

# Facts on Violence against Women with Disabilities

## Why are we focusing on women with disabilities?

About one in five women in Australia has a disability. We live across urban, regional, and rural areas, have different occupations, faiths, sexualities, and cultures from one another. We share similarities in that we often experience both gender and disability-based discrimination, leading to higher rates of violence in comparison to men with disabilities, and women without disabilities.

## Violence against women is a serious, widespread problem in Australia

Approximately **1 in 4 women** has experienced violence by an intimate partner. <sup>1</sup>



Intimate partner violence is a **leading contributor to illness, disability and premature death** for women aged 18-44 years. <sup>2</sup>



On average, **one woman a week is killed** in Australia by an intimate partner

## Women with disabilities experience higher rates of violence

**65% of women with disabilities report at least one experience of violence since the age of 15** ...compared to 45% of women with no disabilities. <sup>3</sup>

**52% report physical violence** compared to 28% women without disabilities.

**36% experience some form of intimate partner violence,** <sup>4</sup> compared to 21% women without disabilities.

**33% report sexual violence** compared to 16% women without disabilities.

**37% report emotional abuse from a former or current partner** compared to 21% women without disabilities.

**27% report stalking or harassment** compared to 16% women without disabilities.

## Some women with disabilities experience even higher rates of violence and discrimination

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience **higher rates** of disability than non-indigenous women; and report a disproportionate rates of violence. <sup>5</sup>



LGBTQI people with disabilities experience **higher rates** of crime, violence and discrimination. <sup>6</sup>

Women with disabilities in a rural setting experience a **higher risk** of social isolation and have less access to support services. <sup>8</sup>

More than **half** of all incarcerated women in Australian prisons have a diagnosed psychosocial disability and a history of sexual victimisation. <sup>7</sup>

Financial hardship **increases the prevalence** of violence for women with disabilities.

Over half of young women who report violence have a disability, and **experience discrimination when seeking support or advice.**

More young women with disabilities report physical violence, sexual violence, stalking or harassment than young women without disabilities. <sup>11</sup>



Women make up **74%** of all elder abuse victims, many of whom are also living with disabilities.

Older women with **disabilities report higher rates** of physical violence, sexual violence, intimate partner violence, emotional abuse and/or stalking compared to older women without disabilities. <sup>10</sup>

Women with disabilities from refugee or migrant backgrounds are **less likely to report** acts of violence or access disability services. Many **policies and legislation** in Australia result in practices that impact on culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women with disabilities, **including increased risk of violence and harassment.** <sup>9</sup>



## Women with disabilities face unique forms of violence and risk factors:

Often, women with disabilities have multiple disabilities, **compounding disadvantage** and are being targeted by those who use violence.

Women with disabilities can experience other **risk factors** for violence, such as **living in institutions or being dependent on informal or formal care** in the home.<sup>12</sup>

Women with disabilities are **less likely** to report violence or access support services, and their experiences of violence are more likely to be minimised, excused, or not believed.<sup>13</sup>

Women with disabilities also report **exploitation, abuse, or neglect**, including forced or withholding of medical intervention, delaying of medical care, or denial of support.



Although internationally recognised as forms of violence, practices of **forced or coerced sterilisation, abortion, or contraception** for women with disabilities occur in Australia.<sup>14</sup>

Women with disabilities also experience heightened rates of violence and harassment in **public spaces, and technology-based abuse and online harassment.**



Many women with disabilities also experience **financial abuse**, where their access to money is limited, removed, or controlled based on assumptions about their capability to manage their finances.



### Women with disabilities experience barriers to support, and fear reporting due to:

- Lack of access to the physical and sensory environment.
- Lack access to communication support.
- Lack of access to information in accessible formats.
- Ableism – attitudes or practices that discriminate against people with disabilities
- Focusing on disability instead of our concerns.
- Inappropriate assumptions.
- Lack of workforce trauma awareness.<sup>15</sup>

**For more information about how you, or your organisation, can take action to prevent violence against women with disabilities, or to consult with the Experts by Experience Advocates, contact Women with Disabilities Victoria.**

### Violence against women with disabilities is preventable<sup>16</sup>. Working with women with disabilities, we can:

- Address the social context that gives rise to violence against women and girls with disabilities.
- Challenge acceptance of violence against women and girls with disabilities.
- Improve attitudes towards women and girls with disabilities by challenging ableist and sexist stereotypes.
- Promote the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in all aspects of life.
- Promote women and girls with disabilities' independence, agency and participation in leadership and decision-making.
- Engage men and boys to challenge controlling, dominant and aggressive forms of masculinity.



# Facts on Violence against Women with Disabilities – Sources

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