

Bystander research snapshot report

Background

There is growing evidence to support bystander actions that we can all take in our daily lives as part of preventing violence against women.¹

Our Watch recently commissioned Kantar Public (formally TNS Australia) to conduct an online survey to find out about different bystander situations and how bystanders can be supported to take action against sexism, gender discrimination and inequality.

What is bystander action?

In the primary prevention of violence against women, bystander action is defined as:

“Safe and appropriate actions taken to challenge the drivers of violence against women – that is, to challenge:

- The condoning of violence against women.
- Men’s control of decision-making and limits to women’s independence in public and private life.
- Stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity.
- Disrespect towards women, and male peer relationships that emphasise aggression.”

Examples of bystander action include speaking out about, or seeking to engage others in responding to sexism, gender-based discrimination, and inequality, and ‘calling out’ or challenging sexist and violence-supportive behaviours, attitudes and practices.

Research methodology

Kantar Public conducted an online survey with a sample of 1,204 Australians aged 16 and over, including representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ and in metro and regional areas.

Key findings

The survey showed that all respondents think it is common for females to be treated unfairly and/or without respect in a range of settings, indicating that sexism, gender discrimination and gender inequality are widespread problems in Australia.

The survey also highlighted that some respondents have problematic attitudes around gender stereotypes, women’s roles and gender equality. But the good news is that many respondents think sexism, gender discrimination and gender equality are concerning and want advice about how they can help.

¹ See <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/review-of-bystander-approaches-in-support-of-preventing-violence-against-women>





Sexism and gender discrimination are perceived to be prevalent across a range of settings

Respondents thought it was more likely for women to be treated unfairly and/or without respect in the following settings and environments:



Male dominated settings

70% thought common or very common.



Social media

65% thought common or very common.



Clubs, pubs and bars

67% thought common or very common.



Workplaces

65% thought common or very common.



On the street

57% thought common or very common.

Attitudes around gender stereotypes, women's roles and gender equality

The survey showed some problematic attitudes:

- **51%** of people surveyed think 'women are better care givers than men'.
- **27%** of people surveyed think 'men have more sexual needs than women'.
- **25%** of people surveyed think 'women's requests for gender equality are exaggerated'.
- **21%** of people surveyed think 'women are becoming too outspoken these days'.
- **20%** of people surveyed think 'men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household'.
- **19%** of people surveyed think 'sexist jokes are harmless fun'.

Australians think sexism, gender discrimination and gender inequality are concerning

More specifically, the survey showed that:

82% of people surveyed find **'females being paid less than a male colleague for the same work'** concerning or very concerning.

78% of people surveyed find **'a male colleague interrupting and talking over a female colleague'** concerning or very concerning.

77% of people surveyed find **'a friend sharing a sexist joke about an "ugly, fat chick" on social media'** concerning or very concerning.

70% of people surveyed find **'a male colleague making a comment about one of your female colleague's sexual attractiveness'** concerning or very concerning.

70% of people surveyed find **'women doing all the cleaning up after dinner while the men watch television'** concerning or very concerning.

Australians want support to speak up against sexism, gender discrimination and gender inequality

The survey showed that:

79%

of people surveyed want practical tips about ways to safely intervene when witnessing disrespect towards women and girls.

75%

of people surveyed want practical tips about how to respond to casual sexism in a social environment without being a 'party pooper'.

The survey also showed that people found messages around the social approval of speaking up the most motivating, like:

- It's OK to speak up or show disapproval when witnessing disrespect towards women and girls.
78% thought this message was somewhat or very motivating.
- It's likely that other people around you also disapprove of disrespect towards women and girls.
74% thought this message was somewhat or very motivating.
- If you don't take responsibility in situations of disrespect towards women and girls, then who will?
74% thought this message was somewhat or very motivating.

Next steps

Our Watch is working to develop resources to support bystanders as part of a large-scale bystander campaign funded by the Department of Social Services which will be launched in 2018.

In the meantime, we all need to start challenging the attitudes and beliefs that demean and disrespect women.

So, what can you do? Here are some ideas from Our Watch:

- Start by looking at your own attitudes and behaviours towards women and men. Do you treat men and women differently? Do you expect them to act differently? Ask yourself why.
- If you hear someone blaming a victim of sexual assault by asking: “What was she wearing?” or “Was she drunk?”, tell them that those kinds of attitudes contribute to a society that excuses violence against women. The only person responsible for sexual violence is the perpetrator.
- Promote and role model equality and respect between men and women in all elements of your life – at home, at work and in your community.
- Model equality at home and in your relationships – and if you have children, make sure they see you talking through problems in an open and respectful way and sharing jobs at home equally. Make efforts to highlight female and male role models who are succeeding in non-traditional careers.
- Talk to the people in your life about your commitment to preventing violence against women and encourage them to say yes to gender equality.

To find out more, visit Ourwatch.org.au and sign up for the monthly e-newsletter.

