

# GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

# Coercive control

“*Coercive control*” is a pattern of abuse over time that’s often difficult to recognise. It’s used by a person to control, dominate and intimidate another person, usually an intimate partner.

This control can describe non-physical abuse (psychological, emotional, financial, cultural, spiritual), as well as physical and sexual abuse. It is not less serious when it is not physical.

This abuse can be an extremely harmful feature of a violent relationship long before any physical violence takes place.

## Consent

Consent is clear or positive agreement to participate in an activity. It is often used in the context of sexual activity. In Victoria it is against the law to participate in sex without enthusiastic consent, legally known as “*affirmative consent*”.

“Affirmative consent” means that it is **not** consent if:

- their partner “agrees” out of force, fear, coercion or harm (or threat of these things)
- their partner doesn’t resist, or doesn’t say “no”
- their partner feels like they can’t withdraw their consent
- they are abusing their authority, relationship or trust
- their partner cannot consent – including because of:
  - o age
  - o being asleep or unconscious
  - o being affected by alcohol or other drugs
  - o not understanding or being mistaken about the sexual nature of the act
  - o being mistaken about the identity of any other person involved.

You can change your mind about giving your consent at any time, including during sex. It is not an assumed ongoing agreement – consent is not automatic because you are in a relationship, or because the person has given their consent previously.

## Family violence

Family violence is any violent, threatening or controlling behaviour in families or intimate relationships. It can be in a current relationship, or one that has ended.

It can be:

- physical: hurting, hitting
- emotional: bullying, making threats
- sexual: forcing you to have sex
- stalking: including using technology, or needing to always know where you are
- financial: controlling all of the money decisions, or stopping you from working
- isolation: moving away from family and friends, or stopping you from socializing
- damaging or destroying property.

## Gender and gender identity

Being a man or woman – or being neither, or feeling ‘in between’. This has more to do with how you see or understand yourself (“identify”, a social and emotional feeling) than what body parts you have (your biology, or sex); but for many people, their gender and sex match.

# Gender stereotypes or gender roles

The attitudes, expectations or pressures for people to behave, act or think a certain way because they are a man or a woman.

When we treat gender stereotypes as strict rules to live by, they can limit our opportunities, independence and wellbeing. This is true for people of all genders.

## Gender-based violence or gendered violence

Any form of physical or non-physical violence or abuse against a person or group of people because of biased or harmful beliefs about gender.

It includes all forms of violence against people based on their gender, or violence that affects people of a particular gender disproportionately. It is commonly used to describe men's violence against women and girls.

## Gender equality

Gender equality is not about ignoring gender or erasing all gender stereotypes. It's about protecting and upholding people's rights, opportunities and safety, and ensuring that access to these is not dependent on their gender or the sex they were assigned at birth.

## Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap describes the difference in average earnings between women and men in the workforce. It's an important figure because it helps show the impact of the social and economic factors that reduce women's abilities to earn – and therefore financial independence – over their career and into retirement.

The pay gap can be because of gendered stereotypes about who can do which jobs (like mining or construction being “men's work” or lower-paid caring professions being “women's work”), as well as women often being overlooked for managerial or senior roles.

It is not the same as “equal pay” (receiving the same pay for the same job, regardless of gender), which has been a legal requirement in Australia since 1969. Equal pay alone doesn't close the gender pay gap.

## Masculinity

The gender stereotypes related to how men act and behave; what it means to ‘be a man’.

You might hear about “harmful masculinity” or “toxic” masculinity – this describes the negative pressures on men (for example: to always be tough, to keep their emotions to themselves, to be ‘in control’ in a relationship, etc) that hurt men and the people around them.

## Social pressures or social expectations

The pressure to follow gender stereotypes as strict rules. This pressure can be direct – expectations from family, friends and community members, or broad – messages from the media or tradition. These stereotypes aren't always bad, but when they feel more like ‘rules’ than ‘options’, they can stop us all from being valued and respected as individuals.

# Respect

Understanding and appreciating every person for who they are. All people deserve to be treated with respect, as a basic human right.