Policy Explainer:

Gender-based violence definitions

Read the full version of the policy here:
Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy

What is this resource is for?

This document helps students and staff understand Deakin's Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy. It will give you more information about different types of gender-based violence and what they might look like. It will also give you information about some other key concepts that are important for understanding gender-based violence.

Content warning

This document talks about different types of gender-based violence and includes examples. While we have tried to keep the document focused on facts and key examples, reading these examples can be upsetting. Make sure you feel prepared, and if any of the content brings up concerns for you, you can contact:

- Safer Community or Student Counselling at Deakin, or
- 1800RESPECT for support outside of Deakin.

Contents

Key concepts:.....2

Gender-based violence.....2

Intersectionality.....2

Consent.....2

Types of gender-based violence.....3

Coercive control.....3

Economic or financial abuse.....3

Emotional or psychological abuse.....3

Family violence.....4

Female genital cutting or circumcision.....4

Forced marriage.....4

Intimate partner violence.....4

Sexual violence and sexual harm.....5

Sexual assault.....5

Sexual harassment.....5

Stalking.....6

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence.....6

Key concepts:

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is '*any form of physical or non-physical violence, harassment, abuse or threats, based on gender, that results in, or is likely to result in harm, coercion, control, fear of the deprivation of liberty' (National Code 2025)*.

Gender-based violence means violence that is more likely to affect women and gender-diverse people or is caused by gender inequality. This can include:

- Physical violence: hurting someone physically, often in a family violence situation
- Sexual violence: like sexual harassment or sexual assault (sexual touching without consent)
- Psychological: gaslighting, name calling and verbal abuse; or
- Financial forms of violence: like limiting access to money, work or study.

Gender-based violence is not experienced the same way by everyone. It can happen to anyone of any gender and identity. Violence can come from a partner, a family member, a friend or a stranger. Read on to learn more about different types of gender-based violence and key concepts.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a concept that explains the impact of different forms of discrimination that can happen at the same time and influence each other. It considers that people have a range of parts to their identity, including in their race, gender, age, ability, sexual orientation, and how these 'intersect' to shape how they experience oppression and discrimination, or power and privilege.

These parts of someone's identity can also affect how someone experiences gender-based violence, such as:

- increasing the risk of experiencing gender-based violence
- influencing the specific forms of gender-based violence, and the effects of certain behaviours; or
- creating additional barriers to reporting and getting help.

For example:

- the combination of racism and sexism can increase the severity of family violence
- the combination of visa uncertainty and cultural or religious taboos about same sex relationships may make certain people more vulnerable to emotional abuse and coercive control that includes threats of 'forced outing'; and
- people with disabilities may find it harder to find appropriate and accessible gender-based violence supports, especially when additional characteristics, like LGBTIQA+ status or language barriers are also a factor.

Consent

Consent is an important factor in many types of violence, so it is important to understand it.

Sexual consent means free, voluntary, informed agreement between people to participate in a sexual act. This agreement is only present when these people all genuinely feel they want to engage in that sexual act and actively make sure the other person/people do too.

Affirmative consent means that a person must do something to make sure there is consent, it can't just be implied or assumed. That means they need to say yes through words or gestures, it isn't enough that someone didn't say no.

Affirmative consent is now law in Victoria. The law also applies to taking or sharing sexual images or videos, and the use or non-use of condoms, dams or contraception.

The FRIES acronym is a helpful tool to remember what consent looks like. Consent must be:

- Freely given: it cannot be assumed or obtained through pressure of force
- Reversable: a person can change their mind at any time, even if they have previously consented
- Informed: all people should be clear and informed of the boundaries and parameters of the sexual activity
- Enthusiastic: consent should be given with genuine enthusiasm, it is not enough to just not object; and
- Specific: consent for one activity doesn't mean consent for another.

Important: A person must also have capacity to consent, meaning a person must consider another person's age, mental state, and if they are affected by alcohol or drugs when confirming consent. There also can't be any significant power imbalance, like between a university supervisor and their student.

Types of gender-based violence

Coercive control

A pattern of behaviour towards another person to control them and take away their freedom. It can include a mix of physical and emotional abuse and is almost always part of family or intimate partner violence.

Coercive control creates fear and takes away the person's freedom and independence. Sometimes there might be behaviour that doesn't seem like a big deal on its own, but collectively the pattern of behaviour creates fear and limits freedom, choice and rights.

This might look like:

- Controlling who a person talks to, what they do, or isolating them from friends and family.
- Monitoring and tracking what someone does or where they go (e.g. with Snap Maps).
- Constant put downs, verbal abuse, jealousy or blame.
- Controlling access to things people need, like work, money, medicine, passports or food.
- Threatening to 'out' someone who hasn't yet revealed their sexuality or gender-identity publicly.
- Restricting access to mobility aids, assistance animals, funding or supports.
- Gaslighting: causing someone to question their memories or perceptions.
- Threatening to harm the person, their pets or others they care for.

Economic or financial abuse

When someone controls a person's money or financial independence, including how they access, make and spend money, to trap them and stop them from being independent.

This might look like:

- Stopping or limiting access to work or study.
- Controlling all finances or only providing a limited allowance.
- Refusing to contribute financially
- Taking and spending someone else's money without consent; or
- Creating debt in someone else's name.

This is different from mutually agreeing to a shared budget, or agreeing that one person will stay home to care for children or someone else, while the other works.

Emotional or psychological abuse

When someone uses words, threats, or actions to harm someone's mental health and sense of safety. It

often includes isolation, put-downs, and/or threats. Coercive control is a type of emotional violence, so some of these examples are similar.

