.00)               | 6.66 (7.00)        |
| Workshops for women teaching them about their rights and instilling self-respect  | 7.15 (8.00)               | 6.78 (7.00)        |
| Open-Source Gender Equality Curriculum developed collaboratively by educators and made available for free to schools  | 7.16 (8.00)               | 6.31 (6.00)        |
| School-Based Peer Counseling Programs where students are trained to provide support and referral services   | 6.93 (7.00)               | 6.34 (7.00)        |
| Data-Driven Advocacy Workshops to teach community leaders how to effectively use gender data to advocate for policy changes   | 6.62 (7.00)               | 5.73 (5.00)        |
| Gender Relations Simulator — an educational tool that simulates different gender dynamics and outcomes based on user decisions  | 6.18 (6.00)               | 5.58 (5.00)        |

(\*Note: Mean (Median))

Figure 6: Most effective gender-based violence interventions



Further demographic differences emerge with Non-White/EU women preferring school-based peer counselling programs, and women with annual incomes less than AUD \$52, 000 preferring data-driven advocacy workshops and an open-source gender equality curriculum.

### 5.7 GBV Risk Profile

YWA developed an original scale—GBV Risk Profile—in collaboration with men's behavioural change practitioners, to create a risk profile for GBV perpetration. It measures the presence and prevalence of negative psychological traits and life instability in male respondents. Analysis reveals strong correlations between YWA’s original scale and self-reported GBV perpetration. These correlations are stronger than those between the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI)<sup>62</sup> and GBV perpetration, a validated and widely studied scale in academia. Accordingly, YWA’s scale could help identify individuals at risk of perpetrating GBV, and thus inform preventive measures, such as targeted policy deployment, against GBV.

The comparison of GBV Risk Profiles between men in city areas and those in remote or regional areas was conducted, revealing significant differences. Men living in remote or regional areas are more likely to feel overwhelmed in stressful situations and have past relationship issues affect their current relationships.

<sup>62</sup>Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) is a 22-item measure for identifying sexist perceptions, attitudes, and opinions.

They also show a higher prevalence of disorganised personal and professional lives, disbelief in gender equality, and being bothered when a partner wants alone time. Conversely, men in cities are more likely to fear losing their job.

Table 7 focuses on moderate to high GBV risk profiles, defined as scoring 6-10 on a 10-point scale. Table 8 examines high GBV risk profiles, identified by scores of 8-10 on the same 10-point scale.

Table 7: Prevalence of Moderate GBV Risk Profile Traits

| Prevalence of <b>Moderate GBV Risk Profile Traits</b> (6-10 points out of 10) in Men | Area (current) |                 |
|--|----------------|-----------------|
|  | City           | Remote/Regional |
| Blame Themselves for Problems  | 60.3%          | 68.4%           |
| Overwhelmed in Stressful Situations  | 57.7%          | 80.8%           |
| Fear of Losing Job   | 60.7%          | 38.4%           |
| Past Relationship Issues Affect Current Ones   | 51.5%          | 71.2%           |
| Need to Always Appear Strong and in Control  | 53.7%          | 51.6%           |
| Hard to Move on After Relationship Ends  | 50.3%          | 43.3%           |
| Mental Health Challenges Interfere with Daily Life                                   | 44.8%          | 39.5%           |
| Jealous of Friends' Success  | 40.3%          | 43.8%           |
| Hard to See Woman's Side in Disagreements  | 32.8%          | 40.7%           |
| Stay Angry for a Long Time   | 34.2%          | 31.2%           |
| Feel Unfairly Judged When Corrected  | 34.3%          | 21.7%           |

|   |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|
| Bothered When Partner Wants Alone Time        | 29.9% | 10.7% |
| Use Alcohol to Cope with Stress               | 26.1% | 21.9% |
| Disorganised Personal and Professional Life   | 22.6% | 43.9% |
| Use Drugs to Cope with Stress                 | 22.9% | 28.3% |
| Unstable Living Situation                     | 22.1% | 26.6% |
| Disbelief in Gender Equality                  | 10.5% | 27.5% |
| Unwilling to Share Household Responsibilities | 9.6%  | 18.0% |

Figure 7: Prevalence of Moderate GBV Risk Profile Traits by location

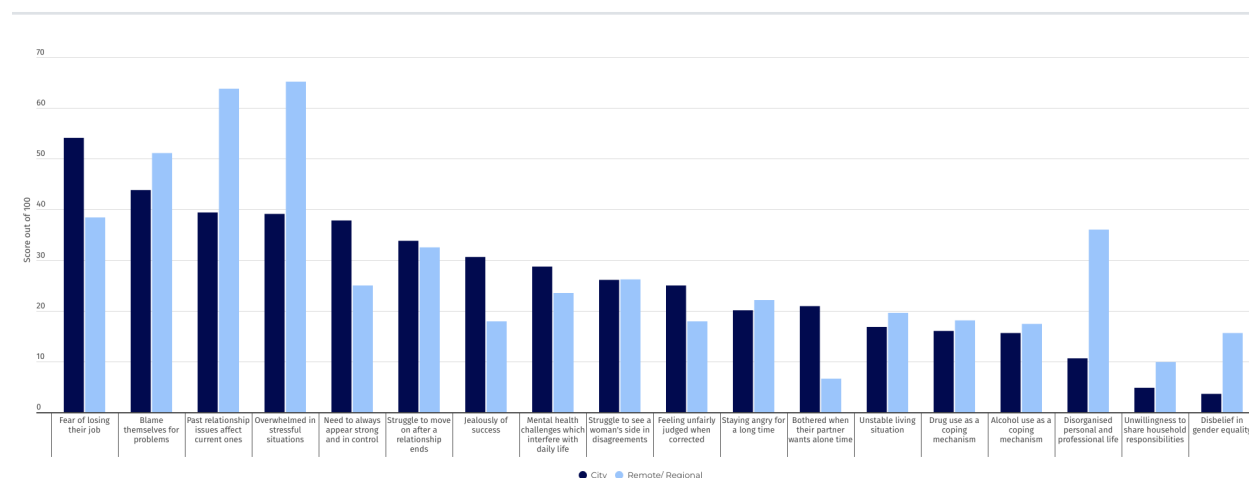


Table 8: Prevalence of High Expression of GBV Risk Profile Traits

| Prevalence of <b>High GBV Risk Profile Traits</b><br>(8-10 points out of 10) in Men |      | Area (current)  |  |
|---|------|-----------------|--|
| Variable  | City | Remote/Regional |  |

|  |       |       |
|--|-------|-------|
| Fear of Losing Job                                 | 54.1% | 38.4% |
| Blame Themselves for Problems                      | 43.8% | 51.1% |
| Past Relationship Issues Affect Current Ones       | 39.4% | 63.8% |
| Overwhelmed in Stressful Situations                | 39.1% | 65.2% |
| Need to Always Appear Strong and in Control        | 37.8% | 25.0% |
| Hard to Move on After Relationship Ends            | 33.8% | 32.5% |
| Jealous of Friends' Success                        | 30.6% | 17.9% |
| Mental Health Challenges Interfere with Daily Life | 28.7% | 23.5% |
| Hard to See Woman's Side in Disagreements          | 26.1% | 26.2% |
| Feel Unfairly Judged When Corrected                | 25.0% | 17.9% |
| Stay Angry for a Long Time                         | 20.1% | 22.1% |
| Bothered When Partner Wants Alone Time             | 20.9% | 6.6%  |
| Unstable Living Situation                          | 16.8% | 19.6% |
| Use Drugs to Cope with Stress                      | 16.0% | 18.1% |
| Use Alcohol to Cope with Stress                    | 15.6% | 17.4% |
| Disorganised Personal and Professional Life        | 10.6% | 36.0% |
| Unwilling to Share Household Responsibilities      | 4.8%  | 9.9%  |

|                              |      |       |
|------------------------------|------|-------|
| Disbelief in Gender Equality | 3.6% | 15.6% |
|------------------------------|------|-------|

### 5.8 YWA Original Time Progressions of GBV

YWA completed original time progression analysis<sup>63</sup> of GBV perpetration and exposure, revealing experiences in various life areas that correlate with increased risk. By understanding these key correlations, interventions can be precisely targeted to reduce GBV risk.

### 5.9 GBV Perpetration

This section explores positive and negative correlations between **young men’s**<sup>64</sup> experiences in various life areas and GBV perpetration.

#### 5.9.1. Family/Friends

GBV Perpetration Correlations:

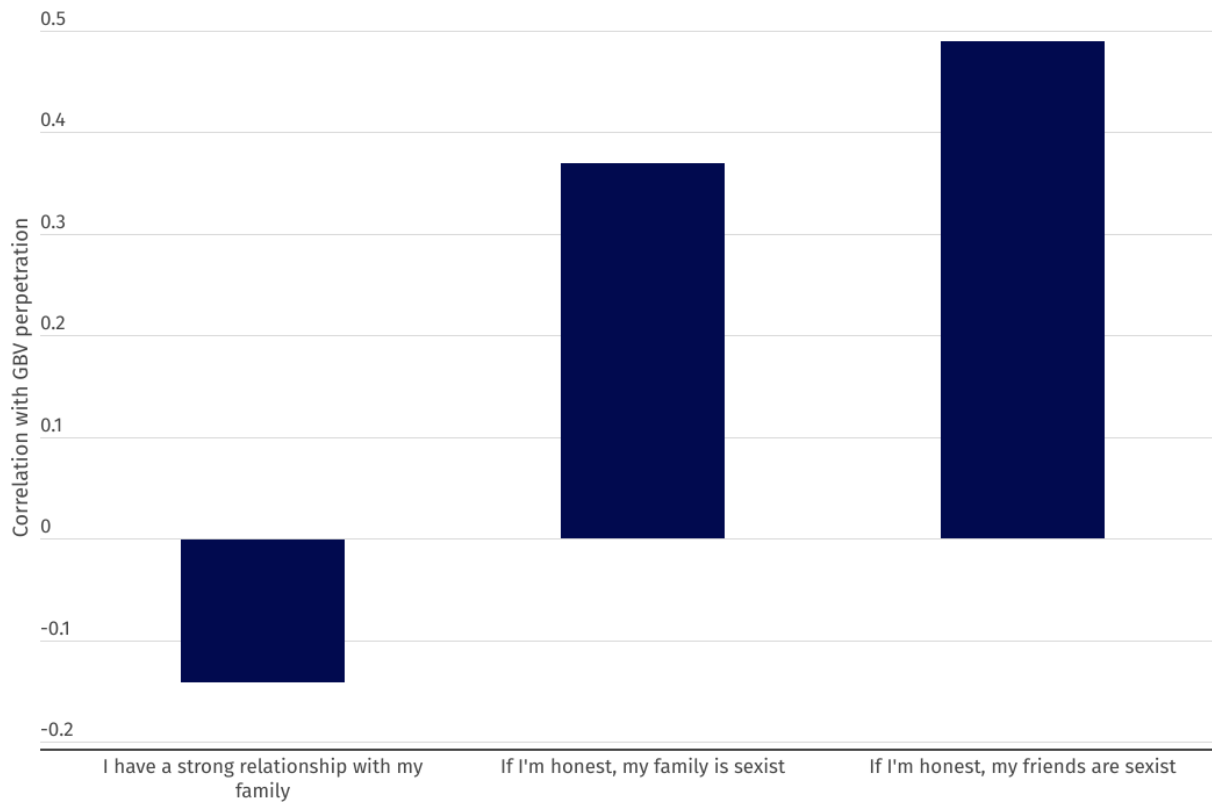
- If I'm honest, my family is sexist
- If I'm honest, my friends are sexist
- I have a strong relationship with my family

Sexist attitudes within family and friends (in particular) enforce harmful gender norms and contribute to GBV. Addressing these attitudes requires targeted interventions that promote gender equality within these close-knit groups. Family therapy sessions can help members understand and dismantle ingrained sexist beliefs, fostering a more supportive family dynamic. Community-based programs can facilitate discussions on gender equality, providing a space for individuals to challenge and change their views. Encouraging open conversations about gender roles and responsibilities within families and friendship groups can lead to a gradual shift in attitudes, reducing the risk of GBV. Notably, having a strong relationship with one's family negatively correlates with GBV perpetration, demonstrating the importance of supportive family dynamics in teaching men non-violent emotional regulation.

<sup>63</sup> Time progression analysis refers to how certain variables or conditions progress over time; in this case, GBV perpetration risk as respondents progress through life areas.

<sup>64</sup>The report adopts a certain binary in framing young men in the context of GBV perpetration and young women in the context of GBV exposure; this is based on statistical evidence of perpetration and exposure rates by gender. YWA acknowledges that these roles are somewhat fluid and not strictly binary. However, for the purposes of this analysis and report, this framing has been adopted without a shame-inducing or antagonistic approach.

Figure 8: Correlation between Attitudes of Friends/Family and GBV Perpetration (Men)



## 5.9.2 Health

### GBV Perpetration Correlations:

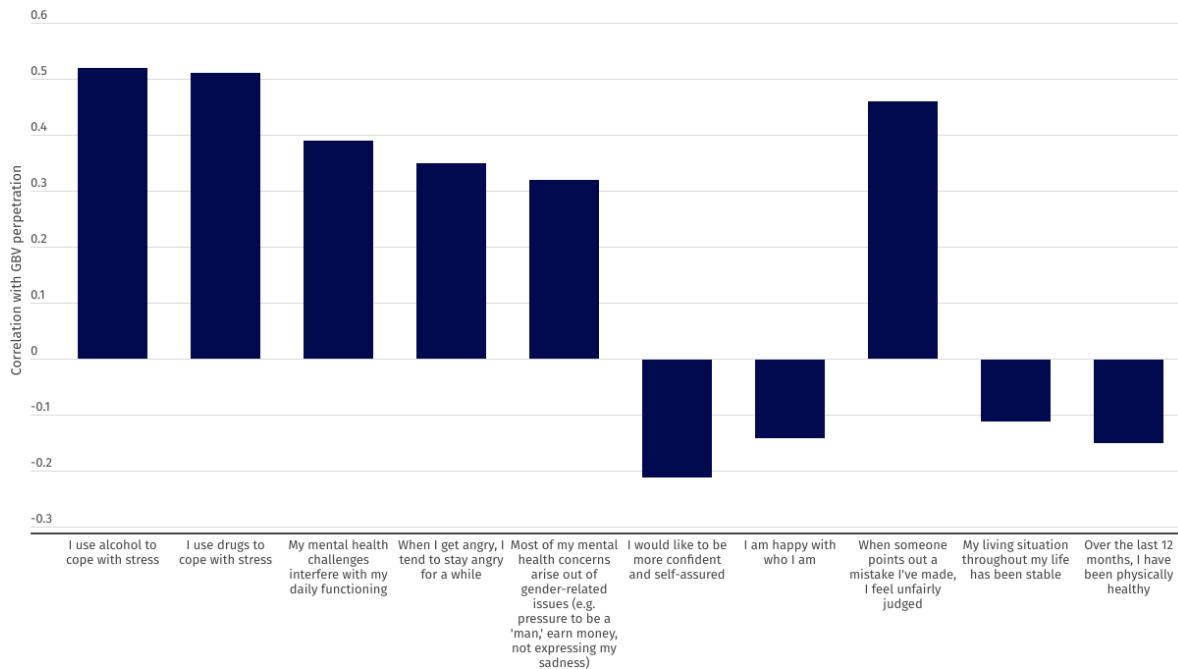
- I use alcohol to cope with stress
- I use drugs to cope with stress
- My mental health challenges interfere with my daily functioning
- When I get angry, I tend to stay angry for a while
- Most of my mental health concerns arise out of gender-related issues
- I would like to be more confident and self-assured
- I am happy with who I am
- When someone points out a mistake I've made, I feel unfairly judged
- My living situation throughout my life has been stable
- Over the last 12 months, I have been physically healthy

Mental health distress among men stems from societal pressures to conform to traditional masculine roles, leading to unhealthy coping mechanisms such as substance abuse. Interventions should focus on providing gender-sensitive mental health services that address these specific pressures. This includes creating support groups where men can discuss their challenges without fear of judgement and offering workshops on healthy coping strategies. Workplace initiatives, such as mental health days and stress



management programs, can also alleviate mental health issues by providing employees with tools and time to manage their stress effectively. The negative correlation with being physically healthy over the last year suggests that physical well-being is associated with lower GBV perpetration, highlighting the importance of holistic health approaches in these interventions.

Figure 9: Correlation between Mental & Physical Health and GBV Perpetration (Men)



### 5.9.3 Education & Financial Education

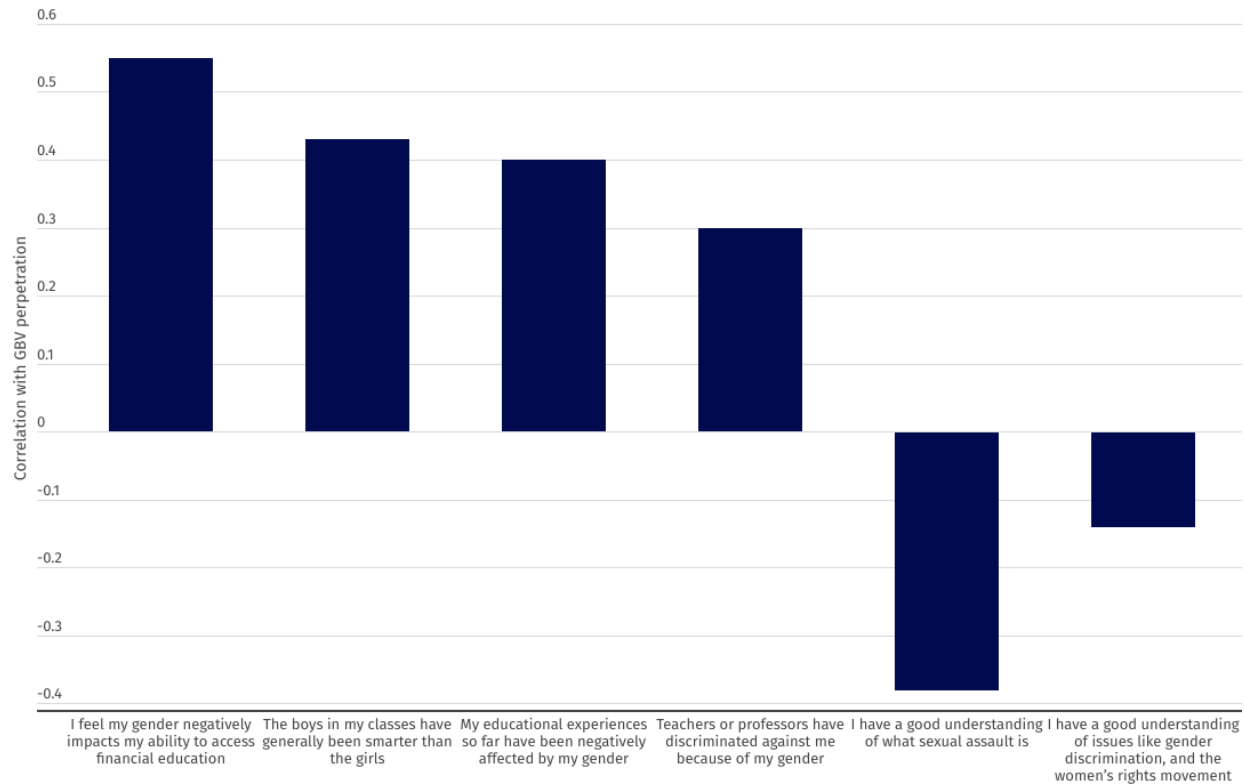
GBV Perpetration Correlations:

- I feel my gender negatively impacts my ability to access financial education
- The boys in my classes have generally been smarter than the girls
- My educational experiences so far have been negatively affected by my gender
- Teachers or professors have discriminated against me because of my gender
- I have a good understanding of what sexual assault is
- I have a good understanding of issues like gender discrimination, and the women's rights movement

Educational environments perpetuate gender biases that significantly affect students' academic experiences. The belief that boys are generally smarter than girls can lead to diminished self-esteem and academic performance among female students. Teachers' gender discrimination further exacerbates these disparities. Interventions should include mandatory training for educators to recognise and address their biases, thus creating a more equitable classroom environment. Integrating gender studies into the curriculum can help students understand the historical and social contexts of gender discrimination, fostering critical thinking and empathy. Having a good understanding of issues like gender discrimination

and the women’s rights movement correlates negatively with GBV perpetration. Hence, education is a powerful tool in reducing GBV.

