

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE TOOLKIT

25 November - 10 December

Violence against women can be prevented.
This 16 Days of Activism and beyond,
let's change the story.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY



Respect Victoria acknowledges the Aboriginal peoples of Victoria as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waterways on which we rely. We proudly acknowledge Aboriginal communities of Victoria and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living culture. We acknowledge the significant and ongoing impacts of colonisation and commit to working alongside Aboriginal communities to effect change.

We recognise the ongoing leadership role of Aboriginal communities in addressing and preventing family violence and violence against women and will continue to work in collaboration with First Peoples to eliminate these forms of violence from all communities.

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ABOUT THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM



The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence originated from a petition circulated during the 1991 United Nations World Conference on Human Rights.

This petition called on the conference committee to address women's human rights and recognise gender-based violence as a human rights issue. Three decades on, the **16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence** is a widely recognised global campaign that encourages action to prevent and end violence against women and girls.

The 16 Days of Activism begins on the **International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women** (25 November) and ends on **International Human Rights Day** (10 December). The dates for the campaign were chosen to link violence against women and human rights.

During this time, organisations and individuals from around the world raise awareness that women's rights are human rights, and that violence against women is a fundamental violation of those human rights.

What is gender-based violence?

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

What is violence against women?

*Violence against women is any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life – **United Nations Declaration**.*

Women from all cultures and all parts of society can experience violence. There are many different forms of violence, and it is experienced uniquely. It can include:

- intimate partner violence, including dating violence
- sexual violence (perpetrated by someone they know or by a stranger)
- sexual harassment (in workplaces, public spaces or online)

- dowry-related abuse, sexual and reproductive coercion, sex trafficking and other slavery-like practices, female genital mutilation/cutting, forced marriage
- coercive control, including financial abuse, technological abuse, control around immigration status
- violence that occurs in institutional settings; for example, violence in prisons, in aged care facilities, disability or residential care settings or health education settings.¹

What drives violence against women?

There are four factors that evidence has shown most consistently drive men's violence against women. These are referred to as the gendered drivers of men's violence against women:

1. **Condoning of violence against women.**
For example, blaming a woman for not leaving a violent partner.
2. **Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life.**
For example, the belief that men should be 'in charge' in their relationships and the bosses at work.
3. **Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity.** For example, the idea that men must be tough and in charge, and that women should be submissive to men.
4. **Male peer relations and culture of masculinity that emphasises aggression, dominance and control.**
For example, men using sexist or homophobic jokes to bond with each other.²

What is primary prevention?

Primary prevention of violence against women is about changing the underlying social conditions that produce and drive this violence, that excuse, justify or even promote it – and prevent it from occurring in the first place. Violence against women is preventable if we change the culture that allows it to happen.



Find out more

- **Preventing and responding to family violence** – Safe and Equal.
- **Understanding Prevention** – Respect Victoria.

¹Information taken from Our Watch's evidence-based framework to guide a coordinated and effective national approach to preventing violence against women - *Change the Story*.

²Information taken from Our Watch's evidence-based framework to guide a coordinated and effective national approach to preventing violence against women - *Change the Story*.

Respect Starts with a Conversation

We all deserve to be respected for who we are. Unfair assumptions and treatment based on gender stereotypes harm us all. As well as contributing to violence against women, it also limits our opportunities and choices, and is a factor in men's risk of self-harm and suicide.

Respect Victoria's Respect Starts With A Conversation campaign encourages Victorians to talk about and question rigid gender stereotypes and dominant forms of masculinity – one of the gendered drivers of men's violence against women.

Learn more about the campaign

Change starts with conversation. That's why this toolkit provides resources and information to help challenge harmful stereotypes in your community.

Efforts to prevent violence against women must be inclusive of *all* women. This means First Nations women, women from migrant, refugee and culturally diverse backgrounds, women with disabilities, women from all socioeconomic backgrounds, older women and young women, as well as trans and queer women. Trans women and cis women are allies – they share experiences of misogyny, discrimination and harm.

Who is this toolkit for?

This document and its related resources are intended for local governments, workplaces, and organisations that have a role in prevention, intervention and response of family violence and violence against women. It is intended to support your involvement in the 16 Days of Activism and to encourage local community participation in ongoing efforts to end violence against women.

Why focus on violence against women?

In this toolkit we use 'gender-based violence' to refer to men's violence against women. Violence against women is the focus of the United Nation's global campaign. In real terms, on average every 9 days a woman is killed by her current or former partner.³

The drivers of this violence are well understood, which means together we can challenge these social conditions to prevent violence from happening in the first place.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM



These are just a few ideas and tools to help you get started. We encourage you to use as many of these ideas as you like beyond the 16 Days of Activism to help prevent violence against women.

