

Chapter 4

Prevalence of domestic and family violence

Data on the prevalence of domestic and family violence

4.1 This chapter summarises the evidence the committee received on the prevalence of domestic and family violence.

Personal Safety Survey

4.2 The most comprehensive data that is available in relation to the prevalence of domestic and family violence in Australia is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Personal Safety Survey (PSS).¹

4.3 In terms of the overall prevalence of violence, the PSS found that men were more likely than women to experience violence:

In 2012 it was estimated that 8.7% of all men aged 18 years and over (737,100) and 5.3% of all women aged 18 years and over (467,300) had experienced violence in the 12 months prior to the survey...

...

In 2012 it was estimated that 49% of all men aged 18 years and over (4,148,000) and 41% of all women aged 18 years and over (3,560,600) had experienced violence since the age of 15.²

4.4 However, in terms of the prevalence of 'partner violence',³ the PSS reported that women were more likely than men to experience violence by a partner:

In 2012, an estimated 17% of all women aged 18 years and over (1,479,900 women) and 5.3% of all men aged 18 years and over (448,000 men) had experienced violence by a partner since the age of 15.⁴

4.5 The ABS also reported on the prevalence of partner violence during the previous 12 months:

1 See, for example, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, *Submission 68*, p. 1; ACT Domestic Violence Prevention Council, *Submission 100*, p. 3; Women's Centre for Health Matters, *Submission 101*, p. 3. Women's Health West described the Personal Safety Survey as the 'primary data source' on the prevalence of violence against women in Australia, *Submission 21*, p. 5. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has conducted two Personal Safety Surveys, the first from August to December 2005 and a second from February to December 2012.

2 ABS, Personal Safety Survey, 2012.

3 'Partner' is used to describe the person the respondent lives with, or lived with at some point, in a married or de facto relationship. 'Partner violence' refers to any incident of sexual assault, sexual threat, physical assault or physical threat by a current and/or previous partner, but does not include violence by a 'boyfriend/girlfriend or date'.

4 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Personal Safety Survey, 2012.

Women were more likely than men to have experienced violence by a partner in the 12 months prior to the survey. In the 12 months prior to the survey an estimated 132,500 women (1.5% of all women aged 18 years and over) had experienced violence by a partner compared to 51,800 men (0.6% of all men aged 18 years and over).⁵

4.6 The survey also compared changes in the prevalence of partner violence over time:

Between 2005 and 2012 [when the PSS surveys were conducted] there was no statistically significant change in the proportion of women and men who reported experiencing partner violence in the 12 months prior to the survey.⁶

4.7 The ABS surveyed for the prevalence of 'emotional abuse'⁷ by a partner:

Women are more likely than men to have experienced emotional abuse by a partner since the age of 15. In 2012 an estimated 25% (2,142,600) of all women aged 18 years and over and 14% (1,221,100) of all men age 18 years and over had experienced emotional abuse by a partner since the age of 15...

Women were more likely than men to have experienced emotional abuse by their current partner in the 12 months prior to the survey. Women were also more likely than men to have experienced emotional abuse by a previous partner in the 12 months prior to the survey...⁸

4.8 While the prevalence data in the PSS was often cited in submissions, a limited number of submissions raised issues with methodology of the PSS. For example, Mr Paul Mischefski, Vice-President of Men's Wellbeing Inc, Queensland, argued:

Despite repeated calls for this highly-regarded and quoted survey to achieve gender parity and include an equal number of female and male respondents, the survey has consistently shown an immense bias towards a female survey sample.

The 2005 survey included 11,800 females but only 4500 males. This heavy gender bias became even worse in the 2012 survey, where only 22% of respondents were male – less than one-quarter.⁹

4.9 Women with Disabilities Victoria stated that women with disabilities are 'vastly under-represented' in the PSS and recommended that the ABS 'adopt

5 ABS, Personal Safety Survey, 2012.

6 ABS, Personal Safety Survey, 2012.

7 For the purposes of the survey 'emotional abuse' occurred when a person is subjected to certain behaviours or actions that are aimed at preventing or controlling their behaviour with the intent to cause them emotional harm or fear. These behaviours are characterised in nature by their intent to manipulate, control, isolate or intimidate the person they are aimed at. They are generally repeated behaviours and include psychological, social, economic and verbal abuse.