Figure 10: Correlation between Education & Financial Education and GBV Perpetration (Men)



## 5.9.4 Relationships

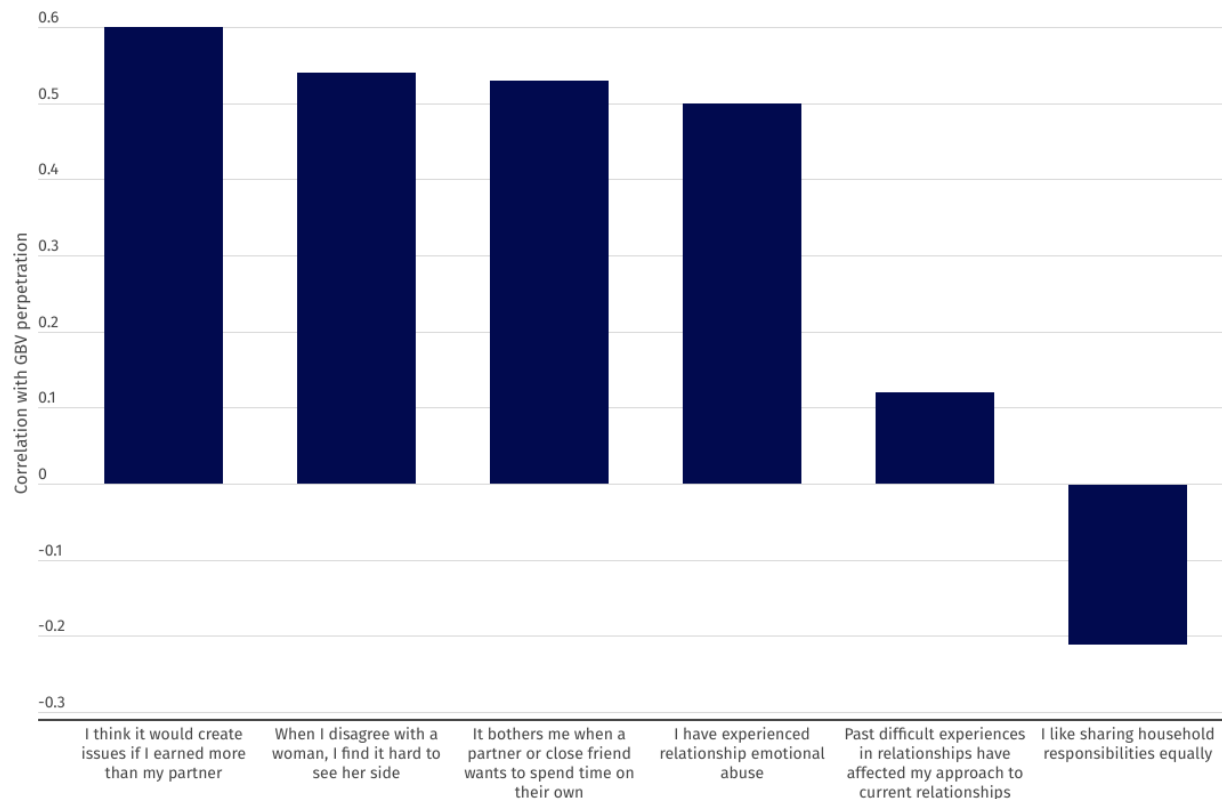
GBV Perpetration Correlations:

- I think it would create issues if I earned more than my partner
- When I disagree with a woman, I find it hard to see her side
- It bothers me when a partner or close friend wants to spend time on their own
- I have experienced relationship emotional abuse
- Past difficult experiences in relationships have affected my approach to current relationships
- I like sharing household responsibilities equally

Power imbalances and poor communication in relationships are significant risk factors for GBV. The concern about earning more than a partner and difficulty in understanding a woman's perspective during disagreements highlight entrenched gender norms. Interventions should focus on promoting equality within relationships, including financial equity and shared responsibilities. Relationship counselling and educational programs on conflict resolution and empathy can help couples navigate these issues more constructively. The negative correlation with enjoying equal household responsibilities suggests that fostering a sense of partnership and shared duties can mitigate GBV risk. Addressing past relationship

traumas and providing support for those experiencing emotional abuse can also help individuals form healthier, more respectful relationships.

Figure 11: Correlation between Relationship Experiences and GBV Perpetration (Men)



### 5.9.5 Sex

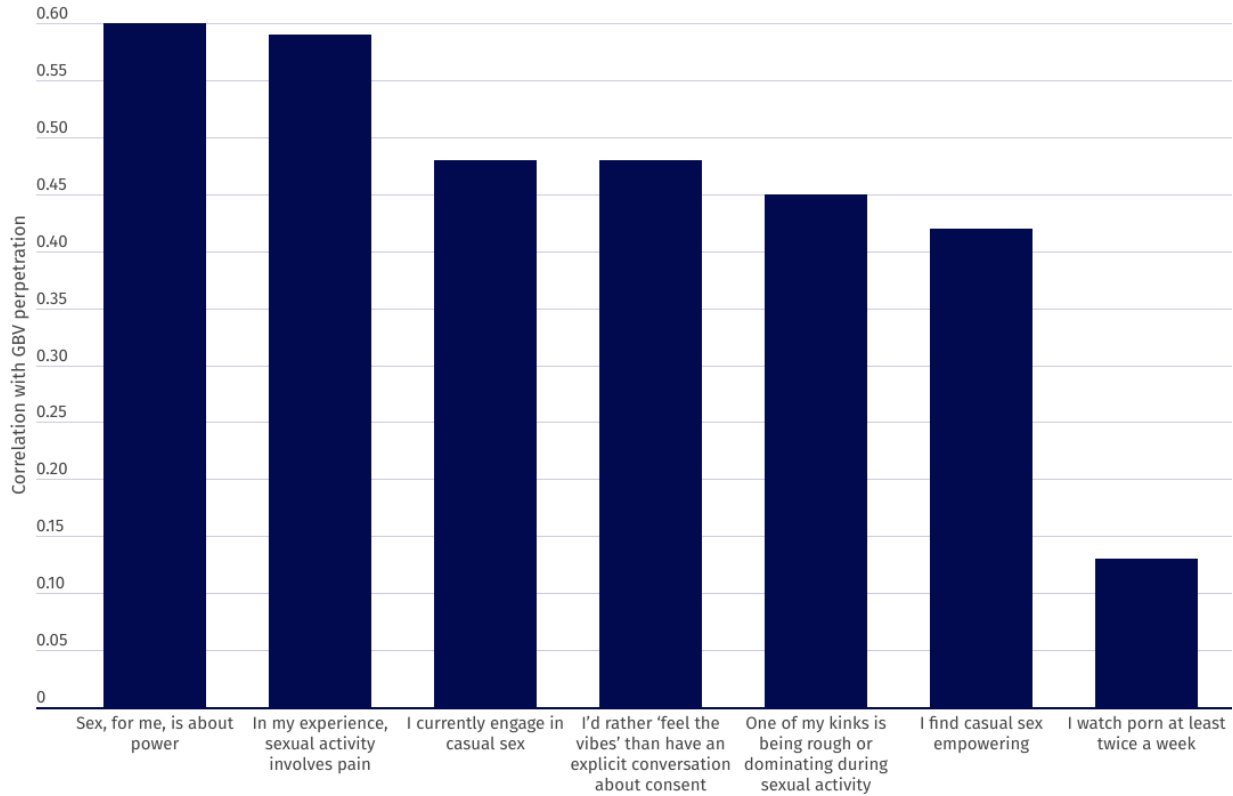
GBV Perpetration Correlations:

- Sex, for me, is about power
- In my experience, sexual activity involves pain
- I currently engage in casual sex
- I'd rather 'feel the vibes' than have an explicit conversation about consent
- One of my kinks is being rough or dominating during sexual activity
- I find casual sex empowering
- I watch porn at least twice a week

The correlations between perceptions of sex and GBV perpetration reveal areas for intervention. The belief that sex is about power and the preference for non-explicit consent suggest that many individuals may not fully understand or respect the concept of mutual consent. Comprehensive sex education that emphasises explicit and enthusiastic consent, respectful sexual practices, and the potential for harm in certain kinks can mitigate these issues. Additionally, addressing the normalisation of pain during sex and

frequent pornography consumption can help individuals form healthier sexual attitudes and behaviours, ultimately reducing GBV.

Figure 12: Correlation between Perceptions & Experiences of Sex and GBV Perpetration (Men)



### 5.9.6 Career

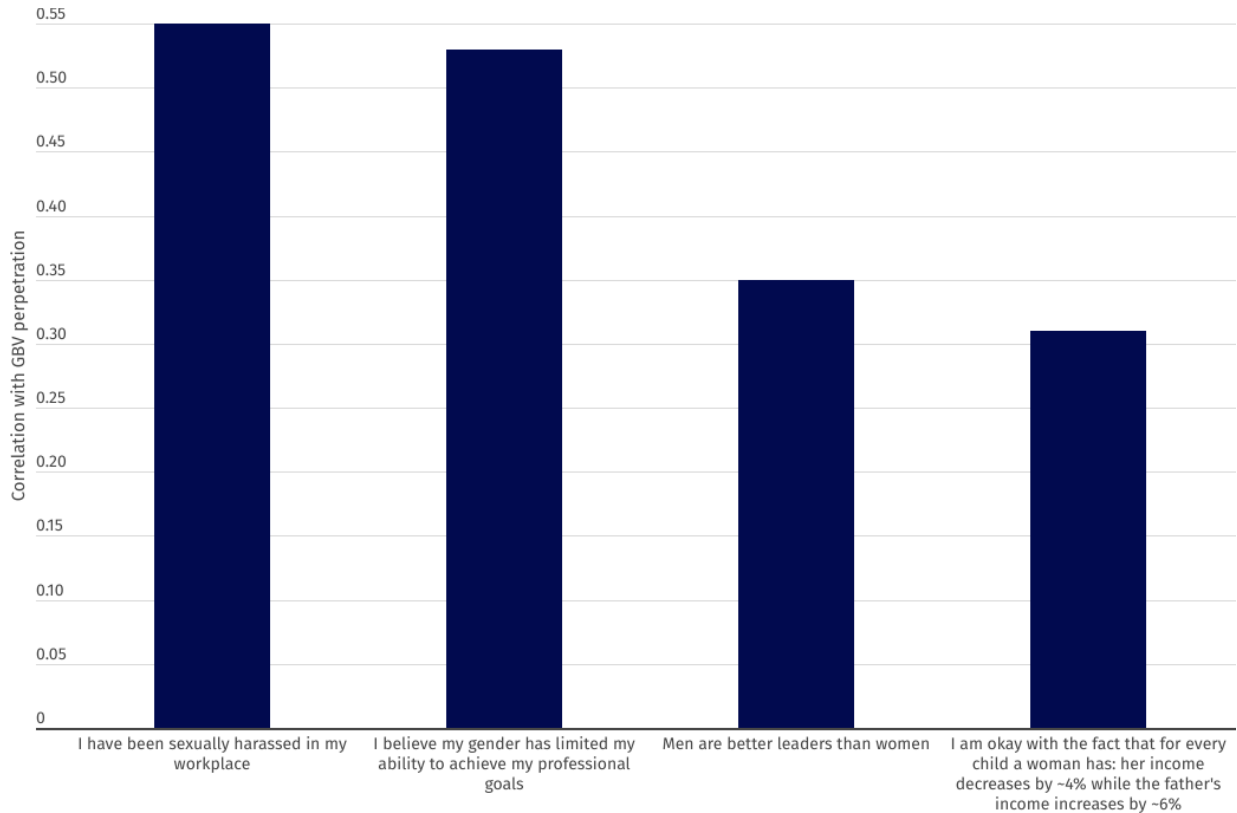
GBV Perpetration Correlations:

- I have been sexually harassed in my workplace
- I believe my gender has limited my ability to achieve my professional goals
- Men are better leaders than women
- I am okay with the fact that for every child a woman has: her income decreases by ~4% while the father's income increases by ~6%

Workplace harassment and gender discrimination hinder professional growth and contribute to a hostile work environment. Interventions should include the enforcement of strict anti-harassment policies and the establishment of clear reporting mechanisms. Providing equal access to financial education and professional development opportunities can help bridge gender gaps in career progression. Mentorship programs that pair experienced professionals with those facing gender-based challenges can offer guidance and support, helping to navigate and overcome these barriers. Promoting transparency in hiring

and promotion practices ensures that all employees have equal opportunities to advance based on merit. These steps can reduce the systemic issues that contribute to GBV in professional settings.

Figure 13: Correlation between Career experiences and GBV Perpetration (Men)



### 5.9.7 Indexes

GBV Perpetration Correlations:

- Personal and Mental Health Distress Score
- Gender and Sexuality-Related Distress Score
- Gender Bias Index
- Gender and Relationship Distress Score 6+

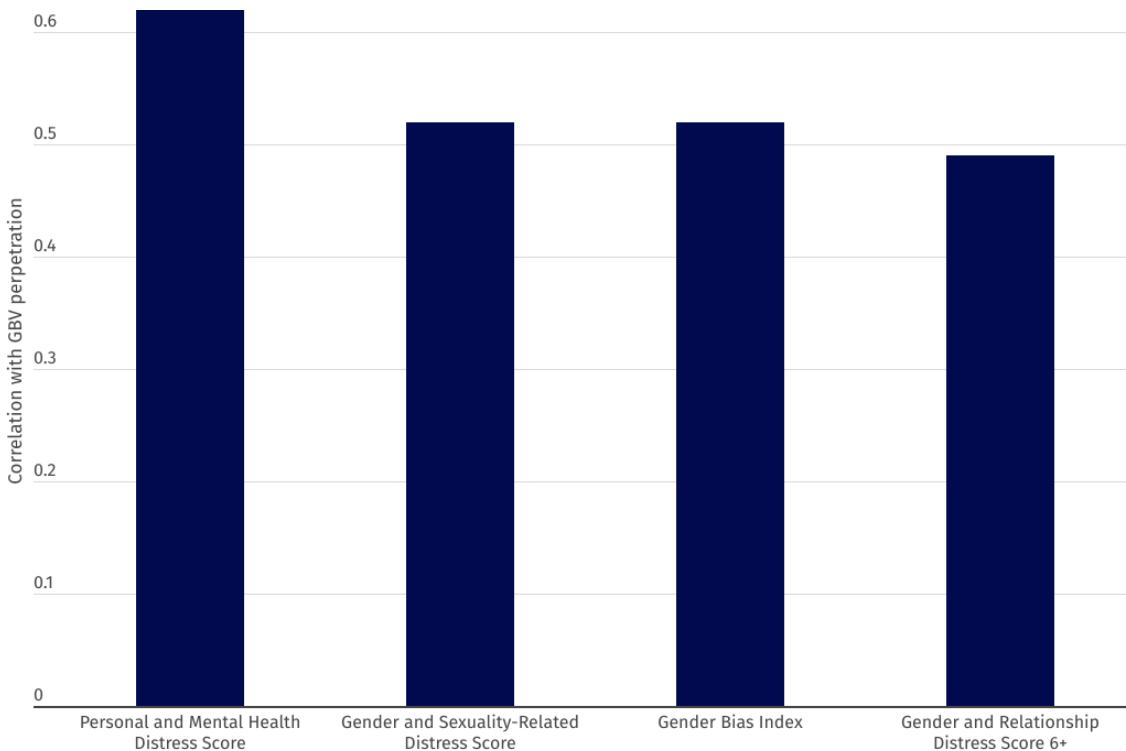
High scores on distress and bias indexes indicate significant areas for targeted interventions. Personal and mental health distress and gender-related distress suggest that individuals experiencing these issues may be more likely to perpetrate GBV. Comprehensive mental health services that address gender-specific challenges can help alleviate these distress factors. The Gender Bias Index and Gender and Relationship

Distress Score clarify the need for educational interventions which challenge harmful gender norms. Promoting egalitarian views and reducing gender-based distress through community support programs can be effective strategies for lowering GBV risk.

**Overall**, the data reveals that sexist attitudes and beliefs among males often form early in life, particularly through educational experiences where boys are perceived as smarter and gender discrimination by teachers is common. These early experiences contribute to entrenched gender biases and power dynamics that manifest in later behaviours. Men who view sex as a power dynamic and who struggle with explicit communication around consent are significantly more likely to perpetrate GBV. Additionally, mental health distress, influenced by societal pressures to conform to traditional masculine roles and the use of unhealthy coping mechanisms such as alcohol and drugs, is a critical factor in GBV perpetration. Workplace environments where sexual harassment and gender discrimination are prevalent further exacerbate these behaviours, reinforcing negative attitudes towards women.

Interventions should focus on addressing these issues through comprehensive sex education that emphasises consent and respect, mental health support tailored to address gender-specific challenges, and strict anti-harassment policies in professional settings. Notably, the data shows that having a good understanding of issues like gender discrimination, sexual assault, and the women’s rights movement, enjoying equal household responsibilities, and being physically healthy all correlate negatively with GBV perpetration. This indicates that education on gender issues, fostering egalitarian views, and promoting overall well-being can significantly reduce GBV perpetration.

Figure 14: Correlation between YWA Index scores and GBV Perpetration (Men)



## 5.10 GBV Exposure

This section explores positive and negative correlations between **young women's**<sup>65</sup> experiences in various life areas and GBV exposure.