1. Join the Walk Against Family Violence

Join the 15th annual Walk Against Family Violence on Friday 24 November to help create a future where we are all safe, equal and respected.

This event will mark the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism in Victoria.

By joining the Walk in solidarity with victim survivors, you can take action to prevent family violence and violence against women.

People of all genders are welcome. Bring your workmates, friends, family, chosen family and dogs.

Come along to the Walk in the Melbourne CBD or plan an event in your local town or community. If you can't get along to an event, you can walk, wheel or share your thoughts from home on social media.

We need all Victorians to help create a future where we are all safe, equal and respected.

Make sure you tag us in your social posts on the day!

Twitter/X: @Respect_Vic
Instagram: @respectvictoria
Facebook: @RespectVictoria
LinkedIn: Respect Victoria
#WAFV2023 #WhyWeWalk

To find out more about and share information with your colleagues and community go to the [Facebook event page](#) or our [event webpage](#).

2. Host or join an event

Organise or attend a morning tea, panel discussion or exhibition – or other event that connects your community – and start the conversation about how gender stereotypes play out in your workplace, relationship or family.

Or, start a book or podcast club – share and discuss books that challenge traditional gender stereotypes. Use the book list leaflet to help with recommendations and distribute to your local library – available to download and print on [page 23](#).

You might like to run a contest at your event – organise a 'challenging gender stereotypes' art competition, or a competition relating to what respect and equality look like.

Add your event to the Safe and Equal calendar so people know about and can get involved in your event.

Don't forget to tag Respect Victoria and Safe and Equal in your social posts so we can see what you're up to, and share with our communities!

Twitter/X: @safe_and_equal
Instagram: @safe_and_equal
Facebook: Safe and Equal
LinkedIn: Safe and Equal

Twitter/X: @Respect_Vic
Instagram: @respectvictoria
Facebook: @RespectVictoria
LinkedIn: Respect Victoria



**JOIN THE
WALK AGAINST
FAMILY
VIOLENCE**



Find out more

- [Running a 16 Days of Activism community event](#) – Safe and Equal.
- [16 Days of Activism calendar of community events](#) – Safe and Equal.

3. Share the message on social media

Whether you're an individual or representing an organisation, social media is a powerful way to share messages about respect and equality.

Check the tips for using our social media assets on [page 24](#), and learn how to deal with any backlash on [page 31](#).

4. Promote the 16 Days of Activism before and during the campaign

Use the email signature banner or the online video background to raise awareness - and encourage your workmates to use it too.

Share posters with local businesses like medical centres, supermarkets, chemists and petrol stations, and organisations like sports clubs and ask them to join you in spreading the word in your community.

[Available to download and print on page 23.](#)

5. Start the conversation and get people talking

Conversations are a really meaningful way of exploring important issues. Recognise that conversations happen in different ways. Use the talking points from [page 15](#) to help you talk about violence against women, sexism, harassment and disrespect towards women with colleagues, family, friends and your community. Connect with elders, faith leaders, employers, schools, and other leaders in your community and encourage them to lead these discussions too. It might feel awkward to start these conversations. That's okay! Without talking about it, nothing will change.

CREATING A MEANINGFUL 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM



Below are some important considerations for making your 16 Days of Activism meaningful for the communities you work with.

Learning from and involving people who hold different forms of lived experience of violence makes primary prevention work stronger and more effective.

Be an ally. Listen and learn.

All women deserve to be safe, equal and respected. But all women are not the same and their experience of violence and access to services and supports will vary. Intersecting forms of oppression, discrimination, power and privilege impact the prevalence and dynamics of violence against women.

To help prevent violence against *all* women, your 16 Days of Activism should consider how the gendered drivers of men's violence against women intersect with other forms of injustice and discrimination.

You can do this by elevating and centering the voices of women who experience these forms of discrimination in your campaign communications, events and activities.

Your campaign can also demonstrate allyship by:

- acknowledging Traditional Owners and the ongoing impacts of colonisation in your communications, activities and events
- ensuring your events and materials are safe, inclusive and accessible to people with disabilities
- connecting with and making welcome the various multicultural communities in your area to your events and activities, including migrant and refugee groups. Share any resources in the languages commonly used in your greater community
- making your events and activities safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTIQ+ people. Encourage your organisation to learn about gender diversity and how to support trans and gender diverse people
- ensuring your communications, activities and events connect with and include older people in your community.