8 ABS, Personal Safety Survey, 2012.

9 *Submission 87*, p. 5. See also *One in Three Campaign, Submission 23*, p. 7.

appropriate methodologies to achieve a representative sample of women with disabilities in the Personal Safety Survey'.¹⁰

4.10 The Multicultural Centre for Women's Health contended that data collection surveys such as the PSS 'are not designed to adequately account for the experiences of immigrant and refugee women'.¹¹

4.11 Our Watch stressed the importance of ensuring that the PSS involved sample sizes of different community groups:

PSS and [National Community Attitudes Survey (NCAS)] sample sizes for different community groups – particularly Indigenous communities, women with disabilities, and different [culturally and linguistically diverse] communities – are largely insufficient [to] allow statistically-significant analysis, measure changes, or inform prevention activities for these groups.¹²

4.12 Our Watch recommended that in future the PSS (and the NCAS) include:

large enough cohorts of different groups to ensure statistical relevance and aid systematic quantitative analysis.¹³

4.13 A number of submissions also noted that any domestic and family violence statistics are likely to underestimate the prevalence of the issue, due to victims not reporting violent incidents.¹⁴ This issue, and other matters in relation to the collection of data, are further discussed in Chapter 5.

4.14 As part of the National Plan, the PSS is due to be conducted every four years.¹⁵ The Implementation Plan for the First Action Plan provides the following information on the work that goes into the preparation of the PSS:

Activities such as national surveys require long lead times for development and testing and it was essential to start the process as soon as practicable. During the first year, significant work was undertaken on the development of the Personal Safety Survey (PSS). This included the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) working with Commonwealth, state and territory and non-government representatives to identify new content for the PSS. In addition survey instruments have been developed and tested with both

10 *Submission 50*, p. 8.

11 *Submission 97*, p. 2. See also Centre for Advocacy, Support and Education for Refugees (CASE for Refugees), *Submission 29*, p. 6.

12 *Submission 141*, p. 25.

13 *Submission 141*, p. 25. The National Community Attitudes Survey (NCAS) is discussed later in this chapter.

14 See, for example, Australian Women Against Violence Alliance, *Submission 62*, p. 8; *Submission 129*, p. 9.

15 Department of Social Services, *Submission 57*, Attachment 2 (National Implementation Plan for the First Action Plan), p. 26.

survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and a broader community sample. Specific interviewer training has been developed and tested.¹⁶

International Violence Against Women Survey

4.15 Submissions also referred to information on the prevalence of domestic and family violence in the International Violence Against Women Survey.

4.16 The Australasian component of the 2013 survey reported that 28 per cent of women had experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner.¹⁷ In the 2004 survey, 34 per cent of Australian women aged between 18 and 69 had experienced some form of violence by a current or previous partner.¹⁸

Homicides

4.17 A number of submissions referred specifically to the prevalence of domestic and family violence-related homicides. For example, academics from the University of Melbourne provided the following information from the National Homicide Monitoring Program for the years 2008-09 to 2009-10:

Australia-wide...1 in 5 murders involved intimate partners (23 percent in each year 2008/09 and 2009/10), and overwhelmingly in these cases, women were killed by men (75%). Two thirds occurred between current spouses or de facto partners, and over a quarter occurred between separated/divorced spouses or de facto partners...

Over 10 per cent of family violence-related homicides in Australia involve child victims and the overwhelming majority are killed by a parent. On average, 27 children are killed by their parents in Australia each year.¹⁹

4.18 In February 2015, the National Homicide Monitoring Program released the figures of homicide in Australia for the period 2010-11 to 2011-12. In the period, 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2012, there were a total of 479 homicide incidents – 236 in

16 Department of Social Services, *Submission 57*, Attachment 2 (National Implementation Plan for the First Action Plan), p. 26.

17 See Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, *Submission 123*, p. 2, citing World Health Organisation (WHO), *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence* (2013).

18 See Office of the Public Advocate, *Submission 27*, Attachment 2, p. 29, citing J Mouzos, and T Makkai, *Women's Experiences of Male Violence: Findings From the Australian Component of the International Violence Against Women Survey*, Canberra, Australian Institute of Criminology (2004). See also Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, *Submission 72*, pp 4-5, which noted that the International Violence Against Women Survey uses a broader definition of domestic violence than the ABS's Personal Safety Survey; Domestic Violence Victoria, *Submission 124*, p. 3; Our Watch (Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children), *Submission 141*, p. 12.

19 *Submission 120*, pp 7-8, citing research by the National Homicide Monitoring Program, Australian Institute of Criminology. See also Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, *Submission 72*, p. 6; Our Watch (Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children), *Submission 141*, p. 12; White Ribbon Australia, *Submission 94*, p. 9.