This might look like:

- Constant blame or strong reactions to small mistakes
- Abusive language or name calling
- Making a person feel guilty for things like spending time with or caring for family
- Threatening to hurt the person, their children, animals or themselves
- Threatening to 'out' someone who hasn't yet revealed the sexuality or gender-identity publicly; or
- Threatening their safety and resources such as access to housing, money, or carer supports.

Family violence

Abusive behaviour by a family member towards another family member or family-like person. It includes people living together who are not family. This also includes when a child is exposed to these behaviours (even if not directly targeted).

This might look like:

- Physical violence or sexual abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse such as harmful comments and guilt-tripping
- Financial abuse including gambling family money without agreement, withholding or controlling finances, stealing money or stopping someone from working or studying
- Threats or coercive control of an intimate partner or other family members
- Any behaviour that makes the family member fear for their safety or someone else's; or
- Violence that occurs from someone whose relationship is like a family member (such as a carer, step-parent, defacto partner or housemate).

Female genital cutting or circumcision

Also referred to as female genital mutilation (FGM), this includes procedures or rituals to partially or totally remove external female genitals, or cutting or other injury to the female genital organs, not for medical reasons. This may occur as part of traditional cultural practices, and is consider gender-based violence when it occurs without consent, when there is coercion, or it happens to people under the age of consent.

Forced marriage

When one or both people are forced into marriage without their free and full consent. This is different from an arranged marriage where all people in the marriage freely consent. Forcing someone into marriage may involve threats, pressure, or violence, and violates their human rights.

Intimate partner violence

A subset of family violence which involves abuse that happens from a current or past partner. This may be where the people are or have been dating, married, living together, or casual sexual partners, or otherwise in an intimate relationship. This can include the behaviours listed under family violence and those listed under sexual violence.

People don't need to be living together to experience intimate partner violence, and it also can happen regardless of age or how long people have been or were together.

Sexual violence and sexual harm

Sexual behaviour that happens without consent (agreement). It can make a person feel scared, intimidated, uncomfortable, embarrassed or harmed in another way.

This includes:

- **Sexual harassment**: unwanted sexual comments, displays, gestures, touching, or advances
- **Sexual assault**: touching someone in a sexual way without consent
- **Rape**: sexual penetration (meaning some part of one person's body sexually entering another person's body without consent, including genitals, objects and hands); or
- **Other sexual offences or misconduct**: other sexual behaviours that are crimes or count as student or staff misconduct.

Important: Sexual harm is *not* consensual flirting, attraction, or agreed sexual activity between people. But it *is* sexual harm if someone engages in unwanted sexual behaviour or activity without consent. The definitions below provide more information.

Sexual assault

Sexual assault happens when someone touches another person in a sexual way without their consent (agreement). Sexual assault also includes rape, which means sexually penetrating (entering) another person without their consent.

- It can include vaginal, anal, or oral penetration, or penetration with an object or body part; and
- It occurs where the person penetrating another does not reasonably believe that the other person consents.

Sexual assault might look like:

- Any non-consensual touching of genitals, anus, buttocks, or breasts
- Any non-consensual touching to get sexual satisfaction
- Any non-consensual touching that is clearly sexual in nature
- Sex that occurs without all people involved agreeing
- Sex that was consensual but that includes sexual acts that were not agreed to
- Refusing to stop sexual activity when asked to stop; or
- Any sexual activity with someone who is too intoxicated from alcohol or other drugs to consent.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is unwanted sexual behaviour that makes someone feel offended, embarrassed, or threatened. It doesn't have to happen more than once, once is enough to be sexual harassment.

This might look like:

- Unwelcome touching, hugging, kissing, or fondling
- Staring, leering, or sexually suggestive body language
- Sexual jokes or comments
- Forcing someone to view pornography or pornographic images
- Asking someone out repeatedly or requesting sexual acts
- Personal questions about appearance, someone's sex life or gender presentation
- Negative assumptions or commentary about how different people engage in sex or relationships
- Explicit emails, texts, or messages
- Stalking or online harassment that is sexual in nature; or
- Creating sexualised AI images of someone or sharing intimate photos or videos without consent.

Stalking

Stalking is when a person follows, contacts or interferes with another person or their property, where it could cause fear or distress. Stalking can happen online or in person and is often linked to other types of gender-based violence, like sexual violence and family violence.

This might look like:

- Frequent unwanted phone calls, messages or social media requests
- Sending a person unwanted gifts, letters, notes, cards or other messages
- Hanging around near a person's home, workplace or place where the person goes often
- Following a person or tracking their movements or activities (e.g. using GPS trackers, CCTV, or apps like Find My Friends and Snap Maps)
- Hacking a person's accounts to access their private information. It includes changing someone's passwords, reading their emails, or installing spyware on their computer
- Setting up fake accounts pretending to be the person; or
- Connecting with a person's friends, family or colleagues to undermine them, spread harmful information or make people doubt them.

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence

Using technology such as the internet, phones, laptops and tracking devices to carry out harmful and abusive behaviour. It happens when someone uses technology to hurt, threaten, control, or humiliate another person. It often makes existing abuse worse. For example, technology can make intimate-partner violence worse by adding control or online harassment to physical abuse; or worsen an experience of sexual assault through distribution of images.

This can look like:

- **Harassment and threats**: repeated unwanted contact to frighten someone or create distress
- **Stalking**: tracking or monitoring someone's movements or online activity
- **Coercive or controlling behaviour**: using technology to isolate or control someone
- **Image-based abuse**: sharing intimate photos or videos without consent, including fake videos or photos created with AI
- **Non-consensual sexting and cyber flashing**: sending sexual messages or photos to someone who hasn't agreed; or
- **Doxxing**: publicly posting someone's private information (like their address or phone number) to expose or harm them.