### 5.10.1 Family/Friends

GBV Exposure Correlations:

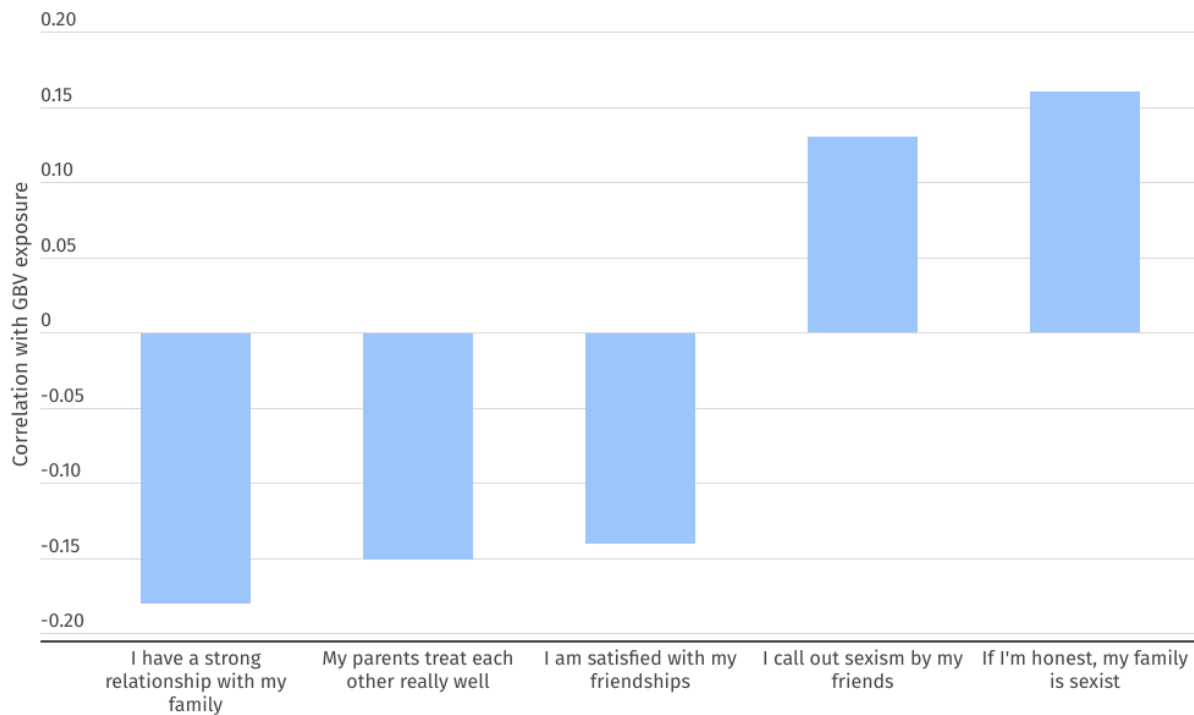
- I have a strong relationship with my family
- My parents treat each other really well
- I am satisfied with my friendships
- I call out sexism by my friends
- If I'm honest, my family is sexist

Strong, supportive relationships with family and friends are crucial in reducing GBV exposure. Positive family dynamics and satisfaction with friendships provide emotional support that acts as a buffer against GBV. Calling out sexism among friends indicates an active stance against harmful behaviours, which can create a more respectful social environment. However, the presence of sexism within families must be addressed. Family therapy and community programs that address and challenge sexist attitudes can foster healthier relationships and reduce GBV exposure. Encouraging open discussions about gender roles and responsibilities within families and friendships can lead to meaningful changes in attitudes and behaviours.

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<sup>65</sup>The report adopts a certain binary in framing young men in the context of GBV perpetration and young women in the context of GBV exposure; this is based on statistical evidence of perpetration and exposure rates by gender. YWA acknowledges that these roles are somewhat fluid and not strictly binary. However, for the purposes of this analysis and report, this framing has been adopted without a shame-inducing or antagonistic approach.

Figure 15: Correlation between Attitudes of Family/Friends and GBV Exposure (Women)



### 5.10.2 Health

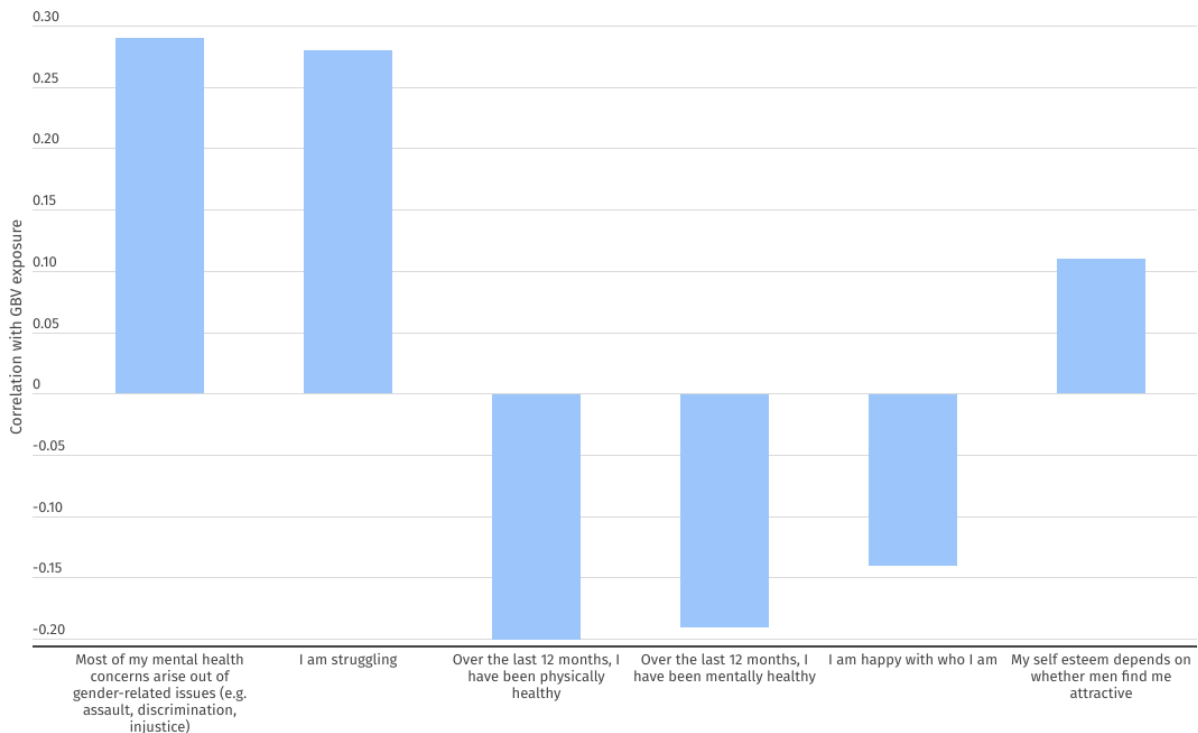
#### GBV Exposure Correlations:

- Most of my mental health concerns arise out of gender-related issues (e.g. assault, discrimination, injustice)
- I am struggling
- Over the last 12 months, I have been physically healthy
- Over the last 12 months, I have been mentally healthy
- I am happy with who I am
- My self-esteem depends on whether men find me attractive

Mental health concerns arising from gender-related issues like assault and discrimination significantly increase vulnerability to GBV. The struggle with mental health, self-esteem tied to male validation, and physical health highlight the complex interplay between mental and physical well-being and GBV exposure. Gender-sensitive mental health services that address these specific challenges are crucial. Providing support groups, therapy, and workshops on self-esteem and resilience can help individuals manage their mental health more effectively. The negative correlation with being physically and mentally healthy suggests that holistic health approaches are essential for reducing GBV exposure.



Figure 16: Correlation between Mental & Physical Health and GBV Exposure (Women)



### 5.10.3 Education & Financial Education

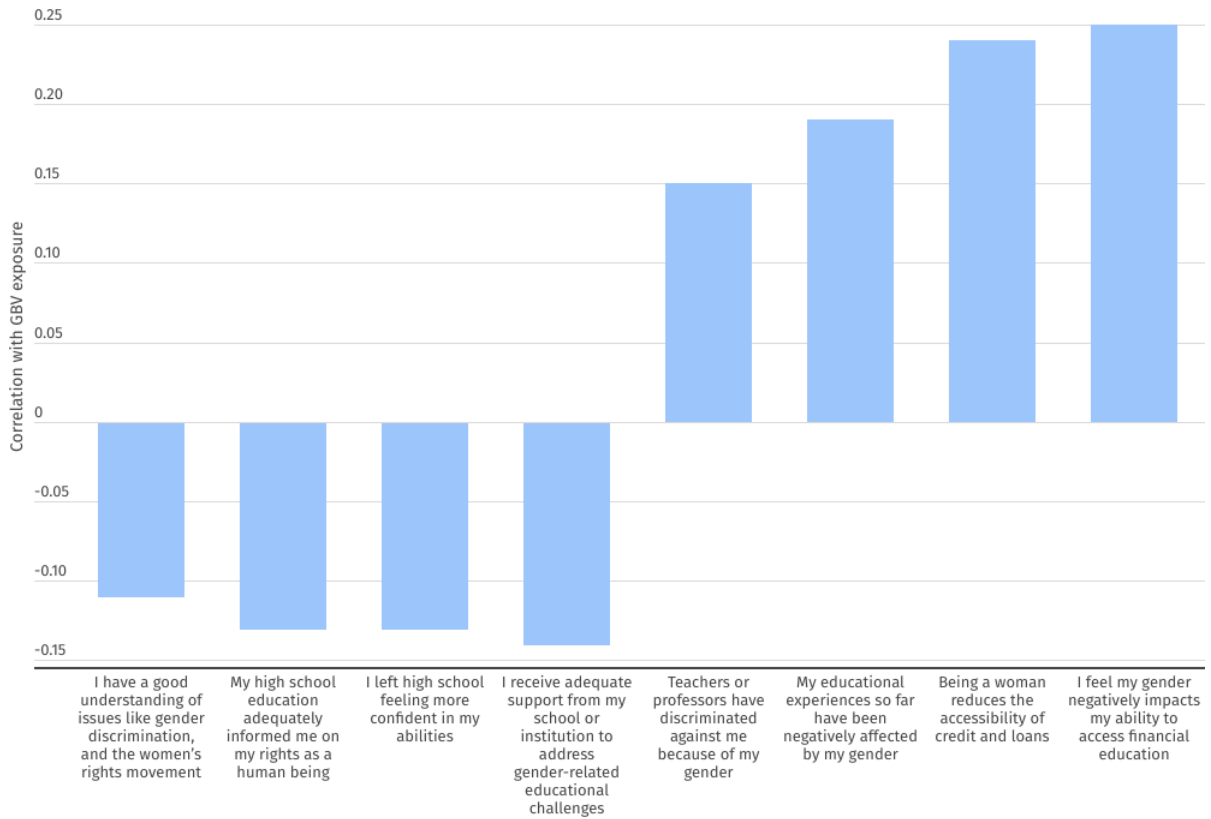
GBV Exposure Correlations:

- I have a good understanding of issues like gender discrimination, and the women's rights movement
- My high school education adequately informed me on my rights as a human being
- I left high school feeling more confident in my abilities
- I receive adequate support from my school or institution to address gender-related educational challenges
- Teachers or professors have discriminated against me because of my gender
- My educational experiences so far have been negatively affected by my gender
- Being a woman reduces the accessibility of credit and loans
- I feel my gender negatively impacts my ability to access financial education

Educational environments significantly affect GBV exposure. Understanding issues like gender discrimination and women's rights is associated with reduced GBV exposure, highlighting the importance of comprehensive gender education. Negative educational experiences due to gender discrimination by teachers indicate the need for mandatory training to address biases and create supportive learning

environments. Ensuring that students feel informed about their rights and confident in their abilities can mitigate the impact of gender-based educational challenges. Addressing financial education barriers and credit accessibility for women is also crucial for reducing economic vulnerabilities to GBV.

Figure 17: Correlation between Education & Financial Education and GBV Exposure (Women)



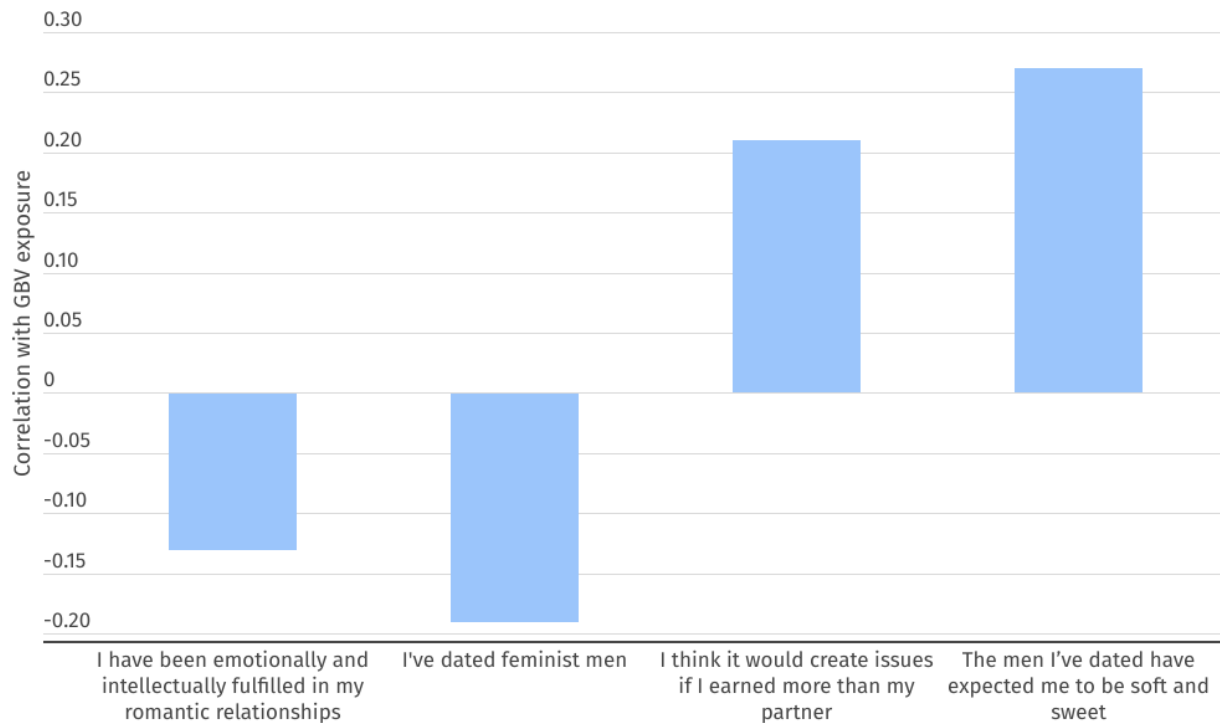
### 5.10.4 Relationships

GBV Exposure Correlations:

- I have been emotionally and intellectually fulfilled in my romantic relationships
- The men I've dated have been feminists
- I think it would create issues if I earned more than my partner
- The men I've dated have expected me to be soft and sweet

Fulfilment in romantic relationships and dating feminist men are associated with reduced GBV exposure, underscoring the importance of egalitarian and respectful partnerships. Conversely, concerns about earning more than a partner and expectations of being 'soft and sweet' highlight entrenched gender norms that increase GBV vulnerability. Interventions should promote equality within relationships, including financial equity and mutual respect. Relationship education programs that challenge traditional gender roles and encourage supportive, feminist partnerships can help individuals form healthier and more respectful relationships, reducing their exposure to GBV.

Figure 18: Correlation between Relationship Experiences and GBV Exposure (Women)



### 5.10.5 Sex

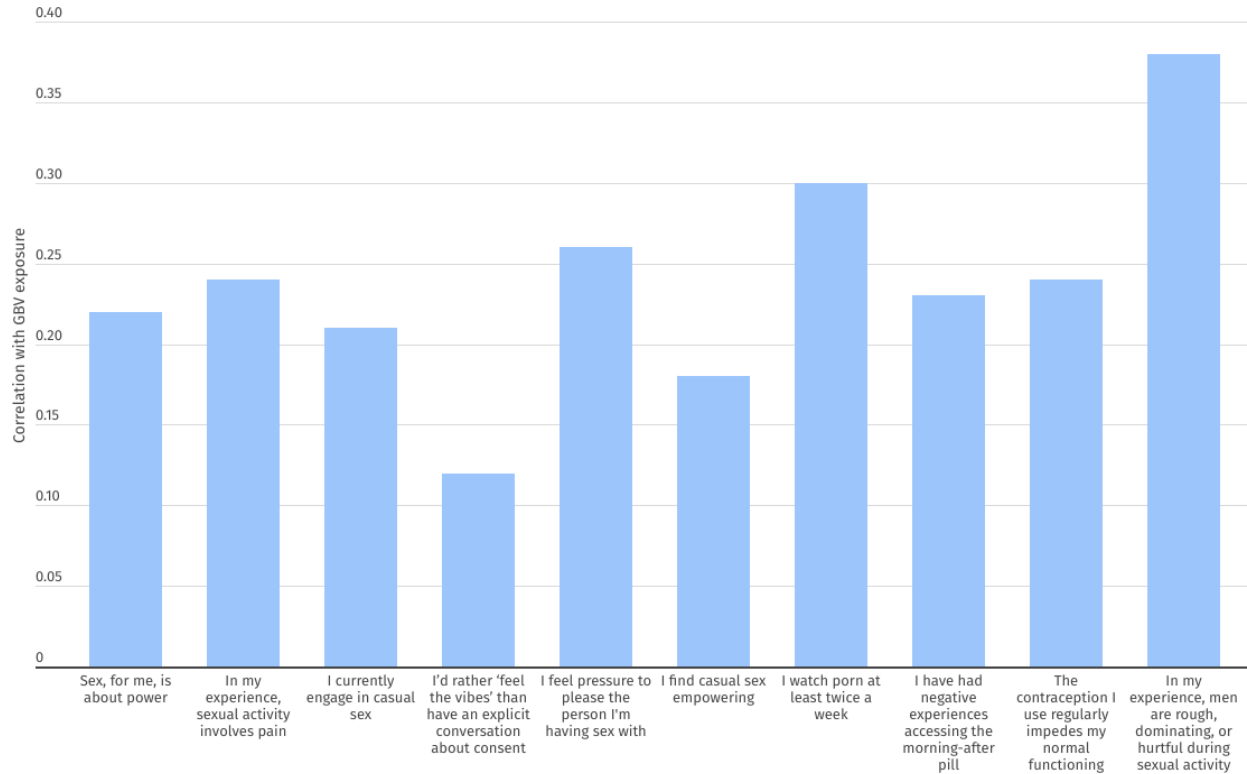
#### GBV Exposure Correlations:

- Sex, for me, is about power
- In my experience, sexual activity involves pain
- I currently engage in casual sex
- I'd rather 'feel the vibes' than have an explicit conversation about consent
- I feel pressure to please the person I'm having sex with
- I find casual sex empowering
- I watch porn at least twice a week
- I have had negative experiences accessing the morning-after pill
- The contraception I use regularly impedes my normal functioning
- In my experience, men are rough, dominating, or hurtful during sexual activity

The correlations between sexual experiences and GBV exposure highlight several areas for intervention. The belief that sex is about power and the experience of pain during sexual activity suggests a lack of mutual respect and consent. Comprehensive sex education that emphasises explicit consent, respectful practices, and sexual assertiveness can help mitigate these issues. The pressure to please sexual partners and negative experiences with contraception further exacerbate vulnerability to GBV. Providing resources for better sexual health management and ensuring access to emergency contraception can reduce these

risks. Addressing the normalisation of rough or dominating behaviour during sex is also crucial for fostering healthy sexual relationships.

