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
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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


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


Female participation in sport and physical activity: a snapshot of the evidence VicHealth, 2014


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


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


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**Mental health**

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


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

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**Body image**


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

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**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

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


How our Clearinghouse can help you

Women’s Health Victoria’s Clearinghouse has a wealth of information on gender in health in various forms. Our experienced health and information professionals can assist you to access this information.

Feedback and subscription

We value your feedback. Please tell us what you think of this resource. Click here to take a brief online survey

Please Contact Us with any feedback including suggestions for future Clearinghouse Connector topics.

Has a colleague forwarded this e-bulletin to you? For your own subscription, complete an online Subscribe Request.

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