2010-11 and 243 in 2011-12.²⁰ There were 187 were domestic homicide incidents, of which 109 (or 58 per cent) were classified as intimate partner homicide.²¹ The report also states:

Where both victim sex and relationship classification could be determined, a higher proportion of victims of intimate partner homicide were female (n=83; 76% of domestic homicides)[.]²²

4.19 The committee also received evidence on the rate of domestic and family violence- related homicides in specific state jurisdictions. In Victoria in 2012-13, there were 44 deaths as a result of family violence, 'nearly one per week'.²³ The Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) referred to homicide statistics from NSW:

In NSW in the 12 months to September 2012, around three-quarters of female homicide victims (27 out of 35) were killed by someone with whom they were in a domestic relationship. This compares to one-fifth of male homicide victims (11 out of 57).²⁴

4.20 The One in Three Campaign also referred to NSW statistics, noting the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) findings:

BOCSAR also examined trends and characteristics of domestic homicides in NSW over the period January 2003 to June 2008. During this time, there were 215 victims of domestic homicide; 115 females and 100 males (almost one in two victims were male). Intimate partners were responsible for 43 per cent of domestic homicide victims (70 females and 23 males - one in four were male).²⁵

Domestic and family violence against men

4.21 As set out above, the PSS provides some data on the prevalence of domestic and family violence against men. However, submissions also highlighted other data which is available. For example, the One in Three Campaign cited the 1999 South Australian Interpersonal Violence and Abuse Survey which found:

32.3 per cent (almost one in three) victims of reported domestic violence by a current or ex-partner (including both physical and emotional violence and abuse) were male.²⁶

20 These 479 incidents involved 511 victims and 532 offenders.

21 Australian Institute of Criminology, *Homicide in Australia: 2010-11 to 2011-12: National Homicide Monitoring Program report*, AIC Reports, Monitoring Reports 23 (2015), p. vi.

22 Australian Institute of Criminology, *Homicide in Australia: 2010-11 to 2011-12: National Homicide Monitoring Program report*, AIC Reports, Monitoring Reports 23 (2015), p. 16.

23 Victoria Police, *Submission 92*, p. 3.

24 *Submission 89*, p. 16.

25 *Submission 23*, p. 10.

26 *Submission 23*, p. 8.

4.22 The NSW Government submission also provided some data on the prevalence of domestic and family violence against men:

In the twelve months to March 2014, 69 per cent of victims of domestic violence-related assaults in NSW were women. There were 21,664 female victims compared to 9,925 male victims. This equates to a rate per 100,000 population of 594 for females and 277 for males.²⁷

Specific groups at risk of domestic and family violence

4.23 The terms of reference also refer to the prevalence of domestic violence as it affects vulnerable groups including 'women living with a disability' and 'women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds'. The committee recognises these are not the only vulnerable groups and acknowledges the following list of vulnerable groups, provided by Victoria Police, who may face additional barriers in reporting and seeking assistance in domestic and family violence matters:

- culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), non-English speaking new and emerging migrant communities;
- people with disabilities;
- people experiencing mental health issues;
- Aboriginal communities;
- people in same sex relationships;
- transgender and intersex persons;
- young people; and
- older people experiencing intimate partner and intergenerational violence.²⁸

4.24 The introduction to the Second Action Plan 2013-2016 includes some data for specific groups of the community, namely Indigenous women, women with a disability and women from CALD backgrounds:

Indigenous women are 31 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence related assaults than other women. Women with disability are more likely to experience violence and the violence can be more severe and last longer than for other women. A recent survey of 367 women and girls with disability found that 22 per cent had been affected by violence in the previous year. Women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and new and emerging communities who experience violence can also face significant difficulties, including a lack of support networks, language barriers, socio-economic disadvantage, and lack of knowledge of their rights and Australia's laws.²⁹

27 *Submission 140*, Attachment 1, p. 7.

28 *Submission 92*, p. 4.

29 See Department of Social Services, *Submission 57*, Attachment 5 (Second Action Plan), p. 5.

4.25 The committee also received other evidence on the prevalence of domestic and family violence in specific groups at risk and the factors which may make these groups particularly vulnerable.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women

4.26 Many submissions noted the higher prevalence of domestic and family violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. For example, the joint submission from Women's Legal Services Australia and the National Association of Community Legal Centres provided the following information:

[A]pproximately 25% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women had experienced one or more incidents of physical violence in the previous 12 months [and] 94% knew the perpetrator.³⁰

4.27 Our Watch referred to findings from the National Homicide Monitoring Program of the Australian Institute of Criminology:

Just over half of Indigenous homicide victims were killed in a domestic homicide, of which the most common subcategory was intimate partner homicide (42 per cent).