Figure 19: Correlation between Perceptions & Experiences of Sex and GBV Exposure (Women)



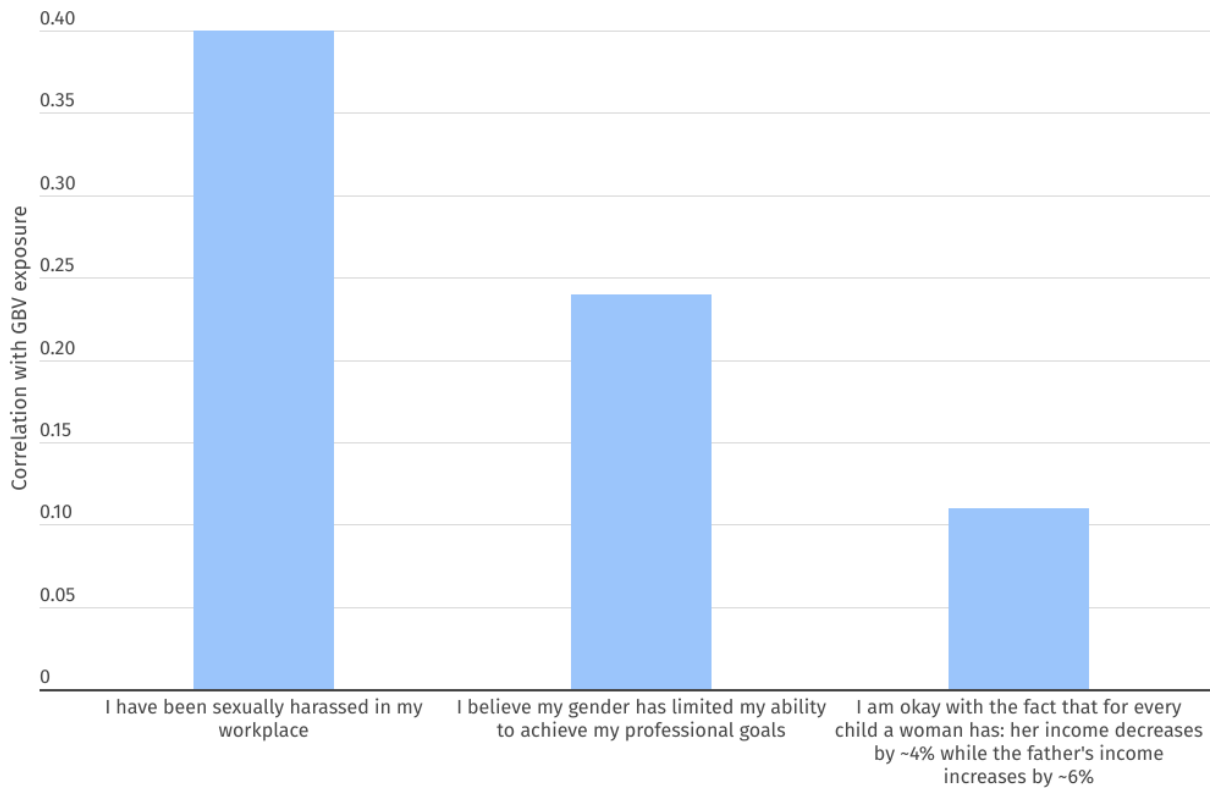
### 5.10.6 Career

GBV Exposure Correlations:

- I have been sexually harassed in my workplace
- I believe my gender has limited my ability to achieve my professional goals
- I am okay with the fact that for every child a woman has: her income decreases by ~4% while the father's income increases by ~6%

Workplace harassment and gender discrimination significantly increase exposure to GBV. Experiences of sexual harassment and perceived limitations on professional growth due to gender highlight the need for robust workplace policies. Implementing strict anti-harassment measures and transparent reporting mechanisms, with actionable change embedded, can create safer work environments. Equal access to professional development opportunities and addressing income disparities related to parenthood can help reduce gender-based vulnerabilities.

Figure 20: Correlation between Career Experiences and GBV Exposure (Women)



### 5.10.7 Indexes

GBV Exposure Correlations:

- Gender and Relationship Distress Score
- Gender and Relationship Distress Score 6+
- Gender Bias Index

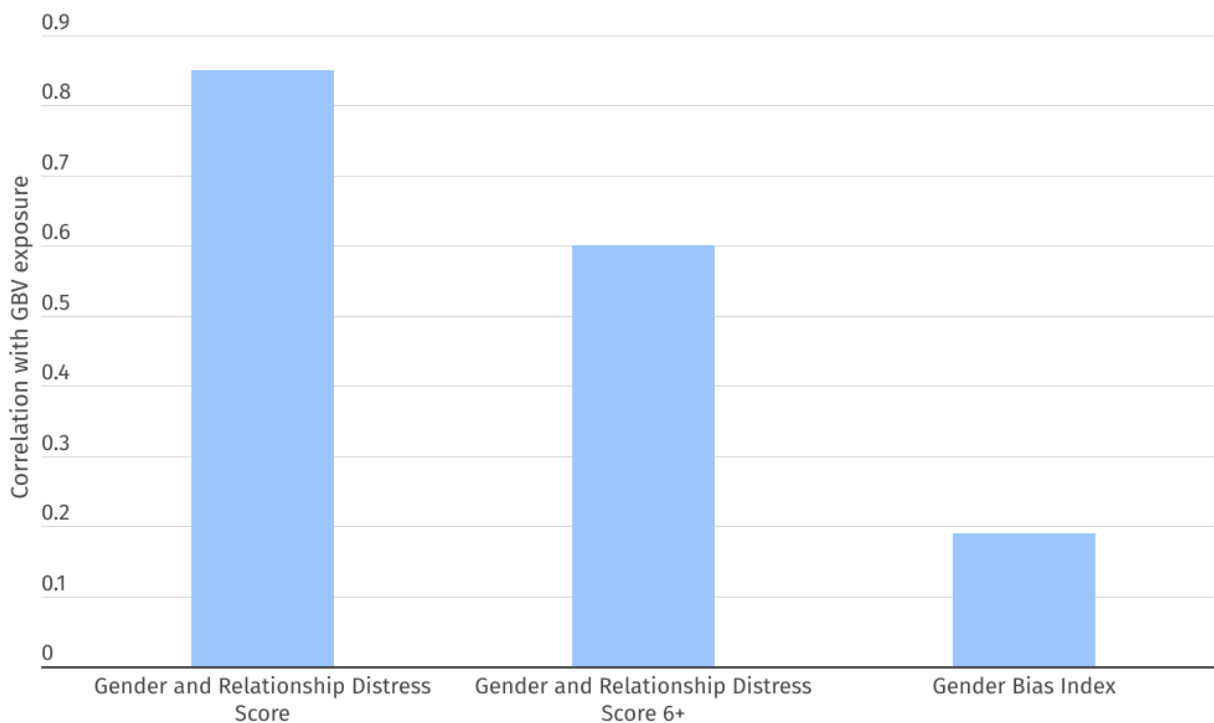
High scores on distress and bias indexes indicate significant vulnerabilities to GBV exposure. The Gender and Relationship Distress Scores suggest that individuals experiencing high levels of distress in these areas are more likely to be exposed to GBV. These correlations underscore the importance of comprehensive support services addressing relationship and gender-specific challenges. The Gender Bias Index highlights how pervasive gender biases contribute to GBV exposure, necessitating broad-based educational campaigns to challenge and change harmful gender norms. Reducing gender-based distress through community support programs and promoting egalitarian views can be effective strategies for lowering GBV exposure.

**Overall**, the data indicates that women are particularly vulnerable to GBV exposure due to pervasive gender biases and discriminatory practices encountered from a young age within educational and professional environments. Negative experiences with contraception and emergency contraception access, along with the expectation to please sexual partners, increase their vulnerability during sexual activities.

Emotional and intellectual fulfilment in relationships and dating feminist partners serve as protective factors against GBV exposure, highlighting the importance of equitable and supportive romantic relationships. Conversely, mental health struggles linked to gender-related issues, such as assault and discrimination, and self-esteem tied to male approval significantly heighten the risk of GBV exposure. The presence of sexist attitudes within family and social circles further reinforces harmful gender norms.

Receiving accurate and detailed education on sex positively correlates with women’s physical health, mental health, and self-esteem. Detailed education on consent correlates with physical health and self-satisfaction. Additionally, feeling adequately informed about reproductive health correlates with happiness with oneself. These educational factors are also linked to emotional and intellectual fulfilment in romantic relationships and comfort in discussing sexism and gender issues with partners. Comprehensive sexual education that addresses consent and healthy sexual practices, robust support systems in schools and workplaces, and initiatives to challenge and change sexist attitudes within families and communities are crucial for reducing GBV exposure.

Figure 21: Correlation between YWA Index Scores and GBV Exposure (Women)



## 5.11 Correlations Among Composite Scores

YWA created the following composite scores/scales to examine GBV in our primary research methods:

### GBV Exposure Scale

The composite GBV Exposure Score is the average of the following 10-point scale items:

- I have experienced relationship violence
- I have experienced relationship emotional abuse
- I have experienced relationship financial abuse
- I have excused or accepted abuse because of love.

### GBV Perpetration Scale

The composite GBV Perpetration Score is the average of the following 10-point scale items:

- I have been physically or sexually abusive to my partner
- I have been emotionally or financially abusive to my partner
- I have raped someone
- I have sexually assaulted someone
- I have sexually harassed someone

### Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI)

The Benevolent and Hostile Sexism Scores are constructed based on responses to a series of statements reflecting two distinct types of sexism. Each statement is rated on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5). The scores are calculated by taking the mean of the responses to the respective statements, with higher scores indicating higher levels of sexism.

The Benevolent Sexism Score is calculated from the following statements:

- Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores
- Men are incomplete without women
- Women should be cherished and protected by men
- Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess
- Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility
- Men should be willing to sacrifice their well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives

These statements reflect traditional, paternalistic attitudes towards women, often idealising them as pure and morally superior, while reinforcing gender roles that emphasise male protection and provision.

The Hostile Sexism Score is calculated from the following statements:

- When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against
- Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash
- Women exaggerate problems they have at work
- Women seek to gain power by getting control over men

- Feminists are making unreasonable demands of men
- Many women get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances

These statements reflect antagonistic attitudes towards women, suggesting that women manipulate, exaggerate, or seek to dominate men, and that feminist demands are unreasonable.

The overall Benevolent and Hostile Sexism scores are computed by averaging the responses to the respective sets of statements to produce an overall Ambivalent Sexism score.

### Male Gender-Bias Index

The Male Gender-Bias Index is calculated based on responses to a series of statements reflecting gender biases. The index is created by taking the row-wise mean of the following statements:

- The boys in my classes have generally been smarter than the girls
- I believe incompetent women are regularly hired and/or promoted for diversity reasons -
- I am okay with the fact that for every child a woman has: her income decreases by ~4% while the father's income increases by ~6%
- Men are better leaders than women
- If I'm honest, my family is sexist
- If I'm honest, my friends are sexist

None of the statements are reverse scored. The index score is calculated by taking the average of the responses to these statements, allowing for a summary measure of gender biases among men.

### Male Gender and Sexuality-Related Distress Score

The Male Gender and Sexuality-Related Distress Score is calculated based on responses to a series of statements reflecting distress related to gender and sexuality issues. The score is created by taking the row-wise mean of the following survey items:

- Over the last 12 months, I have been mentally healthy (reverse-scored)
- I have a good understanding of what sexual assault is (reverse-scored)
- Most of my mental health concerns arise out of gender-related issues (e.g. pressure to be a 'man,' earn money, not expressing my sadness)
- I am struggling
- Sex, for me, is about power
- One of my kinks is being rough or dominating during sexual activity
- I watch porn at least twice a week
- My romantic relationships so far have followed traditional gender roles
- The women I've dated have expected me to be strong and independent

The score is calculated by taking the average of the responses to these statements.

### Female Gender and Relationship Distress Score



The Female Gender and Relationship Distress Score is calculated based on responses to a series of statements reflecting distress related to gender and relationship issues. The score is created by taking the row-wise mean of the following survey items:

High Responses (no reverse scaling)

- In my experience, sexual activity involves pain
- My romantic relationships so far have followed traditional gender roles
- The men I've dated have expected me to be soft and sweet
- I feel pressure to please the person I'm having sex with
- I have experienced relationship violence
- I have experienced relationship emotional abuse
- I have experienced relationship financial abuse
- I have excused or accepted abuse because of love

Low Responses (reverse scaling)

- I have felt comfortable discussing sexism and/or gender issues with the people I have dated
- It matters to me if a man is a feminist
- The men I've dated have been feminists
- I have been emotionally and intellectually fulfilled in my romantic relationships

The score is calculated by taking the average of the responses to these statements.

Male Personal and Mental Health Distress Score

The Male Personal and Mental Health Distress Score is calculated based on responses to a series of statements reflecting personal and mental health distress. The score is created by taking the row-wise mean of the following survey items:

High Responses (no reverse scaling)

- When someone points out a mistake I've made, I feel unfairly judged
- I believe it is important to always appear strong and in control
- When a friend succeeds at something I want, I feel jealous
- It bothers me when a partner or close friend wants to spend time on their own
- When I get angry, I tend to stay angry for a while
- When I disagree with a woman, I find it hard to see her side
- When a problem arises in my life, I blame myself
- In stressful situations, I feel overwhelmed
- Past difficult experiences in relationships have affected my approach to current relationships
- I use drugs to cope with stress
- I use alcohol to cope with stress
- My mental health challenges interfere with my daily functioning
- When a relationship ends, I find it hard to move on
- I couldn't bear to lose my job

### Low Responses (reverse scaling)

- I like sharing household responsibilities equally
- I believe that men and women should have equal status in society
- My living situation throughout my life has been stable
- My personal and professional life are organised

A Spearman correlation matrix<sup>66</sup> highlights several significant relationships among these scales. The GBV Exposure Score shows a strong positive correlation with the GBV Perpetration Score and the Gender and Relationship Distress Score, indicating that higher exposure to GBV is associated with higher perpetration and relationship distress. It also has moderate correlations with Gender and Sexuality-Related Distress, Personal and Mental Health Distress, and Control and Abuse in Relationships scores.

The GBV Perpetration Score similarly shows strong correlations with Control and Abuse in Relationships and Gender and Relationship Distress scores, suggesting that those who perpetrate GBV are likely to have higher levels of control and abuse behaviours as well as relationship distress. It also has moderate correlations with Gender and Sexuality-Related Distress and Male Personal and Mental Health Distress Scores.

Hostile Sexism Score has moderate correlations with Benevolent Sexism Score and weak to moderate correlations with various distress scores, indicating that those with higher hostile sexist attitudes are likely to have higher benevolent sexist attitudes and experience more distress in different areas.

Benevolent Sexism Score shows moderate correlations with Hostile Sexism Score and weaker correlations with distress scores, suggesting a connection between benevolent sexist attitudes and other forms of distress, albeit weaker than that seen with hostile sexism.

Male Gender and Sexuality-Related Distress Score exhibits strong correlations with Gender and Relationship Distress and Male Personal and Mental Health Distress Scores, indicating a significant overlap in the distress experienced in these areas. It also has moderate correlations with Control and Abuse in Relationships and FDSV-related scores.

Gender and Relationship Distress Score has strong correlations with most other distress and GBV scores, reflecting the extensive impact of relationship distress on various psychological and behavioural traits.

Male Personal and Mental Health Distress Score shows strong correlations with other distress scores and moderate correlations with sexism scores, highlighting the interconnectedness of mental health with sexism and relationship dynamics.

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<sup>66</sup> Spearman's rank correlation is a non-parametric measure of statistical dependence between the rankings of two variables. It assesses how well the relationship between two variables can be described using a monotonic function, which means that as one variable increases, the other variable tends to either increase or decrease consistently, but not necessarily at a constant rate.

Control and Abuse in Relationships Score has strong correlations with GBV Perpetration and Gender and Relationship Distress scores, indicating a significant association between control/abuse behaviours and these areas. It also has moderate correlations with various distress and sexism scores.

**Overall**, the matrix illustrates the intricate relationships between exposure to and perpetration of GBV, relationship norms, sexist attitudes, and various forms of psychological distress, underscoring the interrelatedness of these traits.

## 6. YWA Interview Insights

In the YWA interviews, young women noted four thematic challenges, with respect to GBV. These themes are organised by summary of main points, representative quotes, words most mentioned, problems most mentioned, and solutions most mentioned.

### 6.1 Theme 1: GBV and Harassment

Summary of main points:

- GBV and harassment affect the majority of young Australian women. Men are the primary perpetrators of violence in both public and private settings, including public spaces (e.g., streets, public transport, nightlife venues), educational institutions, workplaces, and intimate relationships.
- Sexual violence, domestic abuse, and harassment start as early as primary school. These behaviours are normalised through societal attitudes and inadequate institutional responses, which fail to punish perpetrators.
- The prevalence of sexual violence is high. When informed that 51% of women born between 1989 and 1995 report experiencing sexual violence in their lifetime, 73% of interview participants expressed this was likely an “underestimate” due to underreporting and that, per their experience, sexual violence is ubiquitous.
- Pornography and casual sex culture contribute to harmful attitudes towards women and increased sexual violence by normalising aggressive behaviours; they also create expectations of enjoying certain acts or risking being deemed ‘vanilla’ or boring/ and making and unrealistic expectations about sex and consent.
- Alcohol, drugs, and intergenerational trauma are associated with higher rates of domestic violence, particularly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- The LGBTQIA+ community also faces high rates of GBV.
- Cyber harassment and online violence have emerged as significant threats, with women experiencing stalking, threats, and abuse through social media and digital platforms.

Representative quotes:

1. “I think [domestic violence among my Aboriginal community] is really fuelled by trauma, intergenerational trauma, alcohol and drugs. They have a really big, big influence.”

2. “I think that women and gender diverse people and the LGBTQ+community are victims of [male violence].”
3. “I have heard from friends horrific stories about experiencing dangerous things online.”
4. “[During nights out] there were a lot of older men trying to get girls in their cars; it was really scary.”
5. “When I decided to speak out about [my experience of sexual violence] I felt shame, like it was my fault he did the things to me and I was responsible.”
6. “I think there is so much violence against women that is normalised.”
7. “Men, in general, feel like they have a right to our bodies.”
8. “Every woman I speak to has a story of a non-consensual act.”
9. “For young women, violence is perceived as an inherent part of life. It's a very sad state of affairs.”
10. “I was a victim of sexual assault.”
11. “There are men who constantly push and push and push even when you’ve said no or shown you’re not interested and it puts you in a really uncomfortable position.”

Words most mentioned:

Violence, harassment, sexual abuse, women, men, trauma, pornography, alcohol, shame, online, domestic, intergenerational, LGBTQIA+, underreporting

Figure 22: Words most mentioned



Problems most mentioned:

1. High prevalence of sexual violence and harassment against young women, starting from an early age.
2. Normalisation of GBV in society, perpetuated by media, pornography, and casual sex culture.

3. Impact of pornography and casual sex culture on attitudes towards women and understanding of consent
4. Intergenerational trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities causes high rates of substance abuse and poverty, which are risk factors for domestic violence.
5. Inadequate support systems and legal responses for victims of GBV.
6. Underreporting of sexual violence due to shame, societal stigma, and lack of faith in justice systems.

