



Young women's health

Clearinghouse Connector – November 2016

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Introduction

For young people, adolescence is associated with physical change, friendships, first intimate relationships, and pressure to lay a strong foundation for a healthy and productive adulthood. However, research clearly shows that girls and boys are subjected to different expectations and pressures during adolescence on the basis of gender. Research also indicates that between the ages of 10 to 20, girls and young women's experiences and health outcomes can differ from their male peers.

Issues arising for young women in this age bracket include mental health and body image, sexual and reproductive health and relationships, as well as gender inequality, physical health and social inclusion. Anxiety, sexual harassment and poor body image are experienced at a greater rate by young women.¹ Rates of depression and anxiety among young women are higher than those of their male counterparts, and continue to rise.² Australian girls report perceiving Australia as gender unequal, with more than half reporting that they are seldom or never valued for their brains over their looks.³ Gender inequality is experienced at home, where girls as young as 10 report doing more housework than boys their age.⁴

Young women with disabilities are subjected to dual discrimination and negative stereotyping on the basis of gender and disability, negatively affecting self-esteem and expectations.⁵ Young Aboriginal women are impacted by experiences of gender inequality, racism and trauma.⁶ In undertaking the research for this Connector we identified a gap in current, freely available, Australian research relating to the experiences of young women (specifically) from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Material focussing on 'young women' often implies heterosexual young women, sidelining resources relating to LBQ women's experience.

WHV thanks the following expert reviewers for their input:

- **Natalie Hendry** – Deakin University
- **Renee Imbesi** – VicHealth

Overview

[Everyday sexism: girls' and young women's views on gender inequality in Australia](#) Plan International Australia; Our Watch, 2016

[Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health 1989-95 cohort summary: Surveys 1 and 2](#) Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (ALSWH), 2015

[Section 4: Middle school and adolescence](#) *In: State of Victoria's children report 2013-14: a report on resilience and vulnerability within Victoria's children and young people* Victoria. Department of Education and Training, 2016: pp. 53-111

[Submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\): development of the General Comment on the Rights of Adolescents](#) Women with Disabilities Australia, 2015

[Adolescent women](#) *In: Women's health in NSW: a life course approach: an evidence check rapid review* Sax Institute, 2013: pp. 9-11

Physical health

[2016 Physical activity and sport participation campaign: insights report](#) TNS Social Research, 2016

[Female participation in sport and physical activity: a snapshot of the evidence](#) VicHealth, 2014

[Changes in sport and physical activity participation for adolescent females: a longitudinal study](#) BMC Public Health, 2016

[Teaching girls to prioritise function over form for better body image](#) The Conversation, 2013

[YSAS snapshot: young women in youth alcohol and other drug services](#) Youth Support and Advocacy Service, 2013

Sexual and reproductive health

[5th National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health](#) Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, 2014

[Young people and sexual health in rural and regional Victoria](#) Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic), 2013

[Women in contact with the gay and lesbian community in Sydney: report of the Sydney Women and Sexual Health \(SWASH\) Survey 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014](#) University of Sydney. ACON and Centre for Values, Ethics and the Law in Medicine (VELiM), 2015

[Understanding the low uptake of long-acting reversible contraception by young women in Australia: a qualitative study](#) BMC Women's Health, 2015

['It's always just there in your face': young people's views on porn](#) Sexual Health, 2015

[Relationships between social-emotional intelligence and sexual risk behaviors in adolescent girls](#) Journal of Sex Research, 2015. **[U.S.]**

[The first sexual experience among adolescent girls with and without disabilities](#) Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 2012. **[U.S.]**

Mental health

[Young people's mental health over the years: Youth Survey 2012-14](#) Mission Australia, 2015 **[Direct download]**

[The mental health of children and adolescents: report on the second Australian child and adolescent survey of mental health and wellbeing](#) Australia. Department of Health, 2015

[Bright futures: megatrends impacting the mental wellbeing of young Victorians over the coming 20 years](#) VicHealth, 2015

[Anxiety and depression in pre-teen girls rising](#) Sydney Morning Herald, 2015

[Depression in rural adolescents: relationships with gender and availability of mental health services](#) Rural and Remote Health, 2012