Two in every five Indigenous victims of homicide were female, higher than the equivalent proportion of female non-Indigenous homicides (31 per cent).³¹

4.28 Submissions also referred to the data on the prevalence of violence in the Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey. For example, Women's Health West:

In the [International Violence Against Women] survey itself, 7 per cent of non-Indigenous women reported experiencing physical violence, compared to 20 per cent of Indigenous women. Three times as many Indigenous women reported experiencing an incident of sexual violence, compared to non-Indigenous women.³²

Women with a disability

4.29 The Office of the Public Advocate (Victoria), provided research which demonstrates that women with disabilities are at greater risk of experiencing family and sexual violence compared with both men with disabilities and women without disabilities.³³ Domestic Violence Victoria summarised the circumstances that place

30 *Submission 26*, p. 4. See also Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service, *Submission 39*, p. 8; Department of Social Services, *Submission 57*, Attachment 3 (Progress Review of the First Action Plan), pp 17-18.

31 *Submission 141*, p. 14.

32 *Submission 21*, p. 6. See also Beryl Women, *Submission 45*, p. 6; Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), *Submission 68*, pp 2-3; Queensland Domestic Violence Network, *Submission 88*, p. 7.

33 Office of the Public Advocate, *Submission 27*, Attachment 1, (Voices Against Violence, Paper One: Summary Report and Recommendations), p. 15. See also University of Melbourne, *Submission 120*, p. 21.

women with disabilities at risk, and the reasons that they did not seek or receive support:

Women with disabilities are among the most socially and economically marginalised in the community. Women with disabilities experience violence at significantly higher rates than other women and have greater difficulty in accessing support services. Many women with disabilities are subject to the control of others, and experience high levels of violence from family members and carers. Women with disabilities are less likely than other women to report family violence, and less likely to receive services that meet their needs. In addition, over a third of women who sought assistance for family violence from disability services acquired a disability as a result of the abuse. Women with disabilities may live in inappropriate accommodation, where they are vulnerable to abuse and/or live without adequate support in the community.³⁴

4.30 The National Cross-Disability Disabled People's Organisations informed the committee:

To date, there have been no national studies or research conducted to establish the prevalence, extent, nature, causes and impact of violence against people with disability in different settings. There is no systematic data collection in Australia on violence against people with disability, including domestic violence.³⁵

4.31 However, the National Cross-Disability Disabled People's Organisations, along with other submissions, were able to provide some data on the prevalence of domestic and family violence against women with a disability:

Women with disability are 40% more likely to be the victims of domestic violence than women without disability, and more than 70% of women with disability have been victims of violent sexual encounters at some time in their lives. Twenty per cent of women with disability report a history of unwanted sex compared to 8.2% of women without disability. The rates of sexual victimisation of women with disability range from four to 10 times higher than for other women. Ninety per cent of Australian women with an intellectual disability have been subjected to sexual abuse, with more than two-thirds (68%) having been sexually abused before they turned 18 years of age.³⁶

4.32 The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) also cited research on the prevalence of violence against women with disabilities and the specific factors making this group vulnerable to violence:

Research suggests that, in general, women living with disability are twice as likely to become victims of domestic violence as those living without disability. Most often, their vulnerabilities are exacerbated by their

34 *Submission 124*, pp 7-8.

35 *Submission 142*, p. 13. Emphasis in original.

36 *Submission 142*, p. 13. See also Domestic Violence Victoria, *Submission 124*, p. 8.

impairment, their dependence on others for assistance, and their inability to effectively access support services. Violence can be used as a tool to maintain control over women with disability and to instil fear, which is further problematised by the perpetrator often being the person that the victim is depending upon.³⁷

4.33 Dr Jessica Cadwallader, Advocacy Project Manager, Violence Prevention, Australian Cross Disability Alliance, noted that what data is available indicates that women, men and children with a disability experience 'much, much higher levels of violence than others in their community, and often in their homes'.³⁸ Dr Cadwallader referred to the lack of reliable disaggregated quantitative data, with most methodologies used in Australia systematically excluding many people with a disability:

One of the main impediments to the inclusion of people with disability and prevention and response frameworks is the dominant definition of domestic violence. Usually policies, services and legislation define domestic violence as more or less intimate partner violence occurring in a private home. This excludes the places that many people with disability call home. This is solely because others, workers, governments, service providers, consider their home to be a workplace—a group home, a [community residential unit (CRU)], a boarding house, an institution—but not a home. But these are homes for people with disability...