Solutions most mentioned:

1. Implementing comprehensive, age-appropriate and continuous education on consent, respect, and healthy relationships from primary school onwards.
2. Addressing root causes of violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through culturally sensitive programs that tackle intergenerational trauma, substance abuse, and poverty.
3. Developing stricter regulations on pornography accessibility and content, coupled with media and porn literacy education.
4. Enhancing support systems for victims of GBV, including specialised services for LGBTQIA+ individuals and culturally diverse communities.
5. Promoting open discussions and campaigns to dismantle harmful norms, reduce stigma, and encourage reporting; increasing awareness of reporting mechanisms and support services available especially practical information about experience and wait times.
6. Reforming legal systems to better support victims and hold perpetrators accountable, including improved training for law enforcement and judiciary and stricter consequences for GBV, as opposed to lax sentencing laws.

## **6.2 Theme 2: Safety Concerns in Public and Educational Spaces**

Summary of main points:

- Young women experience significant safety concerns in public spaces, including streets, public transport, nightlife venues, and even during daylight hours, leading to constant vigilance and restricted freedom of movement.
- Educational settings, from primary schools to universities, are unsafe due to inadequate intervention, inconsistent safety protocols, and a culture that minimises or ignores subtle forms of aggression and harassment.
- Women adopt precautionary behaviours, such as avoiding certain areas, being hyper-vigilant, sharing their location with friends, and modifying their clothing choices, which impact their quality of life.
- Catcalling and street harassment are common experiences, starting from a young age, contributing to a sense of vulnerability and objectification.
- Public transport, especially at night, is a source of anxiety and fear for many women, with infrequent services and poorly lit waiting areas exacerbating concerns.
- The need for safe community spaces and better-lit areas is emphasised to enhance public safety, with calls for women-only spaces and improved urban planning.

- There's mention that increased independence for women has paradoxically led to increased exposure to dangerous situations. This is because current social attitudes still perpetuate harm against women, despite providing women with equal rights.

Representative quotes:

1. "I always feel uneasy taking the bus late at night, especially when it's not crowded."
2. "Nobody addresses it because, well, nobody's hit each other."
3. "I would say more spaces in the community for young women to come to and feel safe."
4. "I'm trying to think of more specific examples because obviously all the common ones like getting caught, cat called in the street on the way to work."
5. "Even though, like now that I work with them for longer, I know that there would be no issues with that. It was merely just an act of kindness on their part."
6. "Men hold an entitlement around your decisions that can cause an adverse emotional response when you don't fall into what they want. [It's] terrifying and it's a fear that [women] all live with."

Words most mentioned:

Safety, public, transport, nightlife, harassment, education, community, precautions, anxiety, vigilance, independence, catcalling, lighting, avoidance, vulnerability

Figure 23: Words most mentioned



Problems most mentioned:

1. Pervasive fear and anxiety in public spaces restrict women's freedom of movement and quality of life.
2. Inadequate safety measures and intervention strategies in educational settings, particularly for subtle forms of aggression.
3. Frequent experiences of catcalling and street harassment contribute to a hostile public environment for women.
4. Safety concerns on public transport, particularly during off-peak hours and at night.

5. Lack of safe, women-only community spaces and poorly lit public areas.

Solutions most mentioned:

1. Creating more women-only safe spaces in communities and public areas.
2. Improving lighting, surveillance, and security measures in public spaces and transport hubs.
3. Enhancing safety protocols and intervention strategies in educational settings, including training for staff to recognise and address subtle forms of aggression, and more stringent procedures for handling poor behaviour.
4. Increasing frequency and security of public transport services, especially at night, and implementing women-only carriages.
5. Developing urban planning strategies that prioritise women's safety and freedom of movement.
6. Implementing bystander intervention training and public awareness campaigns to combat street harassment and create a culture of collective responsibility for public safety.

### **6.3 Theme 3: Challenges in Relationships and Dating\***

\*This section refers to experiences mostly in heterosexual relationships.

Summary of main points:

- In romantic relationships, young women struggle with emotional unavailability, abuse, and societal pressures to conform to traditional gender roles.
- Gender roles persist in relationships, with men struggling with communication and emotional expression, while women are expected to manage the emotional labour of the relationship.
- Sexual violence within relationships is a significant issue, stemming from entitlement, toxic masculinity, and misconceptions about consent, particularly in the context of long-term relationships.
- Dating apps have become a common tool for meeting partners but contribute to hookup culture, potential safety risks, and a sense of disposability in relationships.
- There's a lack of specific, nuanced education on healthy relationship dynamics, emotional intelligence, and handling adult relationships, leaving young people ill-equipped to navigate complex interpersonal situations.
- Women face pressure to engage in intimate activities early in relationships, conflicting with personal boundaries and contributing to negative sexual experiences.
- The influence of pornography on relationship expectations and sexual behaviour is significant, leading to unrealistic and potentially harmful ideas about intimacy.

Representative quotes:

1. "There's a lot of issues with young men not knowing how to, or caring about valuing women's pleasure in intimacy in the first place."
2. "Young people are not taught how to handle relationships as adults. We get this basic, superficial info if we do get it at all."

3. "I think a big part of it is a sense of entitlement, which could have come from messages they've received about relationships and about women in their upbringing. Young men in relationships feel entitled to pleasure and power."
4. "With my first boyfriend, there were connotations of very romantic, intimate sexual activities early on. I was not really ready to do anything like that. He would say 'if we aren't going to do anything sexual, then why are you here.'"
5. "Relationships are run by men."
6. "I want to be able to have conversations about sex, pleasure, and relationships, but I don't think a lot of women do because there's still conditioning for women not to."
7. "We can't live in this world where we pretend that young women don't have their unique experiences, and everything is equal for us. It's not, that's not a reality."
8. "Men seem to only value women who serve a purpose for them, women who pick up their laundry, women who do this or that."
9. "Trying to talk about male chauvinism and violence in a relationship makes men immediately jump on the defence."
10. "I didn't feel like I was prepared for a relationship. And a lot of it came down to not knowing my worth at the time and not having support in navigating situations where there were power imbalances."

Words most mentioned:

Relationships, dating, emotional, entitlement, pressure, communication, pleasure, violence, boundaries, hookup, consent, pornography, gender roles, intimacy, expectations

Figure 24: Words most mentioned





Problems most mentioned:

1. Persistence of gender roles and expectations in relationships limits equality and privileges men's desires and fulfilment.
2. Prevalence of sexual violence and coercion within intimate relationships.
3. Lack of specific education on healthy relationship dynamics, consent, and emotional intelligence.
4. Pressure to engage in intimate activities early in relationships, conflicting with personal boundaries.
5. Impact of hookup culture and dating apps on relationship expectations and emotional well-being.
6. Influence of pornography on sexual expectations and behaviours in casual sex and relationships.

Solutions most mentioned:

1. Implementing comprehensive relationship education in schools, covering topics like emotional intelligence, communication, and conflict resolution.
2. Promoting open discussions about healthy relationship dynamics, consent, and pleasure in both educational and social settings.
3. Developing programs to address toxic masculinity and entitlement in relationship contexts, focusing on respect and equality.
4. Creating awareness campaigns about consent and boundaries in intimate relationships, emphasising ongoing consent in long-term partnerships.
5. Providing resources and education for safe and respectful online dating practices.
6. Incorporating media literacy education to critically analyse portrayals of relationships and sex in pornography and mainstream media.

## **6.4 Theme 4: Consent Education and Cultural Change**

Summary of main points:

- There is a critical need for consent education starting from a young age, extending beyond sexual contexts to everyday interactions.
- Current consent education is inadequate. It fails to address power dynamics and real-life scenarios where situations are blurry and fails to highlight the importance of ongoing consent.
- Consent education should be continuous, extending throughout one's life and across various contexts, including professional environments and social settings.
- Cultural change is necessary to address the root causes of GBV, including challenging rigid gender norms and promoting equality.
- The influence of media, particularly pornography, on young people's perceptions of consent is a significant concern, necessitating improved media literacy education.
- Despite some progress in attitudes towards consent, there's still a long way to go in terms of respect and practical implementation, particularly in perceiving non-verbal cues and power imbalances.
- Intersectionality in consent education is crucial, considering how different cultural, religious, and social backgrounds may influence the understanding of consent and relationships.

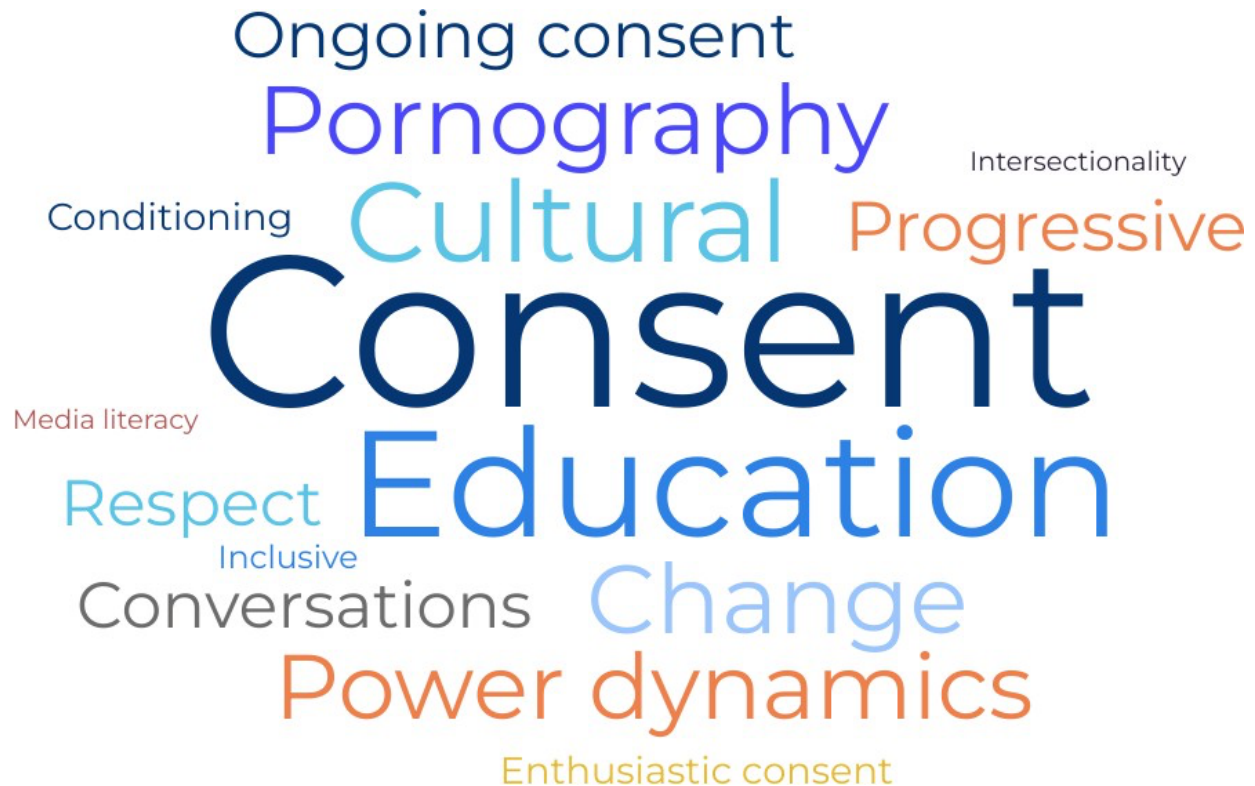
Representative quotes:

1. "I do think that YACVIC's Affirmative Consent Workshops seems like a really good program, because they are co-designed by young people first of all."
2. "Young people's ideas about consent and GBV are more progressive than they were a decade or two ago. But there's still a lot to do."
3. "It's very hard managing that and being able to talk to a white Australian woman who might be secular would be, it would be a very difficult conversation to have because I wouldn't know."
4. "We still have nasty people working in child protection and they really should not be."
5. "In health and physical education, we should learn about how to report sexual violence."
6. "I feel like consent education programs should be starting at a way younger age, so it's instilled in children early."
7. "Its crucial to teach us what our rights are, like, what our basic human rights are and what sexual assault is."
8. "Consent modules at university are terrible."
9. "When we are starting as students, we need to do a module on our student learning website called WADL. It just requires us to click through. No engagement, no knowledge, no understanding."

Words most mentioned:

Consent, education, cultural, change, pornography, progressive, conversations, conditioning, inclusive, respect, intersectionality, media literacy, power dynamics, enthusiastic consent, ongoing consent

Figure 25: Words most mentioned



Problems most mentioned:

1. Inadequate and inconsistent consent education in schools, failing to address real-world scenarios.
2. Influence of pornography and media on young people's understanding of consent and healthy relationships.
3. Societal conditioning that discourages women from having open conversations about sex, pleasure, and boundaries.
4. Lack of inclusive consent education that addresses diverse cultural, religious, and social experiences.
5. Persistence of harmful attitudes and behaviours, especially more covert manipulation, despite some progress in understanding consent.
6. Insufficient attention to power dynamics, ambiguous situations, non-verbal communication, and ongoing consent in educational programs.

Solutions most mentioned:

1. Implementing comprehensive, age-appropriate consent education from primary school onwards, covering both sexual and non-sexual contexts.
2. Developing consent education programs co-designed by young people to ensure relevance and effectiveness.
3. Addressing the influence of pornography and media in consent education through improved media literacy programs.
4. Promoting open conversations about sex, pleasure, relationships, and boundaries in educational and social settings.
5. Creating inclusive consent education considering diverse cultural, religious, and social backgrounds.
6. Focusing on cultural change alongside education, challenging rigid gender norms and promoting broader societal equality.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7. Specific inclusions in Consent and Respectful Relationships Education (CRRE)

Reflecting the government’s commitment to eliminating GBV, “All state and territory Education Ministers have signed a \$77.6 million Federation Funding Agreement Schedule with the Australian Government to support the delivery of Consent and Respectful Relationships Education (CRRE) in schools.

Through this agreement, the Australian Government will provide funding to states, territories and the non-government school sector to support their delivery of CRRE across government and non-government primary and secondary schools in school years 2024-2028.

This recognises the important role CRRE plays in preventing GBV and keeping children and young people safe.

Through this funding, states, territories, and the non-government school sector, will support schools to invest in expert-developed, evidence-based and age-appropriate CRRE.

This includes through:

- providing evidence-based professional learning for staff
- rolling out whole-school approaches to preventing GBV
- partnering with high-quality external providers to support delivery of CRRE
- delivering targeted support for vulnerable and marginalised groups, and
- building on the national RRE evidence-base.”<sup>67</sup>

To ensure maximal efficacy, per YWA’s analysis of the evidence base, CRRE should consist of the following:

#### 7.1 Preventing IPV Onset

This CRRE component aims to prevent the onset and continuation of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) tendencies, which can begin as early as age 12. Introducing targeted interventions at the beginning of high school can preempt the onset of harmful behaviours. Research has shown that once IPV tendencies start, they tend to continue with ongoing incidents in current and future relationships.<sup>68</sup> Thus, primary prevention is crucial.

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<sup>67</sup> Australian Government Department of Education (2024). Funding for consent and respectful relationships education in Australian schools. <https://www.education.gov.au/newsroom/articles/funding-consent-and-respectful-relationships-education-australian-schools>

<sup>68</sup> Ueno, K., & Fincham, F. D. (2013). The continuation of intimate partner violence from adolescence to young adulthood. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 75(2), 456-468. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12016>

Promoting core psychological values—wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence—among young people is also essential. These values are inversely related to sexist behaviour and the acceptance of IPV,<sup>69</sup> protecting young people from both perpetration and victimisation.

Per these age-based developmental risks, specific CRRE content is recommended for early and late high school.

#### Early High School (Years 7-10)

- Developmental Risks:
  - IPV tendencies begin as early as age 12.
  - Students are exposed to media and peers that may propagate sexist behaviours, potentially normalising IPV.
- Targeted Interventions:
  - Start early education on IPV, discussing its signs and consequences, and integrating teachings on consent and respect to prevent the onset of IPV behaviours.
  - Implement a short media literacy program to help students analyse and critique gender portrayals in the media and understand their impact on societal expectations and personal behaviour.
  - Start introducing psychological values—wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence—particularly their definitions, manifestations in role models, and how to cultivate them through small, everyday actions.

#### Late High School (Years 11-12):

- Men-Specific Developmental Risks:
  - Students' gender identities and attitudes toward gender roles become more pronounced, which may reinforce norms that lead to IPV.
  - Students often enter more serious relationships, which include challenges such as negotiating boundaries and managing emotional intensity.
- Men-Specific Targeted Interventions:
  - Integrate workshops focused on consent, communication, and the dynamics of healthy versus unhealthy relationships, incorporating real-life scenarios.
  - Address IPV scenarios through role-playing, teaching students how to handle potential violence and aggression, with an emphasis on psychological strengths such as justice, humanity, and transcendence.
- Women-Specific Developmental Risks\*:
  - Increased risk of experiencing serious relationship issues, including sexual assault and violence.
  - Challenges such as coercive control, manipulative behaviours, and navigating consent within relationships.
- Women-Specific Targeted Interventions:

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<sup>69</sup> Rodríguez-Castro, M. J., Lameiras-Fernández, M., Carrera-Fernández, E., & Vallejo-Medina, A. (2013). Psychological values as protective factors against sexist attitudes in preadolescents. *Psicothema*, 25(1), 31-37. <https://doi.org/10.7334/psicothema2012.253>

- Integrate workshops that give insight on identifying and establishing healthy relationship boundaries, and recognising signs of unhealthy or abusive relationships.
- Provide information on resources for navigating sexual assault, including counselling, legal advice, and support groups.
- Give advice on aiding peers in IPV situations.
- Incorporate a topic that addresses how acceptance of abuse (emotional, physical, and gender violence) is a predictor of further victimisation. Particularly, help adolescents understand and dismantle the justifications that make abuse seem acceptable or less severe.

\*YWA's research analysis shows that acceptance of abuse combined with benevolent sexist attitudes can lead to greater victimisation in women in abusive or potentially abusive situations. Programs should thus focus on reducing the acceptance of abuse and challenging benevolent sexism, which often masks the severity of the abuse and contributes to its normalisation.

## **7.2 Cognitive Dissonance and Value Reassessment Workshops**

This CRRE inclusion aims to diminish sexist behaviour by inducing cognitive dissonance. Upon realising the dissonance in and between their beliefs and behaviours, individuals should realign their attitudes and actions to be more consistent with egalitarian principles. Inspired by Milton Rokeach's research on long-term modification of values and behaviour, this inclusion will induce self-dissatisfaction to encourage actions towards gender equality. In one of Rokeach's key experiments at Michigan State University, participants ranked a set of values and expressed their attitudes towards civil rights demonstrations. They were then presented with contrasting societal norms, which created a state of self-dissatisfaction when they recognised the discrepancies between their own rankings and broader societal values, particularly equality. This induced dissonance led to significant long-term changes in their values and attitudes (up to 21 months; almost 2 years). Rokeach's findings suggest that carefully structured interventions can alter deeply held values and attitudes, influencing social behaviours over extended periods.

Value Reassessment Workshop:

- Start with a facilitator-led session providing data on societal norms versus personal beliefs, using anonymised aggregate data on values such as freedom and equality. Participants anonymously rank their own values in a confidential survey, which will then be compared to the group average during the workshop.
- Facilitators highlight discrepancies between individual and group rankings, mainly focusing on values where societal expectations (e.g., equality) are ranked lower by individuals. This discrepancy is framed as a challenge to personal integrity, morality, and societal responsibilities, aiming to induce feelings of self-dissatisfaction.
- Role-playing scenarios reflecting common sexist situations are employed to make the dissonance more tangible. Participants discuss how these situations align with the dissonance highlighted earlier and explore their feelings and reactions.