[Study reveals high rate of disordered eating in young Australian women](#) UQ News (University of Queensland), 2016

Body image

[National Youth Affairs Research Scheme \(NYARS\): body image and disadvantaged / vulnerable youth: final report](#) University of New South Wales. Social Policy Research Centre, 2012

[You really, really should never comment on your child's weight](#) Huffington Post Australia, 2016

[The role of friends and peers in adolescent body dissatisfaction: a review and critique of 15 years of research](#) Griffith University, 2013

Relationships

[Young Australians' attitudes to violence against women: findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey for respondents 16–24 years](#) Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), 2015

[Beyond high school: what do we know about young adults' social and sexual contexts?: literature review](#) Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, 2013

["Sex without consent, I suppose that is rape": how young people in England understand sexual consent](#) Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2013

[Young love: romantic concerns and associated mental health issues among adolescent help-seekers](#) Behavioral Sciences, 2016

[Sexting and young people: report to the Criminology Research Advisory Council](#) Criminology Research Advisory Council, 2015

[Selfies, sexts and sneaky hats: young people's understandings of gendered practices of self-representation](#) International Journal of Communication, 2015

[Prospective links between social anxiety and adolescent peer relations](#) Journal of Adolescence, 2012
[Sweden]

[Romantic relationships and sexuality in adolescence and young adulthood: the role of parents, peers, and partners](#) European Journal of Developmental Psychology, 2015 **[Netherlands]**

Inclusion and participation

[A right to the night: Australian girls on their safety in public places](#) Plan International Australia, 2016

[Don't send me that pic: Australian young women and girls report online harassment as endemic](#) Plan International Australia, 2016

[Facebook and the fun of drinking photos: reproducing gendered regimes of power](#) Social Media and Society, 2016 **[N.Z.]**

[Teachers' gender bias in maths affects girls later](#) The Conversation, 2015

[Young workers: health and safety snapshot](#) Young Workers Centre, 2016

[What does it take?: developing informed and effective tertiary responses to violence and abuse of women and girls with disabilities in Australia: State of Knowledge Paper](#) ANROWS, 2015

[Girls and young women in the juvenile justice system](#) Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2012

[The gendered nature of Indigenous education participation and attainment](#) Australian National University. Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, 2016

Related websites

[Women's Health Victoria](#) The Labia Library

[Women's Health Victoria](#) Clearinghouse Connector: Sexualisation of women and girls

[Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria](#) Relationships: the good the bad and the ugly

[Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria](#) Partners in Prevention

[Western Australia. Department of Health](#) Resources and websites for promoting health in schools

[Eating Disorders Victoria](#)

[Women With Disabilities Australia](#) WWDA Youth Network

[Headspace](#)

Footnotes

1. Mission Australia (2015). [Young people's mental health over the years: Youth Survey 2012-14 \[Direct download\]](#). Mission Australia. Accessed on 18/10/2016. ↵
2. Fink E, Patalay P, Sharpe S ... et al. (2015). [Mental health difficulties in early adolescence: a comparison of two cross-sectional studies in England from 2009 to 2014](#). Journal of Adolescent Health 56(5):502-7. Accessed on 18/10/2016. ↵
3. IPSOS Australia (2016). [Everyday sexism: girls' and young women's views on gender inequality in Australia](#) Plan International Australia and Our Watch. Accessed on 18/10/2016. ↵
4. Australian Institute of Family Studies (2012). [The housework and homework habits of Australian ten and eleven-year-olds](#). AIFS Media Release (Jul 13). Accessed on 18/10/2016. ↵
5. Women With Disabilities Australia (2015). [Submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\): development of the General comment on the rights of adolescents](#). WWDA, p.9. Accessed on 18/10/2016. ↵
6. Dobia B, Bodkin-Andrews G, Parada R (2014). [Aboriginal Girls Circle enhancing connectedness and promoting resilience for Aboriginal girls: final pilot report](#). University of Western Sydney, p.3. Accessed on 18/10/2016. ↵

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