Similarly, domestic violence definitions frequently exclude some of the relationships in which people with disability experience violence. The relationship with a support worker can mirror many of the forms of interdependence found in families or an intimate partnership, even when that worker is not going beyond what they are paid to do. A support worker may grocery shop for a person with disability, help pay their bills, ensure that their medication is provided or be responsible for showering a person with disability. Just as the interdependence and family relationships can be what enables such devastating violence, support workers often have just as much, or perhaps more control, over the home lives of people with disability. The withdrawal of life-sustaining supports can be a key element of domestic violence against people with disability.³⁹

Women from a culturally and linguistically diverse background

4.34 A number of submissions highlighted the lack of data available about the prevalence of domestic and family violence against women from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, immigrant women and women from a non-English speaking background.⁴⁰ For example, FECCA observed that '[t]here is currently very

37 *Submission 54*, p. 5.

38 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 11 June 2015, p. 8.

39 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 11 June 2015, p. 8.

40 See, for example, Women's Health West, *Submission 21*, p. 8; Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia, *Submission 54*, p. 6; Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, *Submission 97*, p. 2.

limited comprehensive and accurate data and statistics available concerning culturally and linguistically diverse women's experiences of domestic and family violence in Australia'.⁴¹ However, FECCA continued:

Anecdotal evidence shows that the rate of violence perpetrated against culturally and linguistically diverse women is high, and is determined by intersectional disadvantages. According to a research compiled by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), some studies on the nature and the prevalence of domestic abuse in immigrant communities have produced mixed results, while others have indicated that women from non-English speaking backgrounds could experience higher levels of violence. Other findings have indicated that cultural values and diverse immigration experiences add further complexity in relation to experiences of domestic violence and the likelihood of women reporting abuse and seeking assistance.⁴²

4.35 Women's Health West referred to some limited data available from Victoria:

According to client records of the Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service of Victoria, women who were born overseas and are from a non-English speaking background are over-represented as users of domestic violence support services. They represent 37.5 per cent of women accessing the service and only 17.3 per cent of the total Victorian population.⁴³

4.36 The Queensland Domestic Violence Network described research findings on the nature and prevalence of physical and sexual violence against women from CALD backgrounds as offering 'mixed results':

[S]ome studies have found that women from non-English speaking [or CALD] backgrounds experience higher levels of violence, whereas other studies suggest the rate of physical violence is lower than, or similar to, the rate among those women from English speaking backgrounds[.]

However, [other studies have reported] 'Immigrant women are more likely than other women to be murdered as a result of domestic and family violence and are less likely to receive appropriate assistance from services when they attempt to leave a violent relationship'[.]⁴⁴

4.37 Both Relationships Australia and the Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service Victoria noted anecdotal evidence of increasing numbers of women from CALD backgrounds, or migrant women, accessing their services:

Our members also report seeing increasing numbers of women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds who are

41 Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia, *Submission 54*, p. 6. See also Centre for Advocacy, Support and Education for Refugees (CASE for Refugees), *Submission 29*, p. 6; Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, *Submission 97*, p. 2.

42 *Submission 54*, p. 6.

43 *Submission 21*, p. 8. See also Our Watch (Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children), *Submission 141*, p. 15.

44 *Submission 88*, p. 23.

impacted by family violence either from their own immediate partner (usually the male partner) or also on occasions from other extended family members, such as in-laws.⁴⁵

4.38 The focus of many submissions was the factors which make women from a CALD background, immigrant women and women from a non-English speaking background especially vulnerable and prevent them from seeking help. For example, inTouch, Multicultural Centre against Family Violence, provided this summary:

An already difficult situation is accentuated by language difficulties, unfamiliarity with service systems, social dislocation due to immigration, alienation from culture and community, grief related to experiences of torture and trauma and limited culturally appropriate services.⁴⁶

4.39 After hosting a national roundtable on violence against CALD women on 7 August 2015, the Commonwealth Government announced \$160,000 for the Diversity Data project (to be undertaken by ANROWS) that will review how CALD women, women with a disability and Indigenous women experience violence and examine options on how to improve information in future. At the same time, the government also launched a pre-departure information pack to support women who are moving to Australia from overseas, providing them with information about their rights, Australian laws and emergency contacts related to domestic and family violence.⁴⁷