#### Personal and Group Reflection Sessions:

- Participants keep journals to document weekly instances where their actions or observed behaviours of others conflict with their earlier professed values. This is designed to continuously invoke cognitive dissonance and introspection.
- Monthly group sessions allow participants to share experiences from their journals. These meetings serve as a support group where individuals can discuss challenges and progress in aligning their behaviours with their values, framing this as a difficult but worthwhile endeavour.

#### Public Commitment to Change:

- At the end of the initial workshop series, participants share their personal values and commitments, as well as how they practise these, in a personal essay-style event. The mutual sharing strengthens the commitment to change by leveraging peer support and accountability.

#### Longitudinal Evaluation and Reinforcement:

- A longitudinal study is conducted using anonymous surveys at 3, 12, 24, and 36 months post-intervention to measure changes in attitudes and behaviours. This data is added to the Standardised Monitoring and Evaluation Platform (Policy Recommendation #9.4).

### 7.3 Teaching Emotional Regulation to Young Men to Prevent IPV

Difficulties in emotion regulation are a significant predictor of IPV perpetration.<sup>70 71</sup> Young men who struggle with identifying, understanding, and managing their emotions are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviours. Effective emotional regulation education as part of CRRE can mitigate these risks by equipping young men with skills to manage their emotions constructively.<sup>72</sup>

#### Key Components:

##### Emotional Awareness and Identification:

- Objective: Help young men recognise and accurately label their emotions.
- Methods: Psychoeducation, mind mapping, and reflective practices.

##### Cognitive Reappraisal:

- Objective: Teach young men to reinterpret negative situations in a more positive or neutral light.
- Methods: Scenario-based training and construal.

##### Impulse Control and Distress Tolerance:

- Objective: Improve the ability to control impulsive reactions and tolerate emotional distress without resorting to aggression.

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<sup>70</sup> Neilson, E. C., Gulati, N. K., Stappenbeck, C. A., George, W. H., & Davis, K. C. (2023). Emotion Regulation and Intimate Partner Violence Perpetration in Undergraduate Samples: A Review of the Literature. *Trauma, violence & abuse*, 24(2), 576–596. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380211036063>

<sup>71</sup> Orozco-Vargas, A.E., Venebra-Muñoz, A., Aguilera-Reyes, U. *et al.* The mediating role of emotion regulation strategies in the relationship between family of origin violence and intimate partner violence. *Psicol. Refl. Crit.* 34, 23 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41155-021-00187-8>

<sup>72</sup> EACH. Mood Regulation and Identity in Young Men. <https://www.each.com.au/mood-regulation-identity-young-men/>.

- Methods: Mindfulness training, distress tolerance skills, and problem-solving skills.

Goal-Directed Behaviour:

- Objective: Foster the ability to maintain goal-directed behaviour even when experiencing negative emotions.
- Methods: Goal-setting workshops, behavioural activation, and accountability groups.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL):

- Objective: Integrate SEL principles to promote empathy, respect, and healthy relationship skills.
- Methods: Empathy training, communication skills, and conflict resolution strategies.

## 7.4 Incorporating Grey Zones in GBV into CRRE

Grey zones<sup>73</sup> are responsible for the sometimes ambiguous nature of GBV among young adults. Grey zones in intimate partner violence (IPV) refer to ambiguous situations or behaviours that blur the lines between abuse and non-abuse, complicating the identification and understanding of IPV. These include reactive abuse, where a victim's defensive aggression is manipulated to portray them as the abuser; ambiguous consent and sexual coercion, where relational pressures make consensual and non-consensual sex indistinguishable; subtle verbal and emotional abuse, such as gaslighting, that erodes a victim's reality and self-worth; and cultural and social norms that normalise control or coercion, obscuring the recognition of abusive behaviour.

Incorporating real-life, practicable, and confusing scenarios into CRRE is integral for helping young people navigate these grey zones. For example, discussing vignettes of everyday GBV situations can make these grey zones visible and promote critical reflection. These scenarios could include:

- Subtle Forms of GBV: Examples include controlling behaviours disguised as concern, unsolicited digital communication, and coercive tactics in relationships.
- Victim-Blaming: Scenarios where victims are held responsible for the violence they experience, highlighting the need to challenge these harmful narratives.
- Digital GBV: Instances of online harassment, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, and cyberstalking.
- Verbal and non-verbal communication: Hesitancy in expressing one's boundaries and how to use non-verbal cues when struggling with verbal communication.
- Bystander Intervention: Situations where bystanders witness GBV but are unsure how to intervene effectively.

CRRE should also include the cultural and societal norms that underpin GBV. This includes examining how gender roles and stereotypes contribute to the normalisation and justification of violence. For example, the discourse of “men as authors of GBV” versus “GBV as an individual genderless issue” reflects the tension between recognising the gendered nature of violence and the tendency to depersonalise it.

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<sup>73</sup> Cerdán-Torregrosa, A., Nardini, K., & Vives-Cases, C. (2023). “I Reject it, But That’s What Normally Happens”: Grey Zones of Gender-Based Violence and Gender Roles in Young People. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 38(11-12). <https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605221147070>



## 7.5 Sexual Assertiveness Training in CRRE

Research shows that intimate partner violence (IPV) and domestic and family sexual violence (DHSV) victimisation rates are negatively correlated with sexual assertiveness.<sup>74 75 76</sup> Low sexual assertiveness can contribute to sexual re-victimisation, as women who are less assertive may struggle to communicate their unwillingness to engage in sexual activities, leading to misunderstandings or exploitation by perpetrators. Thus, sexual assertiveness training is crucial in effective CRRE.<sup>77</sup>

Sexual assertiveness training is positively correlated with women's ability to refuse unwanted sexual advances, feel comfortable in expressing consent in a nuanced fashion to permissible and non-permissible sexual activities, enhance their sexual health, and increase their self-esteem and satisfaction in interpersonal relationships.<sup>78 79</sup> This approach not only empowers young women but also contributes to the broader goal of preventing sexual violence and fostering a culture of consent and respect. Alongside this, it is important to challenge the association of attraction with aggressiveness; young women who associate attraction with aggressiveness are significantly more likely to experience sexual violence.<sup>80</sup>

## 7.6 Collective Rationale

Collectively, these CRRE inclusions offer a robust strategy to combat GBV. Key components include specialised interventions for at-risk youth, cognitive dissonance workshops to reshape values, emotional regulation training for young men, addressing grey zones in GBV, and sexual assertiveness training for young women. Evidence indicates that including these initiatives within CRRE can significantly reduce GBV, cultivate healthier, more respectful relationships among young Australians, and promote gender justice. Additionally, Dr. Alice Evan's research suggests that romantic love is pivotal in driving gender-equality.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Livingston, J. A., Testa, M., & VanZile-Tamsen, C. (2007). The reciprocal relationship between sexual victimization and sexual assertiveness. *Violence Against Women*, 13(3), 298-313. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801206297339>

<sup>75</sup> Krahé, B., & Berger, A. (2013). Gendered pathways from alcohol use to sexual aggression in a cross-cultural perspective. *Aggressive behavior*, 39(4), 293-304. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21482>

<sup>76</sup> Livingston, J. A., Testa, M., & VanZile-Tamsen, C. (2007). The reciprocal relationship between sexual victimization and sexual assertiveness. *Violence Against Women*, 13(3), 298-313. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801206297339>

<sup>77</sup> It's important to emphasise that while sexual assertiveness training can play a significant role in empowering young women and enhancing their sexual health, this approach should not shift the responsibility for preventing sexual violence onto victim-survivors themselves. Sexual assault prevention must equally, if not more importantly, address the behaviours and attitudes of perpetrators, holding them accountable for their actions. The primary responsibility for preventing sexual assault lies with those who commit these acts, and any preventative measures aimed at women are not a substitute for the essential work of challenging and changing harmful behaviours and societal norms that perpetuate sexual violence.

<sup>78</sup> López-Barranco, P. J., Jiménez-Ruiz, I., Leal-Costa, C., & Jiménez-Barbero, J. A. (2023). Analysis of the relationship between sexual violence and assertive behavior in young Spanish adults. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-023-00928-7>

<sup>79</sup> Rusinko, Holly Michelle. "The efficacy of verbal assertiveness training on reducing risk of sexual assault." PhD diss., University of North Dakota, 2011.

<sup>80</sup> Puigvert, L., Gelsthorpe, L., Soler-Gallart, M., & Flecha, R. (2019). Girls' perceptions of boys with violent attitudes and behaviours, and their risk of suffering gender violence. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 6, 12. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-019-0262-5>

<sup>81</sup> The Great Gender Divergence. (2024). Romantic love is an under-rated driver of gender equality. <https://www.ggd.world/p/romantic-love-is-an-under-rated-driver>

## 8. Targeted Social Media Campaign to Challenge Gender Equality Misconceptions Among At-Risk Young Men

Consent and Respectful Relationship Education (CRRE) should be complemented by a strategic informational social media campaign addressing misconceptions about gender equality among at-risk young men. This recommendation is to mitigate any unintended consequences of feminist activism. While the goal of feminist activism is to challenge rape myths and raise awareness of sexual violence, studies have shown that confrontational approaches can sometimes backfire, particularly among young men. Exposure to feminist activism directly challenging rape myths has been associated with greater reactance in some young men, reinforcing the very beliefs it aims to challenge.<sup>82</sup>

Accordingly, a carefully crafted social media campaign is proposed. This campaign would disseminate a series of infographics articulating the historical and systemic factors creating gender disparities. It would include women's relatively recent acquisition of rights, statistical evidence of ongoing inequalities, and how 'two lines begun parallel and left untouched can never meet.'<sup>83</sup>

Advertising would be targeted toward users who are classified in the high-risk category based on their online behaviours, for example due to their engagement in specific content types, including following influencers and/or accounts known to share misogynistic views. Collaborations with male influencers not traditionally associated with feminist movements but respected in other domains could broaden the message's appeal. Success would be measured through performance and engagement metrics (e.g., likes, shares, sentiment in comments), with the ultimate goal being steadily challenging misconceptions and promoting a more historically informed understanding of gender equality among young men.

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<sup>82</sup> Rogers, M. A., & Kincaid, D. L. (2023). Social media communication about sexual violence may backfire: An experiment examining the impact of digital feminist activism on college-aged men. *Journal of Health Communication*, 28(3), 217-231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2023.2174214>

<sup>83</sup> Randall Robinson, an American lawyer, author and activist, wrote in his book, 'The Debt: What America Owes To Blacks,' "No nation can enslave a race of people for hundreds of years, set them free bedraggled and penniless, pit them, without assistance in a hostile environment, against privileged victimisers, and then reasonably expect the gap between the heirs of the two groups to narrow. Lines, begun parallel and left alone, can never touch." Robinson's concept applies powerfully to gender justice, revealing the systemic and enduring nature of gender inequalities. Like racial inequality, gender inequality has deep historical roots. Women have been denied basic rights—voting, education, employment—and systematically excluded from public life, leading to entrenched disparities in wealth, power, and opportunity. This exclusion mirrors Robinson's metaphor of parallel lines that never meet, as societal norms and institutional barriers have set women and men on divergent paths. Today, women still face significant challenges: wage gaps, underrepresentation in leadership, workplace discrimination, and compounded issues like gender-based violence and legal obstacles. Addressing these persistent inequalities requires systemic change—policy reforms, advocacy for women's rights, and dismantling patriarchal structures. Without intentional intervention, the gap between men and women, like parallel lines, will persist.

## **9. Develop a National Agenda for Research and Action → Establish a Central Funding Register → Engage Philanthropic Organisations → Standardised Monitoring and Evaluation**

### **9.1 Develop a National Agenda for Research and Action**

Create a plan focused on primary prevention and early intervention, inspired by the ANROWS ANRA (Australia's National Research Agenda) model. Identify critical issues affecting various groups across Australia, including Indigenous communities, rural populations, and urban youth. Consult with local organisations, community leaders, and subject matter experts to design research projects and pilot programs that address these issues. This collaborative approach ensures initiatives are culturally appropriate and contextually relevant.

### **9.2 Establish a Central Funding Register**

Create a user-friendly online platform that acts as a central register for available funding. List all funds earmarked for research and pilot programs related to primary prevention and early intervention. Include clear, transparent criteria for funding allocation, based on factors such as potential impact, innovation, and alignment with prevention goals. Design the platform for ease of use, allowing researchers and organisations to search for relevant funding opportunities and apply efficiently. This centralised approach helps ensure effective resource distribution and support for promising initiatives.

### **9.3 Engage Philanthropic Organisations**

Invite philanthropic organisations to contribute to the funding pool. This will expand available resources for prevention and intervention work beyond government while still ensuring efforts are grounded in community needs.

### **9.4 Standardised Monitoring and Evaluation**

Measure the effectiveness of initiatives and improve approaches through standardised monitoring and evaluation. Conduct longitudinal studies to track outcomes over extended periods, providing insights into the long-term impacts of various interventions. Develop an online platform where all projects can report their findings using consistent metrics. This platform will facilitate uniform data collection and analysis across different initiatives and regions. It will also serve as a repository of effective practices, documenting what works, at what life stage, and for which demographic groups in primary prevention and early intervention. This growing body of evidence will inform future initiatives and contribute to the national evidence base.

## 10. Modern Relationships Essay Series: Curriculum Integration

The Modern Relationships Essay Series is proposed to bridge the gap between theoretical relationship education and real-world experiences of young people. The series will adapt the storytelling approach of ‘Modern Love,’<sup>84</sup> a popular New York Times series incorporating a weekly column, book, podcast, and television show. These stories will be starting points for discussions about consent, communication, and emotional intelligence.

Current relationship education presents idealised scenarios that fail to prepare young people for the complexities they encounter. YWA interviews have revealed a concerning pattern: some young men, when faced with emotionally charged or unfamiliar situations, resort to aggressive behaviour rather than expressing vulnerability. The essay series will address this by providing detailed, relatable examples of challenging situations and offering constructive ways to navigate them.

Changing gender roles and their impact on relationship dynamics will be a key component of the series. The essays will examine traditional expectations, emerging norms, and how these affect power balances within relationships. They will present diverse perspectives on gender roles, prompting students to think critically about societal expectations and personal values.

The series will address digital abuse through personal, anonymised narratives of cyberstalking, revenge porn, and online harassment. These accounts will show how digital abuse often develops gradually and provide readers with ways to recognise, prevent, and respond to such situations.

Students will learn about various philosophical models of love, from classical to modern. The curriculum will compare these models with media portrayals of relationships, helping students develop a deeper understanding of healthy partnerships. Guided exercises will encourage students to consider their own relationship goals and standards for themselves and potential partners.

Implementing the series will involve working with educational authorities to incorporate the content into existing curricula, likely within English classes.

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<sup>84</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/column/modern-love>

## 11. NSW MBCP Funding & Trial Program

Increase funding for Men’s Behaviour Change Programs (MBCPs). Despite recognition that “these programs play an integral role in ending domestic and family violence,”<sup>85</sup> there are currently almost 500 men waiting to access them. The main program led by Relationships Australia NSW involves group therapy and tailored support lasting 18 weeks. In the June 2024 budget, an additional \$10 million in funding over the next four years (\$2.5 million/year) was allocated to these programs.<sup>86</sup> This increase in funding is “an important step towards ensuring there are accessible interventions to help end men’s use of domestic and family violence in NSW.”<sup>87</sup> Despite this 30% increase in existing funding, YWA’s research indicates that more funding is necessary for key improvements, as illustrated in the table below.

Current concerns include that only 16 service providers are funded to deliver MBCPs, with only one being an Aboriginal-controlled community organisation. While MBCPs have demonstrated potential for coordinated community response through engaging with perpetrators, victim-survivors, police, and the justice system, limited resources make coordination difficult.

Immediate, 'quick wins' involve funding and setting up annual access to standardised Client Record Management (CRM) systems for MBCPs throughout New South Wales at a cost of approximately \$300,000, and extending contract terms from 2 years to 5 years to better develop and retain the MBCP workforce. The integrated CRM will ensure streamlined communication, efficient case management, and improved data tracking across all MBCPs. Extended contract terms will provide stability and incentivise practitioners to complete the training requirements\*, ensuring a skilled and reliable workforce.

|         | Investment    | Aim   | Outcomes  |
|---------|---------------|---|---|
| Annual  | \$2.5 million | Build workforce capacity through NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Build MBCP Traineeship system</li> <li>● Expand delivery of Graduate Certificate in Men’s Behaviour Change</li> <li>● Expand DV training across other sectors (Mental health, drug and alcohol, nursing, etc)</li> <li>● Create a DV training package specifically for first responders</li> </ul>                           |
| One-off | \$300,000     | Build centralised client record management (CRM) system                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Conduct review of current minimum data set and reporting requirements</li> <li>● Reduce administrative burden and increase frontline service delivery</li> <li>● Provide better data sets for research and evaluation</li> <li>● Better implementation of No To Violence Risk and Safety Support Framework (RSSF)</li> </ul> |

<sup>85</sup> NTV. (2024) NSW Budget funding boost to stop men using family violence vital for victim-survivor safety. <https://ntv.org.au/nsw-budget-funding-boost-to-stop-men-using-family-violence-vital-for-victim-survivor-safety/#:~:text=Frontline%20services%20working%20with%20men,30%25%20increase%20to%20existine%20funding>.

<sup>86</sup> NSW Government. (2024). Treasurer's Speech: 2024-25 Budget. [https://www.budget.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-06/20240618-2024-25\\_Budget-Treasurers-Speech.pdf](https://www.budget.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-06/20240618-2024-25_Budget-Treasurers-Speech.pdf)

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

|         |               |   |   |
|---------|---------------|---|---|
| Annual  | \$50 million  | Expand the role of men’s Behaviour Change as part of a Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Abuse   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implement best practices (as per ‘No To Violence’ budget submission)</li> <li>● Implement Men’s Behaviour Change Screening (with associated specialised risk assessment) as mandatory for all Domestic Abuse bail conditions</li> <li>● Expand access to Men’s Behaviour Change Programs for more NSW residents</li> <li>● Fund annual access to standardised CRM</li> <li>● MBCPs become champions of coordinated community response</li> <li>● Offer primary prevention information sessions in community</li> </ul>   |
| One-off | \$2.5 million | Implement a two-year trial program to address men's behaviour change (MBC), alcohol and other drugs (AOD), and mental health (MH) issues through a structured residential program. This trial aims to reduce family violence by providing a dedicated space where men can work on their behaviour while receiving support for AOD and MH issues, inspired by the successful Communicare Breathing Space program** in Western Australia. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Allow men to be bailed to a program residence, preventing the need for partners and children to relocate</li> <li>● Offer a residential program that includes educational group work, informal counselling, individual case management, and advocacy, requiring participants to engage in all aspects of the program, abstain from substance use, and contribute to their lodging costs</li> <li>● Ensure the safety of women and children by promoting accountability among participants and providing alternative coping strategies to violence and abuse</li> <li>● Integrate a Women’s Advocate within the program to support partners and families affected by participants' behaviours</li> <li>● Develop a practice guide and program materials, and establish a framework that could be expanded nationally if successful</li> <li>● Contribute to the broader goals of reducing family violence, as seen in national efforts like the Supporting Recovery Program, which focuses on long-term mental health support for victim-survivors</li> </ul> |

\*The NSW MBCP Compliance Framework<sup>88</sup> requires that one MBCP group facilitator has significant experience and that facilitators undertake clinical supervision. This is to ensure that group work is run by facilitators with highly developed skills and to drive sector growth and development. Significant experience means that the facilitator is able to demonstrate the following:

- A relevant tertiary degree or vocational qualification (Cert IV or equivalent) in social work, community services, psychology or other relevant field.
- Two years professional experience working in the domestic and family violence sector.
- Demonstrated experience and skill in facilitating MBCP (including undertaking clinical supervision) for at least 200 hours of MBCP practice.

