

Timely Topics: Sexual violence prevention

Key points and statistics about sexual violence prevention

- One in five women over 15 has experienced sexual violence
- The highest rates of sexual assault occur in the 15 to 19 year old age group
- 78% of women who experience sexual assault know the offender
- 38% of young women reported having unwanted sex
- 19% of young men reported having unwanted sex

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics: [Personal Safety Survey 2005 4906.0](#)

Australian Bureau of Statistics: [Recorded Crime: Victims 2003](#)

Smith, A., Aigus, P., Barrett, C., Mitchell, A. and Pitts, M. (2009). *2008 Results of the 4th national survey of Australian Secondary School Students, HIV/AIDS and sexual health*. Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society.

It is hard to measure the extent of sexual violence against women, as most sexual assaults are not reported. It is estimated that 19 per cent of female victims of sexual assault in Australia report the incident to police. The rate of sexual assault against men is harder to determine and not routinely collected.

www.apf.gov.au/library/intguide/SP/ViolenceAgainstWomen.htm

The FPQ Cairns Sexual Assault Service convened a seminar in June, in an effort to raise awareness about male survivors and discuss how to tailor services to meet their unique needs. 'Lifting the lid' hosted local and international experts to increase awareness that men experience sexual violence too. Key information presented at this seminar included information about the profound impact sexual violence can have on men's lives, and the need to work with men to build a positive sense of self.

Two featured speakers from 'Lifting the lid', Dr Gary Foster of [Living Well](#) and Nick Wymarra of [Wuchopperen](#), were interviewed by ABC Far North Queensland's Fiona Sewell on her program 'Mornings with Fiona Sewell'. Listen to the interview at www.fpq.com.au/sa/liftlid.php

Evidence-based practice responses

While there is often media attention paid to responses to assaults (eg sensitivity and awareness training for footballers), there is a growing understanding of the importance of primary prevention programs. Primary prevention refers to work which seeks to engage people in preventing problems before they occur.

The Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women

Michael Flood

The project focuses on the primary prevention of men's violence against women, and commenced in August 2008. Dr Flood is conducting or overseeing research and evaluation related to the effective development of primary prevention efforts, conducting an ongoing review of the evidence related to violence against women and models of good practice to reduce its prevalence, and supporting the design of new programs and the translation of research findings to practice, policy and program development.

One of the most significant contributions of this project is its identification of best practice in school-based violence prevention, particularly through the report *Respectful Relationships Education: Violence prevention and respectful relationships education in Victorian secondary schools*.

This Victorian Government report identifies five criteria for good practice:

- 1 a whole-school approach
- 2 a program framework and logic
- 3 effective curriculum delivery
- 4 relevant, inclusive and culturally sensitive practice
- 5 impact evaluation

Together, these criteria represent the minimum standard for effective violence prevention and respectful relationships education in schools.

Link to the document

www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ProgramsandProjects/MentalHealthandWellBeing/DiscriminationandViolence/ViolenceAgainstWomen/respectful-relationships.ashx

Two steps forward, one step back

VicHealth - A summary of findings of the Violence Against Women Community Attitudes Project

This publication examines the progress and challenges in creating safe and healthy environments for women. The findings will enable us to better understand community attitudes and beliefs and to target future efforts more effectively. The report also provides important benchmark data against which to monitor progress.

www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ProgramsandProjects/MentalHealthandWellBeing/DiscriminationandViolence/ViolenceAgainstWomen/CAS_TwoSteps_FINAL.ashx

Time for action: The National Council's plan for Australia to reduce violence against women and their children, 2009-2021

For women in Australia, sexual assault and domestic and family violence are the most pervasive human rights violations. They harm and limit the lives of a third of Australian women, and require an immediate and focused response. The extent and range of violent actions perpetrated against women are broad. They can include offences as extreme as female genital mutilation, institutional abuse, trafficking of women, and sexual violence as a strategy in armed conflict. These are crimes and human rights abuses and must also be addressed through appropriate channels. *Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009-2021* states that no woman should be a victim of sexual assault or domestic and family violence, and that no woman should fear for

her safety at home, at work or in her community. It focuses on strategies and actions for prevention, early intervention, improved service delivery, and justice.

www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/pubs/violence/np_time_for_action/national_plan/Pages/intro.aspx

"Time to get cracking": The challenge of developing best practice in Australian sexual assault prevention education

Susan Evans, Chris Krogh and Moira Carmody

In this paper, the authors discuss a number of challenges that programs are likely to face in the effort to formulate best practice in sexual assault prevention education. The discussion is based on findings from interviews conducted with 32 prevention educators and program writers during a research project in which questions were asked about program development.

Some of the challenges include:

- the distinctiveness of the prevention education role
- conceptual underpinnings in programs, program development and evaluation, working in schools
- choosing a pedagogical approach to work with young people
- program adaptation for the purposes of cultural relevance

In addressing each of these challenges, connections are made between what interviewees said and what is communicated in the standards.

www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/pubs/issue/i11.html#standards

FPQ

The report *'Preventing Violence Before It Occurs'* from VicHealth (2007) suggests there is a "strong body of evidence from a range of fields (which) indicates that one of the most powerful ways of preventing problems in adulthood is by intervening in childhood and adolescence. This is similarly the case in the prevention of violence against women" (Carter, 2007). This report recommends that school-based anti-violence/respectful relationships programs are among the best documented and most effective primary prevention interventions. School contexts have a significant influence in childhood and adolescence, times when the prospects for primary prevention are strong.

FPQ's work with teachers, parents, students and others in school environments contributes directly to primary prevention efforts in this area. Education and information about relationship formation, respect, intimacy and negotiation skills all contribute to the prevention of sexual violence, whether they are called sexual assault prevention programs or not.

Publications and resources

- [Sex you decide](#)
- [Feel safe CD ROM](#)
- Lesson plans in [BARE](#) and [HIGH TALK](#) and [Everybody Needs to Know](#)

FPQ also receives funding from both Queensland Health and the Department of Communities to manage the Cairns Sexual Assault Service. This service supports people in the community who have experienced sexual violence, and also provides

training for service providers. The service also coordinates community awareness raising activities, particularly during Sexual Violence Awareness Month (SVAM) in October, and seeks to build positive cultures of respect and positive relationships

Useful resource links

The sex and ethics research and violence prevention project

www.sexualethics.org.au/

The project began in 2005 as a joint project of the University of Western Sydney and the NSW Rape Crisis Centre. It has developed a 6 week Sex & Ethics education program which focuses on promoting ethical non-violence skills that assist young people to negotiate sexual intimacy positively.

XY online

www.xyonline.net/

XY is a website focused on men, masculinities, and gender politics. XY is a space for the exploration of issues of gender and sexuality, the daily issues of men's and women's lives, and practical discussion of personal and social change.

White ribbon day- International day for the elimination of violence against women, November 25th

www.whiteribbonday.org.au/

White Ribbon Foundation's goal is to prevent violence against women in Australia and to change attitudes and behaviours that support or excuse violence against women in Australia.

Women working alongside women with disabilities to prevent sexual violence

www.wwild.org/

WWild Sexual Violence Prevention Service aims to achieve social justice and systemic change that will uphold the rights of women with intellectual and learning disabilities to live free from sexual violence.

Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault

www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/

The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (ACSSA) was established in 2003 by the Commonwealth Office for Women. It is funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and is hosted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies. ACSSA is a central collection point for research, information and resources about sexual assault in Australia.