Attitudes to violence

4.40 In September 2014, the third National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS) was released. NCAS was commissioned in 2012 by the then Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and conducted by VicHealth in collaboration with The Social Research Centre and The University of Melbourne.⁴⁸

4.41 In summarising the research findings, VicHealth explained the purpose of the NCAS:

Attitudes that condone or tolerate violence are recognised as playing a central role in shaping the way individuals, organisations and communities respond to violence. Measuring community attitudes tells us how well we are progressing towards a violence-free society for all women. It also

45 Relationships Australia, *Submission 131*, p. 5. See also Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service Victoria, who refer to women without permanent residency as a growing cohort of women accessing their services, *Submission 109*, p. 4.

46 *Submission 138*, p. 6.

47 Minister for Social Services, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services, Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, 'National roundtable to discuss violence against culturally diverse women', Joint Media Release, 7 August 2015.

48 VicHealth, *Australians' attitudes to violence against women: Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey* (September 2014), p. 6.

reveals the extent of the work that lies ahead, where to focus our efforts, and the messages and approaches likely to be effective.⁴⁹

4.42 In conjunction with the PSS, the NCAS is designed to monitor the National Plan.⁵⁰

4.43 The NCAS was compiled from 17,500 twenty-minute telephone interviews with a cross-section of Australians aged 16 years and over. There have been two previous surveys, in 1995 and 2009.

4.44 The NCAS aims to investigate four key areas:

- gauging community knowledge of, and attitudes towards, violence against women to identify areas that need attention in future;
- assessing changes in attitudes between the 1995, 2009 and 2013 NCAS;
- improving understanding of factors influencing knowledge, attitudes and responses; and
- identifying segments of the population that may particularly benefit from activity to prevent violence.⁵¹

4.45 The overall findings of NCAS were summarised as:

The majority of Australians have a good knowledge of violence against women and do not endorse most attitudes supportive of this violence.

On the whole, Australians' understanding and attitudes remained stable between 2009 and 2013. However, when you look at the findings from individual questions, some areas improved, whereas others became worse.

Young people's attitudes remain an area of concern. Young people have somewhat more violence-supportive attitudes than others but their attitudes are gradually improving over time, particularly among young men, with fewer young people in 2013 holding attitudes at the extreme end of the spectrum.

People's understanding of violence against women and their attitudes to gender equality have significant impacts on their attitudes to violence against women.⁵²

Committee view

4.46 The National Plan provides for the conduct of the PSS and the NCAS surveys on a four-year rolling basis as part of the actions to develop the evidence base. The

49 VicHealth, *Australians' attitudes to violence against women: Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey* (September 2014), p. 1.

50 VicHealth, *Australians' attitudes to violence against women: Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey* (September 2014), p. 9.

51 VicHealth, *Australians' attitudes to violence against women: Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey* (September 2014), p. 9.

52 VicHealth, *Australians' attitudes to violence against women: Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey* (September 2014), p. 9.

committee notes that it received evidence criticising the adequacy of sampling sizes of particular subgroups within the community, such as women with a disability, and women from CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

4.47 The committee understands that national surveys require substantial lead time, and anticipates that planning, development and testing for the next PSS – due to be conducted in 2016⁵³ – will have, or will soon, commence.

4.48 The committee notes that as part of the launch of the Second Action Plan \$1.7 million was announced to help the development of a national data collection and reporting framework. This amount includes \$300,000 for the ABS to augment data sets on victims and offenders.⁵⁴ While this is welcome, the committee has no further detail and would urge the Australian Bureau of Statistics, along with Commonwealth, state and territory bodies involved in the development of the PSS to consider the concerns raised in this inquiry, and endeavour to address those issues prior to the conduct of the next PSS.

Recommendation 4

4.49 The committee recommends that the Australian Bureau of Statistics, along with Commonwealth, state and territory bodies involved in the development of the Personal Safety Survey consider the concerns raised during this inquiry about the adequacy of sampling sizes of particular subgroups within the community, such as women with a disability, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, immigrant and refugee women, and Indigenous communities and endeavour to address these issues prior to the conduct of the next PSS.

53 Department of Social Services, *Submission 57*, Attachment 5 (Second Action Plan), p. 45.

54 Department of Social Services, *Submission 57*, p. 1.

