

# Tips for reporting on violence against women and their children

2019 National Edition

**Our  
WATCH**  
End violence against  
Women And Their Children

This is a summary of **How to report on violence against women and their children**.  
For more information and to access the complete reporting guidelines, go to: [media.ourwatch.org.au](https://media.ourwatch.org.au).

**1.**

## Is survivor safety the priority?

Leave out details that might identify survivors, ie. what occurred, where, perpetrator details, number of children, household, pets, weapons used, injuries sustained.

**2.**

## Is the violence named?

Name the violence for what it is: 'violence against women', 'family violence', 'psychological violence', 'elder abuse', 'child exploitation material', 'rape' and 'murder'.

**3.**

## Is the perpetrator in view?

- Use active language ie. 'man assaults wife' instead of 'woman assaulted.'
- Where safe/legally possible, name the relationship between victim and perpetrator to remind your audience that most violence against women is perpetrated by somebody they know.

**8.**

## Are support options included?

Always include support details at the end of every story: "If you or someone you know is experiencing family violence, phone 1800 RESPECT. For counselling, advice and support for men who have anger, relationship or parenting issues, call the Men's Referral Service on 1300 766 491."

**4.**

## Is the story's tone respectful and appropriate?

- Use respectful language and headlines to articulate the seriousness of the violence.
- Seek to uphold the dignity and humanity of the victims, survivors and their families.
- Plan how to maintain respect once the story is live, including social media commentary.

# Tips

## for reporting on violence against women and their children

**7.**

## Have experts been quoted?

Develop good relationships with violence against women experts so they can be contacted to help put the issue into context.

### Experts include:

- national and state-based family violence organisations
- individuals (such as academics)
- organisations relevant to reporting on specific groups
- survivor advocates

**6.**

## Is the imagery appropriate?

- Don't perpetuate harmful stereotypes about gender, race, disability, sexuality or age.
- Consider the impact of images on the victim-survivor, their family, or on other survivors of violence.
- Avoid images that disempower or infantilise victim-survivors, such as 'clenched fists' or 'cowering women'.

**5.**

## Does it reflect the evidence base?

- Use statistics to demonstrate the prevalence and to contextualise the story.
- Women and their children are disproportionately affected by domestic and sexual violence.
- Individual incidents occur within a broader social context where the unequal distribution of power and resources creates a gendered power imbalance.
- Evidence shows that most violence against women and their children is driven by gender inequality.

# Don't...

## Tips for reporting on violence against women and their children

### use terms that minimise or trivialise violence

like 'domestic dispute', 'volatile relationship', or 'child sex'.

### describe violence as

being 'fuelled' by alcohol, drugs, mental health, stress, culture, or 'just snapping.'

### sensationalise or trivialise violence

through dramatic language and puns, unnecessary details or coverage of only 'sensational' aspects of court or police reports.

### identify people by race, ethnicity or other status

unless pertinent to the story.

### blame the victim-survivor

for what happened to them, including whether they were drunk, out late, walking alone, seeing other people, etc.

### reinforce the idea

that women should police or modify their own behaviour to avoid men's violence.

### excuse or minimise violence

as 'part of' culture or faith, or justified by 'carer stress.'

## Quick statistics

### Be aware that our own implicit biases can make us interpret statistics incorrectly.

E.g. it could be presumed that men from migrant and refugee backgrounds are responsible for violence within migrant communities, when in fact men of all cultural backgrounds perpetrate violence **against migrant and refugee women**.

On average, **one woman a week is murdered** by her current or former partner ([AIC, 2017](#))

**One in three** Australian women has experienced **physical violence** ([ABS, 2017](#))

**One in five** Australian women has experienced **sexual violence** ([ABS, 2017](#))

Women are at least **three times more likely than men** to experience violence from an intimate partner. ([ABS, 2017](#))

**One in five LGBTIQ+ Australians** has experienced physical forms of homophobic abuse ([Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014](#))

Women who identify as **lesbian or bisexual** experience **far higher rates of sexual violence** than heterosexual women ([de Visser et al. 2014](#))

**Women and girls with disabilities** are **at least twice as likely** to experience violence as those without disability ([Women with Disabilities Victoria, 2013](#))

**One third** of the 49 women who **lost their lives** to violence against women in Australia in 2017 were **over the age of 60** ([Counting Dead Women Australia 2018](#))

**Aboriginal women** are **35 times more likely to be hospitalised** by family violence than other women. Two in five Aboriginal homicide victims (41 per cent) are **killed** by a current or previous partner, **twice the rate of non-Indigenous victims** (22 per cent) ([AIHW 2018](#)) Reporting frequently implies that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is perpetrated only by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, when **non-Indigenous men are also perpetrators**, particularly in urban areas ([Our Watch, 2018](#))

### Tips for using statistics

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey provides the most comprehensive data on violence experienced by both women and men.

Recorded crime statistics do not tell the full story as most people who experience violence do not report it.

The National Community Attitudes Survey captures Australia-wide data on attitudes to violence against women.



## Interviewing survivors

### Avoid re-traumatising survivors by:

- Dealing honestly with survivors and their families and respecting their right not to talk.

- Ensuring they are able to provide informed consent and supporting their awareness of potential safety, ethical and legal issues, such as risks of identification and retribution.
- Giving them as much time as possible to tell their story in a safe and private location of their choosing.
- Asking open-ended questions such as "what are you able to tell me about what happened?"

- Explaining what happens after an interview, including fact-checking and right of reply, preparing them for potential social media responses, and keeping them updated on when the story will go live.
- Being aware of the impacts of vicarious trauma on journalists and being alert for signs you may be experiencing this so that you can seek support.



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For media enquiries please contact Our Watch on [media@ourwatch.org.au](mailto:media@ourwatch.org.au)

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