

Myths and Facts:

Domestic Violence

MYTH

Women commit domestic violence as much as men.

FACT

Over the years, the number of Australians who understand the fact that men are more likely than women to commit domestic violence has actually been declining.

Yet, the research is clear: men are more likely than women to:

- perpetrate intimate partner violence
- use frequent, prolonged and extreme violence
- sexually assault a female partner and/or
- use controlling and coercive behaviours with/on their partners.

MYTH

Domestic violence affects men as much as women.

FACT

Most Australians know that women are more likely than men to experience physical harm due to domestic violence. However the proportion who are aware of this is declining.

Again, the research is clear: women have been found to be more likely than men to:

- experience physical injury, including injuries requiring medical treatment, time away from work and days in bed; and
- be the victims of domestic homicide.

MYTH

If she doesn't leave, it's her fault if the violence continues at home.

FACT

Nearly one in three Australians think that women who do not leave violent relationships are responsible for the abuse continuing, when in fact, the responsibility for the violence rests with the perpetrator.

This myth shifts responsibility for violence from the perpetrator and fails to recognise why many women are not able to leave abusive relationships.

Studies have found that:

- Some women may decide to remain at home because they are committed to the relationship and just want the violence to stop, or they may need to carefully plan a safe departure.
- That women may stay in the violent household because they minimise the violence they are experiencing:
 - when talking with family, friends and professionals to manage their reactions
 - as a coping mechanism
 - to make sense of violence
 - because it has become 'normal' or
 - they don't see that the relationship is violent.



MYTH

Everybody knows how to access domestic violence services.

FACT

Two in five Australians do not know where to find help about domestic violence despite the importance for victims of violence, and their family and friends, to be able to access support in a timely manner.

The research tells us that women may:

- seek informal help from family and friends before going to a service
- avoid seeking help because they aren't aware of services.

Domestic violence services can help respond to violence, prevent it getting worse and give advice on how others can help safely.

MYTH

It's not hard to leave a domestic violence relationship.

FACT

Fewer than one in five Australians believe this myth, which fails to recognise it can be dangerous to leave a violent partnership.

Many women who live with violence fear that the violence will get worse if they try to leave and so may feel trapped. These fears are real, and reflected in research - the risk of violence to women and their children is greater in the lead-up to separation and afterward the risk of intimate partner homicide is increased.

This myth also ignores the other challenges of leaving which research has revealed to be:

- a lack of alternative sources of housing and income
- unhelpful responses from family, friends and service providers
- a lack of knowledge of support services
- a shortage of available services or problems in accessing services
- concern for the future safety and wellbeing of children, particularly in rural areas
- family law considerations (e.g. shared parenting arrangements after separation)
- the impacts of the violence itself on their health and wellbeing, which may, in turn, impact on their confidence to establish a new life, and
- the nature of the violence as occurring in cycles, which may affect a woman's decision to leave.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All content extracted and adapted from:

Webster, K., Diemer, K., Honey, N., Mannix, S., Mickle, J., Morgan, J., Parkes, A., Politoff, V., Powell, A., Stubbs, J., & Ward, A. (2018). Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality. Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) (Research report, 03/2018). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS.

This report also contains statistics that should be used when representing facts in reports, media releases and educating other sector partners.

You are encouraged to access the original document to learn more.



noviolence.org.au

