

**Resource 3:**

**Things to consider  
when using the  
National Community  
Attitudes towards  
Violence against  
Women Survey (NCAS)**

# Using the NCAS to support positive social norms

Research has consistently shown that people are more likely to hold a view if they feel their peers also hold this view, or if they feel holding this view is 'expected' of them.<sup>8</sup>

When the NCAS data shows that a large number of people disagree with a problematic view, or understand the issue well, it is useful to mobilise this data to show that community attitudes are on the 'right track' for creating an environment which does not support violence against women.

However, the social norming effect can be both an opportunity and a risk. When the data is not contextualised there is a risk of reinforcing problematic views and understandings (see next page *Tips to ensure you are using the data for best impact*).

## Example: Using the NCAS to support positive social norms

*The majority of Australians have a good understanding of non-physical forms of domestic violence.*

Sharing this helps to normalise awareness about what constitutes violence and may support increased knowledge.

### For example, you could say:

"Australians have a very good understanding that non-physical forms of abuse are also defined as domestic violence with 90-92% aware that stalking, harassment, the control of social life and repeatedly criticising a partner are all forms of domestic violence."

---

**Research has consistently shown that people are more likely to hold a view if they feel their peers also hold this view, or if they feel holding this view is 'expected' of them.<sup>8</sup>**

<sup>8</sup> Alexander-Scott, M., Bell, E., & Holden, J. (2016). *DFID guidance note: Shifting social norms to tackle violence against women and girls*. London: VAWG Helpdesk.

# Tips to ensure you are using the data for best impact

## NCAS data must always be contextualised and explained

The NCAS measures community attitudes and knowledge about the nature of violence against women, and thus allows these beliefs to be compared with the facts.

There are many instances where community attitudes are inconsistent with the evidence about violence against women. By using or referring to NCAS statistics without context, there is a risk of reinforcing these problematic attitudes.

**It is important that the NCAS findings about the community's understanding and attitudes are always provided in the context of the facts about the nature of violence against women.**

Providing this context will ensure that commonly held community views that are inaccurate will not be mistaken to be true. For example, imagine someone stands up and says "50% of Australians believe that many women mistakenly interpret 'innocent' remarks or acts as being sexist."

This might be said with the intention of surprising people with how prevalent this problematic view is. However, someone who agrees with this statement may feel validated by this statistic.

Instead, someone might say 'While 50% of Australian's believe that many women mistakenly interpret 'innocent' remarks or acts as being sexist, the evidence demonstrates that gender inequality and sexism are still problems in Australia'.

---

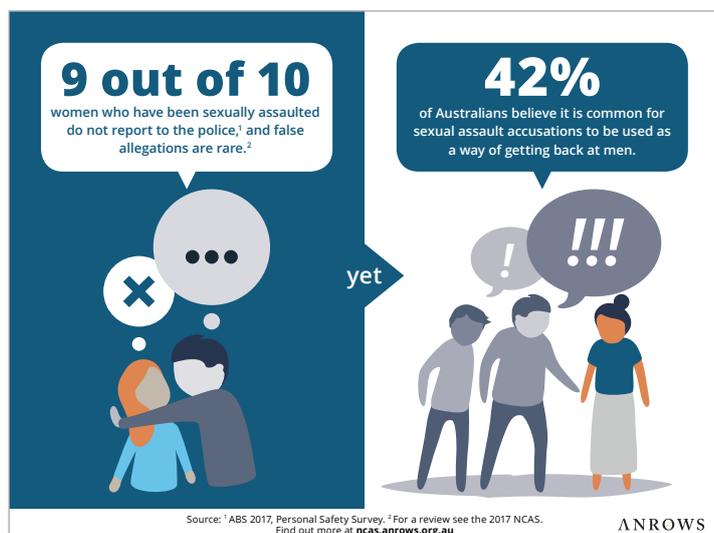
### Additional resource:

A number of infographics have been developed (see Section 3, Resource 10 of this toolkit) that make clear how some community attitudes to violence against women depart from the facts. These can be useful for your communication and education activities.

---

**The evidence shows many instances where the community's beliefs are inconsistent with the evidence. By using or referring to NCAS statistics without context, there is a risk of reinforcing these problematic attitudes.**

Here is one example of this model in the NCAS infographics:



## Exercising caution when changing the wording of NCAS questions

When using the NCAS questions it may be tempting to change the words or shorten the language. However, a word of caution: these questions have been reviewed by experts, and have been cognitively tested and statistically validated. Even a slight wording change can compromise the validity of the measures and change the results. Please try to avoid this where possible. For more information about using NCAS questions for other purposes, please see Section 3, Resource 4.

## Reversing NCAS statistics

To maintain accuracy, please cite statistics in the direction they are presented in the NCAS reports. For example, if 42% of respondents agreed with a statement, it will not necessarily be accurate to say that 58% disagreed. This is because some respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with a statement, but rather replied 'don't know'. The percentage answering 'don't know' varied depending on the question asked.

## NCAS data cannot tell us why attitudes have changed though it does offer some suggestions

The NCAS measures attitudes at a broad community level but cannot tell us why people hold a particular attitude, or why these have changed. However, we can draw on other research to propose some possibilities. Relevant evidence from other research can be found throughout the NCAS Main Report.

This resource is one of ten resources within the toolkit- Re-shaping Attitudes: A toolkit for using the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) in the primary prevention of violence against women. For more information, please visit [www.respectvictoria.vic.gov.au/research](http://www.respectvictoria.vic.gov.au/research)

### **Suggested citation**

Respect Victoria, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Swinburne University of Technology, (2020) Re-shaping Attitudes: A toolkit for using the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) in the primary prevention of violence against women, Respect Victoria, Melbourne, Australia.

For more information or to provide feedback on this resource or toolkit, please contact [research@respectvictoria.vic.gov.au](mailto:research@respectvictoria.vic.gov.au).