The NSW Government is working towards a requirement that all facilitators with ‘significant experience’ have:

- completed the Graduate Certificate in Men’s Behaviour Change Individual and Groupwork Interventions, or
- completed an equivalent qualification designed for men’s behaviour change facilitators and/or a program/s with competencies on: working with users of violence to effect change; victim and children safety; risk assessment and group work; accountability, responsibility and case planning; and continuous improvement in men’s behaviour change work.

\*\*The Communicare Breathing Space program in Western Australia has demonstrated effectiveness in addressing Men’s Behaviour Change (MBC), alcohol and other drugs (AOD), and mental health (MH) issues through several key elements.

Firstly, the program’s residential setting provides a structured environment where men can focus on behaviour change without the distractions and triggers of their usual environment. This setting allows for intensive engagement in educational group work, informal counselling, and individual case management. Group activities such as “Men Relating Safely,” “Emotions & Feelings,” and “Parenting & Caring” are designed to help participants develop alternative coping strategies and communication styles that do not involve violence.

Secondly, the program emphasises accountability and responsibility. Participants are required to engage fully in all aspects of the program, abstain from substance use, and commit to non-violence. This commitment is crucial for fostering a sense of personal responsibility for their actions and encouraging long-term behavioural change.

Another effective component is the inclusion of a Women’s Advocate. This role supports the partners and families of participants by providing advocacy and referral services, ensuring that the safety and well-being of victim-survivors are prioritised. This approach not only supports the men in changing their behaviour but also addresses the broader impact of their actions on their families.

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<sup>88</sup> New South Wales Government, Department of Communities and Justice. Men’s Behaviour Change Program Compliance Framework. <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/documents/service-providers/domestic-and-family-violence-services/men-s-behaviour-change-programs/Men-s-Behaviour-Change-Program-compliance-framework.pdf>.

Additionally, the program offers supported transition accommodation to help participants reintegrate into the community after completing the intensive phase. This transitional support includes assistance with employment, training, and securing future accommodation, which helps maintain the progress made during the program and reduces the risk of reoffending.

Overall, the Communicare Breathing Space program's comprehensive approach, combining residential treatment, accountability measures, advocacy for families, and transitional support, has proven effective in changing attitudes and behaviours related to MBC, AOD, and MH issues.

### 2022-2024 Funding

The below table shows the 2022-2024 Men's Behaviour Change Program contracts with the NSW Government. In summary, between 2022-2024, in NSW:

1. Total funding for MBCPs: \$17,115,944.66 (including GST)
2. Funding period: July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2024 (2 years)
3. Annual funding cost: \$8,557,972.33
4. Number of organisations: 16
5. Average annual funding per organisation: \$534,872.02

| <b>Organisation</b>                  | <b>MBCP contract cost (including GST)</b> | <b>MBCP contract cost (excluding GST)</b> | <b>Funding cost per year</b> |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|------------------------------|
| Men & Family Centre                  | \$1,326,584.60                            | \$1,205,986.00                            | \$602,993.00                 |
| Manning Support Services             | \$484,688.60                              | \$440,626.00                              | \$220,313.00                 |
| North East MBC                       | \$373,428.00                              | \$339,480.00                              | \$169,740.00                 |
| Relationships Australia NSW          | \$2,517,900.00                            | \$2,289,000.00                            | \$1,144,500.00               |
| Housing Plus                         | \$782,553.20                              | \$711,412.00                              | \$355,706.00                 |
| Warrina DFV Specialist Services      | \$968,000.00                              | \$880,000.00                              | \$440,000.00                 |
| Gawura Aboriginal Corporation        | \$839,931.40                              | \$763,574.00                              | \$381,787.00                 |
| EveryMan Australia                   | \$297,440.00                              | \$270,400.00                              | \$135,200.00                 |
| CentaCare NENW                       | \$592,204.82                              | \$538,368.02                              | \$269,184.01                 |
| CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes        | \$2,109,360.00                            | \$1,917,600.00                            | \$958,800.00                 |
| CatholicCare Sydney Fairfield        | \$2,153,217.00                            | \$1,957,470.00                            | \$978,735.00                 |
| CatholicCare Broken Bay              | \$1,430,829.00                            | \$1,300,753.64                            | \$650,376.82                 |
| Mission Australia Central & Far West | \$1,539,254.20                            | \$1,399,322.00                            | \$699,661.00                 |
| Kempsey                              | \$759,000.00                              | \$690,000.00                              | \$345,000.00                 |



|                              |                |                        |                       |
|------------------------------|----------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| BaptistCare NSW and ACT MBCP | \$1,764,348.30 | \$1,603,953.00         | \$801,976.50          |
| Anglicare Sydney MBCP        | \$888,800.00   | \$808,000.00           | \$404,000.00          |
| <b>Total</b>                 |                | <b>\$17,115,944.66</b> | <b>\$8,557,972.33</b> |

## 12. Designing Your Life Courses

### Status Quo

The integration of ‘Designing Your Life’ courses into education represents a paradigm shift in violence prevention, targeting the existential void that often precedes intimate partner abuse. By reframing personal development as a design challenge, these courses provide a pragmatic antidote to the precarious masculinity and status anxiety that fuel GBV, potentially disrupting the paradoxical increase in domestic abuse observed in societies with greater gender equality.

Presently, Australian schools do not offer a dedicated ‘Designing Your Life’ course, and students are not explicitly encouraged to think critically about their future goals, personal development, and life planning. The existing curriculum lacks structured opportunities for students to self-reflect and strategically plan their personal and professional lives. Consequently, many students graduate without a clear vision or the necessary skills to navigate their futures effectively. The absence of these skills prevents some men from developing their identities in a socially constructive way; subsequently, they rely on domination in the private sphere to feel purposeful and authoritative, thus contributing to higher rates of GBV perpetration and exposure.

### Policy Recommendation

#### Problem Identification and Reframing

- Teach students to identify core life and career problems as opportunities for growth, as opposed to challenges. This approach breaks down overwhelming challenges into manageable components, reducing negative emotions and reactionary behaviour.
- Encourage students to look beyond societal expectations to focus on their individual strengths and personal and moral interests.

#### Prototyping Life Paths

- Introduce the concept of life ‘prototyping,’ where students can explore multiple career and life pathways in low-risk environments. This could involve desktop research, internships (in-person and virtual), shadowing opportunities, including those leveraging technology, or simulated experiences.
- Encourage iterative learning where failure is seen as a valuable part of discovering what resonates with a student's passions and skills.

- These internships should become a part of the high school careers curriculum. They are designed to encourage students to try something rapidly and intensely to test if they enjoy it and then continue if so or move on to something else. This allows students to determine their interests quickly, without committing to an extended internship.

### Building a Compass

- Facilitate the creation of a personal ‘compass’ that includes articulating one's ‘Workview’ and ‘Lifeview’—defining what work and life mean to the individual and how they can harmonise these to create a coherent and fulfilling life.
- Stress the importance of aligning these views with personal integrity and societal contributions.

### Implementation

- Embed ‘Designing Your Life’ courses into the high school curriculum as mandatory.
- Include specific sessions that address the intersection of gender, society, and personal development.
- Develop support groups within the course structure where students can share ideas, challenges, and successes. Peer-to-peer mentoring can be particularly impactful in reinforcing course teachings, encouraging personal growth, and creating accountability especially during a developmental period where peer validation is highly sought after.
- Integrate the efficacy of ‘Designing Your Life’ courses into the Standardised Monitoring and Evaluation Platform (Policy Recommendation #9.4) and track students’ longitudinal outcomes both in the context of life fulfilment and IPV perpetration.

### Policy Recommendation Rationalisation

The introduction of ‘Designing Your Life’ courses into educational curricula is a preventative strategy for combating the social and personal dynamics contributing to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). These courses were created at Stanford University, Hasso Plattner Institute of Design. Given the destabilisation of traditional roles, especially for young men, there is a critical need for interventions that cultivate a sense of purpose and direction away from strict gender roles. These courses, which utilise design thinking principles to inform life planning and personal growth, offer young men and women the tools to build their identities and statuses in socially constructive ways, rather than through dominance, aggression, or disrespect in relationships.

Research has shown that “No hope for the future” is the greatest contributor to IPV perpetration among young men.<sup>89</sup> Further research, such as the ‘Precarious Manhood’<sup>90</sup> studies, highlights how societal views on masculinity as an unstable status, which men have to constantly prove, can lead to psychological distress and aggressive behaviours. These pressures are amplified by societal changes that challenge

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<sup>89</sup> Holliday, C. N., Morse, S. M., Irvin, N. A., Green-Manning, A., Nitsch, L. M., Burke, J. G., Campbell, J. C., & Decker, M. R. (2019). Concept Mapping: Engaging Urban Men to Understand Community Influences on Partner Violence Perpetration. *Journal of urban health : bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 96(1), 97–111. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-018-0297-8>

<sup>90</sup> Vandello, J. A., Bosson, J. K., Cohen, D., Burnaford, R. M., & Weaver, J. R. (2008). Precarious manhood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95(6), 1325-1339. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012453>

traditional male roles; subsequently, men may resort to domination within the private sphere to assert their authority and purpose, contributing to higher rates of GBV perpetration and exposure (Nordic paradox<sup>91</sup>).

By employing design thinking methodologies, ‘Designing Your Life’ courses can help individuals create personal and professional lives that are meaningful, fulfilling, and status-proffering, thus undermining the foundations of IPV and GBV.

### **13. Life Transition Support for Young Women**

#### **Status Quo**

There are no dedicated life transition support organisations for young women in Australia. Young women transitioning from high school to university and into their twenties face a precarious period marked by heightened risks of sexual assault, gender discrimination, life-threatening violence, and political marginalisation. Despite clear evidence of these vulnerabilities and the effectiveness of interventions during this period, young women are scarcely mentioned or considered in government agendas and strategies. Consequently, their needs and concerns remain unaddressed, hindering efforts to end violence against women and children within a generation.

#### **Policy Recommendation**

Provide government funding to the Young Women’s Alliance (YWA),<sup>92</sup> an ACNC registered charity that supports young women aged 18-28 as they transition from high school into their twenties. YWA will serve as a one-stop-shop providing resources, referrals, and support tailored to the unique challenges faced by this demographic, with special emphasis on young women in rural and regional communities. The organisation will facilitate young women’s development in personal, educational, and professional spheres, ultimately mitigating against gender disadvantage.

YWA Mission: Provide tangible support to young women aged 18-28 during their transition from high school through their twenties, offering resources, referrals, and services tailored to the unique challenges faced by this age group.

Introduction to YWA in High Schools:

- 1) Collaborate with high schools to introduce YWA in Year 11 and 12.
- 2) Distribute brochures and informational packets detailing YWA’s programs.
- 3) Host seminars and webinars featuring young women who have utilised YWA.

Membership Registration: Encourage young women to register with YWA before graduating from high school to receive continuous, life transition support.

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<sup>91</sup> The Nordic paradox refers to how Nordic countries, despite their high levels of gender equality, also have high rates of intimate partner violence against women. This contradiction challenges the belief that greater gender equality naturally reduces gender-based violence. Denmark, Finland, and Sweden have some of the highest rates of IPVAW (intimate partner violence against women) in Europe, with around 30-32% of women reporting having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner. Iceland reports that about 40% of women experience gender-based and sexual violence in their lifetime.

<sup>92</sup> Transparency: organisation responsible for this report.

### Key Services Provided by YWA:

- Workshops on preventing and minimising harm—sexual, emotional, and physical abuse, sexual assault, intimate partner violence (IPV), and domestic family sexual violence (DFS).
- Resume building, job search tools, and skills training. Information on further education, scholarships, and online resources.
- Access to counselling services, workshops on stress management, and lifestyle planning.
- Events, workshops, and mentorship programs connecting young women with industry leaders and peers.
- Assistance with understanding legal rights, navigating bureaucratic processes, and advocacy in gender justice issues.
- A community of young women during the critical but tumultuous decade of 18-28.
- Connections to other organisations and services for needs beyond YWA's scope.

**Outreach and Accessibility:** Accessible website and mobile app that serves as a portal to YWA's resources and community. Collaborate with educational institutions (secondary schools, universities), local businesses, and other NGOs to extend reach and resource availability.

**Ongoing Support and Engagement:** Monthly newsletters and alerts about new opportunities, resources, and events. Regular surveys to members to assess needs and satisfaction, ensuring the services evolve with the demographic. Create an alumni network to mentor current members and create a feeling of wrap-around support.

### **Policy Recommendation Rationalisation**

Funding the YWA addresses a significant gap in support for young women during a critical transitional period. Sociological and psychological research highlights the precariousness of the 18-28 age range, which includes heightened risks of sexual assault, gender discrimination, life-threatening violence, and political marginalisation. Effective interventions during this period can prevent gender from creating a cycle of inescapable disadvantage.

Despite clear evidence of young women's vulnerability and the value of intervention, no such organisation currently exists. Additionally, young women are often overlooked in government agendas and strategies, leaving their needs unaddressed. YWA will provide a comprehensive support structure, empowering young women with the resources, referrals, and guidance necessary to successfully navigate their personal, educational, and professional lives.

Simply: Systemic support structure → Mitigated gender disadvantage → Empowered young women → Reduced risks of violence and discrimination → Enhanced personal, educational, and professional development → Positive long-term outcomes for individuals and society.

## 14. Incentive-Based Innovation Platform for Gender Justice

Gender equality has significant economic benefits. The European Institute for Gender Equality's study<sup>93</sup> on the economic benefits of gender equality in the EU was the first to apply a robust econometric model to evaluate the macroeconomic advantages stemming from gender equality. It considered the financial benefits of equality across areas such as education, labour market activity, and wages. The E3ME model, used for this analysis, is well-established in the EU context and is tailored to assess outcomes at both EU and Member State levels. However, this model has limitations, namely its focus on macroeconomic rather than microeconomic impacts.

The study identified five key pathways through which gender equality can affect the economy: closing gender gaps in tertiary education, labour market activity, and pay, along with demographic changes resulting from these improvements. The research forecasted that increased gender equality would lead to substantial economic benefits, including the creation of millions of jobs and significant GDP growth by 2050.

### Specific outcomes include:

**Employment Impact:** By 2050, the implementation of gender equality measures could lead to the creation of between 6.3 million and 10.5 million additional jobs across the EU. Notably, around 70% of these jobs would be occupied by women, highlighting the direct benefits of reducing gender disparities in the labour market.

**GDP Growth:** Gender equality could result in positive GDP impacts that grow over time. By 2050, GDP per capita could increase by nearly 10% in scenarios where gender equality progresses rapidly, demonstrating the long-term economic gains from closing gender gaps in various sectors.

### Sector-Specific Outcomes:

**Tertiary Education (Pathway 1):** Closing the gender gap in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education is projected to increase potential output in several key sectors, including defence, engineering, and computing, thereby producing boosts to productivity and economic growth.

**Labour Market Activity (Pathway 2):** The study showed that increasing the labour market participation of women would enhance the overall potential output of the economy. In the rapid-progress scenario, reducing the gender gap in labour market activity by up to 20 percentage points by 2030 leads to higher employment and productivity levels.

**Gender Pay Gap (Pathway 3):** Reducing the gender pay gap is expected to increase household incomes while also influencing employer costs. The research indicates that in the rapid-progress scenario, the gender pay gap could be reduced by up to 14 percentage points by 2030, contributing to more equitable wage distribution and economic stability.

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<sup>93</sup>European Institute for Gender Equality. *Gender Equality Index 2017: Measuring gender equality in the European Union 2005-2015*. Publications Office of the European Union, 2017.  
[https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2017.2087\\_mh0117097enn\\_pdfweb\\_20170803130832.pdf](https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2017.2087_mh0117097enn_pdfweb_20170803130832.pdf)

Demographic Impact (Outcome 4): The study suggested that improved gender equality in education, labour market activity, and wages would likely result in higher fertility rates. This demographic change could have significant economic implications, including increased consumption in the short term and a larger workforce in the long term.

Combined Pathways (Pathway 5): When combining the effects of closing gender gaps in education, labour market activity, and pay, along with the demographic impacts, the study found that the overall economic benefits are substantial. The combined effects show a potential for enhanced economic growth, increased employment, and improved competitiveness across the EU, and demonstrates how the pursuit of gender equality can support achievement of economic growth objectives. This has implications in the structuring of any proposed policy recommendation.

The Incentive-Based Innovation Platform for Gender Justice aims to incorporate insights from:

- The European Institute for Gender Equality's (EIGE) study on the economic benefits of gender equality. This study employs the E3ME macroeconomic model to estimate the broad macroeconomic impacts of gender equality, focusing on pathways such as closing gender gaps in education, labour market activity, and wages. By integrating these pathways into the platform, the initiative can better justify and achieve its goals of driving gender equality and generating economic benefits in Australia, and
- Successful models like the Defence Trailblazer,<sup>94</sup> established in 2022 as a partnership between the University of Adelaide, UNSW and 50+ industry partners to drive innovation in the defence sector and generate an economic benefit of \$1.5 billion over ten years.

Critically, it seeks to incentivise private sector participation in gender equality efforts by recognising the substantial economic dividends that gender parity can deliver. By clearly linking gender equality to economic growth, this policy underscores the importance of allocating funds to initiatives that demonstrate potential for significant impact on key indicators.

Moreover, the platform emphasises the creation of sustainable, long-term collaborative partnerships, moving away from current government grantmaking which involves a one-off, siloed approach to funding, with limited robust monitoring and evaluation. As these innovations are piloted and tested, the proposal envisions the government stepping in to scale up successful initiatives, leveraging proven investments for broad-scale implementation. This approach ensures that once innovations demonstrate their effectiveness, they can be expanded to drive systemic change across Australia. There is potential, too, for sharing and/or licensing these innovations into new markets, particularly with allied partners.

## **Recommendation Details**

The platform will:

- a) Reward and implement the most effective policy ideas for gender equality
- b) Foster sustainable collaboration between academia, industry, and the public sector

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<sup>94</sup> <https://dtb.solutions/>

- c) Generate measurable economic benefits through increased workforce participation and productivity
- d) Align with Australia's existing frameworks for gender analysis and impact assessment\*
- e) Reduce gender-based violence and its associated economic costs

### **Structured Program Tracks**

The platform will introduce four distinct tracks, each addressing key aspects of gender equality:

#### **Gender-Equal Workforce Innovation (GEWI)**

Focus: Initiatives to close the gender pay gap and increase women's representation in leadership

Example projects:

- AI-driven bias detection tools for recruitment and promotion processes
- Innovative job-sharing platforms for senior leadership positions

This track directly addresses the labour market activity and gender pay gap pathways identified in the EIGE study, aiming to replicate the projected 14 percentage point reduction in the gender pay gap by 2030.

