

# Gender-Based Violence

Rates of abuse, harassment and coercion are far higher for women and gender-diverse people with disabilities, with key risks hidden in data. Insights from the **2025 WWDA Economic Security Survey** show urgent action is needed, but national data systems are failing to capture the full picture.

## Our Survey Findings

**41.8%**

of respondents experienced economic abuse, including control of money, income from work, or financial resources.

**16.7%**

Reported being bullied in the past six months (nearly double the national average of 9.4%).

**60%**

reported workplace harassment, much higher than national baseline rates.

**17.9%**

linked family or domestic violence directly to their experiences of housing insecurity.

## What We Know, and What We Don't

### What national data shows:

#### We know women with disabilities experience gender-based violence at disproportionately high rates:

- Since the age of 15, one in three women with disability report emotional abuse by a current or previous partner (37% of women with disability compared to 20% of women without disability).<sup>1</sup>
- Women with disabilities are twice as likely to experience sexual violence compared to women without disabilities, and more likely to experience intimate partner violence (36% compared to 21%).
- 72% of women with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities have experienced violence since age 15, often in institutions or environments closed to public scrutiny.<sup>2</sup>
- Women with disability experience financial abuse at double the rate of women without disability (4.6% compared to 2.4%).<sup>3</sup>

#### We know personal safety is tied to housing and economic security:

- Family and domestic violence is the main reason women and children leave their homes in Australia.<sup>4</sup>
- Rates of sexual harassment are higher for women who experienced recent cash flow problems (27%) compared to women who hadn't (11%).<sup>5</sup>
- Rates of financial abuse are higher for women who experienced recent cash flow problems (9.3%) compared to 2.2% of women who hadn't.<sup>6</sup>

#### We know workplaces can be sites of violence and abuse:

- In the last six-months, 9.4% of workers have experienced bullying (Australian definition used by Safe Work).<sup>7</sup>
- 41% of women have been sexually harassed at work in the last 5 years, compared to 26% of men.<sup>8</sup>
- In the last 12 months, women with disability are more likely to have been sexually harassed at work (14%) compared to women without disability (12%).<sup>9</sup>

## What is missing from national data?

- **Disaggregated Data:** Women with disability are often statistically invisible as a distinct population in official violence and safety data, as national datasets rarely present data disaggregated by both sex and disability.
- **Definitional Gaps in Violence Measures:** Violence definitions in official measurement frameworks exclude disability-specific abuse such as financial abuse in 'care' settings, misuse of support payments, forced medication, withholding assistive technology, and workplace harassment tied to accessibility needs (exclusion from tasks, bullying over reasonable accommodations, discriminatory remarks about capacity).
- **Legal Framework and System Gaps:** Existing laws do not recognise care relationships, congregate residential settings or disability-specific abuse within domestic violence definitions. Only three of eight states and territories have laws against coercive control, and none address disability-specific tactics, leaving significant gaps in both data and legal protection.<sup>10</sup>
- **Residential and Institutional Settings Under-Measured:** Violence and abuse in group homes, supported accommodation, and other disability-specific or closed environments remain largely invisible in national data collection.
- **Service Accessibility Barriers Undocumented:** Systematic data on who cannot access support services due to disability-related barriers is largely absent from national datasets.
- **Housing Insecurity Connections Overlooked:** National housing and homelessness statistics fail to adequately capture the intersection between gender-based violence, housing instability, and disability status.

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