#### **Education and Training Pathways (ETP)**

Focus: Programs to address skills gaps and prepare a gender-diverse workforce

Example projects:

- Virtual reality-based STEM education programs for rural and remote girls
- Industry-partnered apprenticeship programs targeting women in male-dominated trades

This track aligns with the tertiary education pathway, particularly focusing on closing the gender gap in STEM fields, which the EIGE study identified as crucial for boosting productivity and economic growth.

#### **Health and Wellbeing Accelerator (HWA)**

Focus: Innovations in women's health and access to healthcare

Example projects:

- AI-powered mobile app for early detection of postpartum depression
- Workplace redesign solutions to support women experiencing menopause

While not directly addressed in the EIGE study, this track recognizes the interconnection between health, workforce participation, and productivity.

## **Violence Prevention and Response (VPR)**

Focus: Innovative approaches to prevent gender-based violence and support survivors

Example projects:

- AI-powered mobile app to collect and collate data on reported and unreported violence in public spaces
- Networked solutions to enable better integration of peer workers (those with lived experience) in care interventions and treatment models for victim-survivors

This track addresses the significant economic costs associated with gender-based violence, which, while not explicitly quantified in the EIGE study, is recognized as a major barrier to gender equality and economic participation.

### **Assessment Criteria and Evaluation Process**

Establish clear, measurable criteria for evaluating proposals:

- **Measurability:** Quantifiable impact on specific gender equality indicators (e.g., 5% reduction in gender pay gap within target industry, 10% reduction in reported domestic violence incidents)
- **Scalability:** Potential to reach at least 100,000 women or 1,000 organisations within 5 years
- **Alignment:** Direct contribution to at least one goal in Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality
- **Partnership strength:** Involvement of at least two sectors with clearly defined roles and contributions
- **Economic impact:** Projected contribution to GDP growth and job creation, in line with EIGE study projections

Evaluation process:

- Initial screening by platform administrators for eligibility and completeness
- Detailed assessment by a panel of 16 experts (4 each from academia, industry, public sector, and NGOs specialising in gender issues)
- Final selection involving input from key stakeholders and potential end-users

### **Enhanced Collaboration Model**

- Require proposals to demonstrate partnerships between at least two sectors (academia, industry, public sector, or NGOs)
- Establish a mentor network of 75 industry leaders, gender equality experts, and violence prevention specialists to support project teams
- Facilitate quarterly forums and monthly online workshops to encourage knowledge sharing and formal and informal collaboration between projects
- Create a secure online platform for real-time collaboration and data sharing among project teams



## **Economic Value Creation Framework**

Set specific, measurable goals for economic impact, informed by the EIGE study's projections:

- Target AUD \$2 billion in economic benefit over 10 years through increased workforce participation and productivity gains
- Aim to create 1,000 new jobs in gender equality-focused initiatives
- Develop 100 new 'products' or implementable solutions addressing gender inequality
- Reduce the economic cost of gender-based violence by 20% over 10 years
- Increase women's labour market participation rate by 5 percentage points over 5 years

## **Implementation Pathway**

- Introduce a 'Gender Solution Readiness Level' (GSRL) framework with 9 levels, from basic research (1) to full-scale implementation (9)
- Create pathways for successful innovations to be adopted by at least 10 government agencies and 30 major private sector organisations
- Establish a 'Fast Track' process for high-potential violence prevention initiatives to accelerate their development and implementation

## **Funding and Incentive Structure**

- Allocate AUD \$100 million over 5 years to support winning proposals
- Offer tiered funding based on GSRL progression: Concept stage (GSRL 1-3): Up to AUD \$150,000 Pilot stage (GSRL 4-6): Up to AUD \$750,000 Scale-up stage (GSRL 7-9): Up to AUD \$3 million
- Provide additional funding of AUD \$25 million specifically for violence prevention initiatives
- Offer non-financial incentives including mentorship, networking opportunities, and public recognition through an annual 'Gender Innovation Awards' ceremony
- Introduce a 'Gender Equality Innovation Tax Credit' for private sector organisations implementing successful initiatives

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation framework based on the Australian Government Guide to Policy Impact Analysis and the methodologies used in the EIGE study
- Conduct bi-annual reviews of the platform's impact on gender equality indicators and economic benefits
- Engage an independent body (e.g., Productivity Commission) to perform a comprehensive evaluation every two years
- Establish a real-time data dashboard to track progress across all initiatives
- Conduct longitudinal studies to assess long-term impacts of implemented solutions

## **Government Role**

- Position government as a facilitator of innovation and potential end-user of successful solutions

- Establish an inter-departmental working group with representatives from 15 key departments to explore integration of successful innovations into policy and public sector operations
- Use government procurement policies to support scaling of effective solutions, with a target of integrating at least 8 innovations per year into government operations
- Create a 'Gender Equality Innovation Regulatory Sandbox' to allow testing of innovative solutions in a controlled regulatory environment

### **Timeline and Key Milestones**

- Month 0-6: Finalise platform design and establish governance structures
- Month 6-12: Launch call for proposals across all tracks
- Year 2, Month 0-4: Complete first round of evaluations and announce initial funding recipients
- Year 2, Month 4-12: Begin implementation of first wave of projects
- Years 3-10: Ongoing cycles of proposal calls, evaluations, and implementations with annual reporting on progress and impact

The Incentive-Based Innovation Platform for Gender Justice represents a strategic, evidence-based approach to advancing gender equality while driving economic growth in Australia. By focusing on key pathways identified in the EIGE study, incorporating a crucial focus on violence prevention, and fostering cross-sector collaboration, this platform has the potential to generate substantial social and economic benefits.

The platform's structure, with its focus on workforce innovation, education, health, and violence prevention, comprehensively addresses the pathways through which gender equality affects the economy. By closing gender gaps in education, increasing labour market participation, reducing the gender pay gap, and addressing the economic costs of gender-based violence, the platform aims to replicate and exceed the positive economic outcomes observed in the EU context.

The platform's emphasis on measurable outcomes, scalability, and cross-sector collaboration ensures that it can adapt to the Australian context while maintaining a focus on economic impact. The rigorous evaluation process and economic value creation framework will allow for ongoing assessment and refinement of the platform's effectiveness.

Further scoping is recommended, especially of the mechanism for economic goal setting and measurement, followed by implementation of this platform to position Australia as a global leader in gender equality and inclusive economic growth.

\*All proposals will align with the Australian Government's commitment to gender-responsive budgeting, as outlined in the APS Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Impact Assessment and the NFAW's analysis of the 2024-25 Budget. This alignment will ensure that gender equality initiatives are integrated into broader economic and social policies, enhancing their effectiveness and sustainability. Utilising the Australian Government Guide to Policy Impact Analysis, thorough evaluations of all proposals will be conducted to ensure they offer the greatest net benefit for Australia. Robust evaluation will ensure that the

most effective and efficient gender equality initiatives are selected and implemented, maximising their impact.

## 15. Implementing Ambivalent Sexism Inventory Test in Educational and Community Settings

Ambivalent Sexism is a theoretical framework that identifies sexism as consisting of two sub-components: hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. This framework posits that sexism can manifest not only in overtly negative ways but also in seemingly positive forms that still reinforce gender inequality.

Hostile Sexism refers to openly negative attitudes and stereotypes about women. It is characterised by beliefs that women are inferior to men, manipulative, or seeking to dominate men through feminist ideologies or sexuality. Hostile sexism often manifests as misogyny, where women are viewed with contempt and subjected to discrimination, harassment, or violence for not conforming to traditional gender roles.

Conversely, Benevolent Sexism involves attitudes that may appear positive but are actually harmful, as they reinforce traditional gender roles and imply that women are weak and in need of protection. While Benevolent Sexism may seem more benign, it ultimately supports gender inequality by placing women in a subordinate position.

Together, these components form ambivalent sexism.

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) is an effective tool for identifying sexist perceptions, attitudes and opinions - allowing for targeted interventions to be implemented to address these before escalation to questionable and/or violent behaviours.

The ASI should be implemented as an optional tool in schools, community organisations, and sporting clubs. The goal is to identify levels of hostile and benevolent sexism among young men and to provide specialised interventions based on these assessments. This aims to mitigate attitudes and behaviours that support violence against women (VAW), fostering healthier gender relations and enhancing community safety.

Meta-analytical research, including data from multiple, peer-reviewed studies over 25 years, has revealed significant correlations between both hostile sexism and benevolent sexism, and violence against women (VAW).<sup>95 96 97</sup> Hostile sexism has shown a stronger association with both supportive attitudes toward VAW and actual violent behaviours.<sup>98</sup> Benevolent sexism, while subtler, also significantly contributes to

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<sup>95</sup> Glick, P., Sakallı-Uğurlu, N., Akbaş, G., Metin-Orta, İ., & Ceylan-Batur, S. (2022). Ambivalent sexism and violence toward women: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Social Issues*, 78(3), 679-703. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12481>

<sup>96</sup> Trizna, M., & Rudman, L. A. (2023). *Confronting benevolent sexism: Experimental evidence that non-targets experience interpersonal costs*. *Sexuality & Culture*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-023-10127-6>

<sup>97</sup> Gravelin, C. R., Biernat, M., & Bucher, C. E. (2024). *Linking ambivalent sexism to violence-against-women attitudes and behaviors: A three-level meta-analytic review*. *Psychological Bulletin*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000414>

<sup>98</sup> Higher School of Economics. (2023, July 23). *How ambivalent sexism harms female workers*. IQ. <https://iq.hse.ru/en/news/799342430.html>

attitudes that may justify, accept, or normalise VAW, especially from a victim-survivor and peer group lens.

This was affirmed in YWA's survey which showed a positive correlation between men with a high ASI score and GBV perpetration.

#### Implementation of ASI Test

- Introduce the optional ASI Test within secondary and tertiary educational institutions, community organisations, and sports clubs as a voluntary and confidential measure.
- Ensure the test is administered with informed consent, emphasising its confidential and non-punitive nature, aimed only at personal and social betterment.

#### Specialised Interventions by External Providers

- Contract with external providers specialised in gender studies and psychological interventions to analyse the ASI Test results and to conduct necessary follow-up training and interventions.
- These providers will develop tailored intervention programs based on the sexism profiles identified, which could include psychological interventions, reflective exercises, educational workshops, therapeutic discussions, and individual counselling.

#### Monitoring and Evaluation

- Collect feedback from participants and stakeholders regarding the effectiveness and reception of the test and interventions.
- Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions in changing sexist attitudes and reducing behaviours associated with violence against women. This will be added to the Monitoring and Evaluation Platform (Policy Recommendation #9.4). Adjust the program as needed based on empirical evidence and participant feedback.

Implementing the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) Test, followed by specialised interventions provided by external experts, offers a strategic approach to reducing sexism in various community settings. Through this informed and targeted approach, the initiative aims to foster a significant cultural shift towards greater gender equity and mutual respect.

#### Quality Relationship Formation

While addressing and mitigating GBV is crucial, the policy focus on relationships must evolve beyond harm prevention to actively fostering positive, fulfilling partnerships. This pivot is premised on research that love and intimate relationships are powerful catalysts for broader societal change towards gender equality.<sup>99</sup> However, heterosexual relationships continue to present formidable barriers to women's progress, as illustrated by the empirical work of Bursztyn, Fujiwara, and Pallais (2017),<sup>100</sup> and Folke and

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<sup>99</sup> The Great Gender Divergence. (2024, March 9). *Romantic Love is an Under-Rated Driver of Gender Equality*. GGD World. <https://www.ggd.world/p/romantic-love-is-an-under-rated-driver>

<sup>100</sup> Bursztyn, L., Fujiwara, T., & Pallais, A. (2017). 'Acting Wife': Marriage Market Incentives and Labor Market Investments. *American Economic Review*, 107(11), 3288–3319. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20170029>

Rickne (2020).<sup>101</sup> Additionally, the YWA survey reveals a deep-seated adherence to traditional gender roles, with young women frequently internalising expectations of ‘softness’ and ‘sweetness.’ These patterns are further corroborated by YWA interviews, which disclose a disquieting trend of suppressed ambition and unrealised potential among women in heterosexual partnerships. This corpus of evidence signals an urgent need for policy measures that address overlooked impediments to gender equality within intimate relationships, as well as the recognition that even heterosexual dynamics without GBV and/or abuse, may still subjugate women. By examining these impediments and proposing targeted interventions, a paradigm where intimate relationships contribute to gender equality and personal fulfilment can be pursued. This paradigm is explored in Young Women’s Policy Submission (YWPS), which provides a compelling picture of young Australian women’s lives in 10 core areas.

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<sup>101</sup> Folke, O., & Rickne, J. (2020). All the Single Ladies: Job Promotions and the Durability of Marriage. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 12(1), 260-287. <https://doi.org/10.1257/app.20180435>

## NEXT STEPS FOR GOVERNMENT

The YWA research highlights a clear link between early exposure to sexism and gender discrimination in various social settings and the development of GBV-related behaviours in young men, as well as increased vulnerability to GBV among young women. These findings suggest that targeted interventions at key life stages can play a crucial role in preventing the progression of these issues. The YWA suggests the government consider the following actions based on these insights.

### Strategic Objectives

1. The government should collaborate with YWA to develop interventions aligning with the specific risk factors identified. These interventions should be strategically timed to coincide with critical life transitions, such as moving from education to employment or adolescence to adulthood.
2. To enhance the effectiveness of these interventions, the government is encouraged to commission additional research. This research should focus on refining our understanding of how gendered disadvantage develops and identifying further key stages for intervention.
3. YWA suggests that the government prioritise the nationwide implementation of these interventions. This would involve allocating the necessary resources, including funding and training, to ensure delivery and reach.

### Action Steps

1. Form a 3-4 person task force comprising YWA representatives and government policymakers focused on directly translating the insights from the report into actionable interventions. This task force will prioritise the creation of targeted interventions and policy recommendations that address the key developmental stages identified. The process will involve closely examining the report's findings and designing interventions that are specific, measurable, and applicable to the identified risk factors and life stages. Drafted interventions should have clear objectives, outlining the expected outcomes and the necessary resources for implementation. Priority recommendations should be developed to guide policymakers on the most urgent areas for intervention, ensuring a targeted approach that addresses the root causes of GBV.
2. Engage with academic institutions and research bodies to conduct further studies on gendered disadvantage and its link to GBV. This additional research will provide a deeper understanding of the nuances of how these disadvantages develop and persist, allowing for more refined and targeted intervention strategies. The findings should be continuously integrated into the existing interventions to ensure they remain relevant and effective.
3. Secure funding for development, implementation, and ongoing evaluation of these interventions. The budget should include provisions for training educators, community leaders, and other key stakeholders to ensure they are equipped to implement these interventions effectively across different regions. This step will also involve setting up the necessary infrastructure to support the interventions, including monitoring systems and feedback mechanisms, with evaluation being crucial.
4. Establish a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the impact of these interventions over time. This framework should include both qualitative and quantitative measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions in reducing GBV. The data collected

will be used to make iterative improvements, ensuring that the interventions evolve in response to emerging trends and ongoing research findings.

YWA suggests that these steps are essential for addressing the root causes of GBV effectively. By taking these actions, the government can significantly contribute to reducing GBV and promoting gender equality among young people. YWA remains committed to supporting the government in this effort and looks forward to further collaboration.

## CONCLUSION

The 'Young Minds, Old Biases: The Gender-Based Violence Crisis' report by the Young Women's Alliance (YWA) presents a multi-method investigation into gender-based violence (GBV) in Australia, concentrated on the experiences of young people. The report's foundation includes a National Listening Tour, a National Gender Survey with 3,000 responses, 300 in-depth interviews, and literature review including 812 academic articles.

A significant innovation in the report is the GBV Risk Profile, a new scale that surpasses the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) in identifying potential GBV perpetrators. This scale can guide the development of more targeted prevention strategies. The report also introduces time progression analyses of GBV perpetration and exposure, pinpointing critical intervention points throughout various life stages.

The YWA survey highlights disparities between young women and men in their views and experiences related to sex, relationships, and GBV. Men often link casual sex with empowerment and perceive sex as a means of exerting power. They report receiving accurate and useful education on sex and consent. Conversely, women frequently describe their sexual experiences as painful or disempowering. Traditional gender roles remain prevalent, with women expressing a desire for greater control to mitigate emotional distress. Many women also express concerns about how men are socialised and the subtle and overt oppression they face.

The survey also identifies key contributors to the belief that men are superior to women and more deserving of rights and opportunities. These factors include entrenched gender roles, the sexualisation of women, economic systems, insecurity, religion, learned behaviours, pornography, and daily interactions. Notably, men consistently rate these factors higher than women, indicating more deeply ingrained views of women's inferiority.

YWA interviews reveal that GBV is often normalised, with men being the primary perpetrators in both public and private spheres. Incidents of violence frequently start as early as primary school. The interviews also point to the role of pornography and casual sex culture in fostering harmful attitudes and increasing sexual violence. They highlight the intersectionality of GBV, with LGBTQIA+ individuals and Indigenous women facing higher risks, compounded by intergenerational trauma, substance abuse, and socioeconomic challenges.

These interviews further expose the deep safety concerns young women have in public spaces and educational settings, which lead to constant vigilance, limited freedom, and the adoption of precautionary behaviours. They also detail the challenges women face in relationships, including emotional unavailability, sexual coercion, and persistent gendered expectations. Current consent education is found lacking in addressing real-world scenarios, power dynamics, and the importance of ongoing, enthusiastic consent.

The policy recommendations are designed to work together, addressing GBV at multiple levels and stages. The CRRE inclusions focus on key developmental phases and risk factors, emphasising primary prevention, attitudinal change, and skill-building. For example, cognitive dissonance workshops are suggested to challenge entrenched beliefs, while emotional regulation training aims to provide young men with healthier coping mechanisms. Increased funding for men's behaviour change programs and the introduction of 'Designing Your Life' courses are proposed to meet the immediate needs of at-risk



individuals and couples, offering tailored interventions and alternative pathways for personal development.

The funding of the YWA is set to offer crucial support during key life transitions for young women, enhancing their resilience across personal, educational, and professional areas. The Incentive-Based Innovation Platform seeks to leverage cross-sector collaboration and innovation to drive systemic change, ensuring that gender justice remains a priority across policy areas.

Focusing on youth is crucial because adolescence and young adulthood are pivotal periods for shaping attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours related to gender and relationships. Early intervention can prevent the solidification of harmful patterns. Furthermore, young people, particularly young women, are disproportionately affected by GBV. Tailoring interventions to their specific needs, experiences, and developmental stages is vital for achieving meaningful outcomes.

Young people are also essential drivers of change. By involving them in the design and implementation of initiatives, their creativity, energy, and insights can be harnessed to drive cultural transformation. Investing in youth-focused interventions promises long-term benefits, breaking cycles of violence and fostering healthier, more equitable relationships across generations.

The ‘Young Minds, Old Biases’ report provides a detailed, evidence-based plan for addressing the GBV crisis among young Australians. By implementing the integrated policy recommendations, which are based on rigorous research and the voices of young people, Australia can lead in creating a safer, more just society for all, and ensure eliminating GBV in a generation is not merely a poetic or lofty target.



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2024

# Young Minds, Old Biases

## The Gender-Based Violence Crisis