Find out more

- **#SafeKooriFamilies** – There Is Another Way – Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency's (VACCA).
- **Marli, Alinta and Kirra's Story Videos** – Djirra.
- **Sources of lived experience in the family violence sector** – Safe and Equal.
- **Taking Action Guide: Prevention of Violence against Women with Disabilities** – Women with Disabilities Victoria.
- **Healthier relationships between trans women and cisgender men** – Transfemme.
- **Pride in Prevention Messaging Guide** – Rainbow Health.
- **Change the Story** – South East Community Links.
- **Health Relationships Fact Sheet: Translated in Arabic, Hindi, Vietnamese and Chinese** – Multicultural Centre for Women's Health.

Make the link with masculinities and health to engage men and boys

We all face unfair assumptions and treatment based on gender. Men are often told to be tough, in control, the primary earner and the secondary parent. Not only can these attitudes drive violence against women, but they also negatively impact the health and wellbeing of men and boys.

Your campaign can build men's and boys' awareness of these negative impacts and encourage them to challenge harmful masculine stereotypes to prevent violence against women.

While engaging men and boys is critical to progressing prevention work, be careful not to sideline women's voices and concerns. Maintaining accountability to women is key.



Find out more

- **Men in focus evidence and practice guide** – Our Watch.
- **Unpacking the Man Box report** – Jesuit Services.
- **Masculinities and Health resources** – VicHealth.

Use values-based messaging to strengthen the impact and reach of your campaign

Values-based messaging appeals to people's core values and principles to create change. Strengthen the impact and reach of your 16 Days of Activism messages using the below guides.

VISION

All women deserve to be safe, equal and respected.

BARRIER

But on average, a woman in Australia is killed by a man they know every 10 days.

SOLUTION

It doesn't have to be this way. Violence against women can be prevented. This 16 Days of Activism and beyond, let's change the story and create a future where we are all safe, equal and respected. Join the campaign to prevent violence against women. Here's how.



Find out more

- [Framing Gender Equality](#) – VicHealth.
- [Framing Masculinity](#) – VicHealth.
- [Framing Age](#) – Southern Melbourne, Primary Care Partnership.
- [Passing the Message Stick \(First Nations Justice Messaging Guide\)](#) – Getup and Progress (2023).

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM CALENDAR



A little planning can go a long way to make sure people get involved and your activity is a success. Here are some key dates and tips to help you promote 16 Days of Activism and the prevention of violence against women.

OCT

- Respect Victoria's 16 Days of Activism collateral and assets will be available online to download. Start spreading the word and encourage your colleagues, community, local businesses, libraries, and schools to get involved.
- Get vocal and promote 16 Days of Activism and the Walk Against Family Violence to your networks and community.
- Post on social media and display the campaign collateral (i.e online video background and email signature – [see page 22](#)).

NOV

- **24 November** – Walk Against Family Violence, this event will mark the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism in Victoria.
- **25 November** – 16 Days of Activism officially kicks off on International Day for Eliminating Violence against Women.
- **25-26 November** – AFL Women's Grand Final is a time to celebrate women in sports and to recognise that everyone deserves equal access to play and to be involved.
- Send out regular communications to show everyone and your networks what you're up to.
- It's important to let your community know where they can find further support. Make sure you have the Support Services poster ([see page 35](#)) displayed and available as a handout.
- Don't forget to look after yourself and practice self-care.

DEC

- **3 December** – The International Day of People with Disabilities is recognised on this day. Collaborate with or amplify organisations led by people with disabilities. Elevate and raise awareness of the rights and agency of people with disabilities.
- Send out a thank you communication to everyone who showed up and supported, including a photo of your activity. This could be through a social post or EDM.
- **10 December** – 16 Days of Activism ends on Human Rights Day. The date was chosen to honour the United Nations General Assembly's adoption and proclamation, on 10 December 1948, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first global enunciation of human rights and one of the first major achievements of the new United Nations.

AND BEYOND

- Continue to keep up to date with resources and news about what's happening in the prevention and gender equality sector. Subscribe to [MAV](#), [Safe and Equal](#) and [Respect Victoria's](#) newsletters.
- Use these tools and resources beyond the 16 Days of Activism – we encourage workplaces, councils, organisations, and community members to use these resources to support bystander action, prevent violence against women and promote gender equality.

HOW TO TALK ABOUT – AND CHALLENGE – GENDER STEREOTYPING AND ROLES

at work, at home and in the community.

Have a chat or a yarn with your workmates, partner or at your sports club to make sure everyone is equal and respected.

Challenging gender stereotypes and roles

We all deserve to be respected for who we are. But growing up, many of us are told we should have certain skills, likes and dislikes, and ways we should look based on our gender – rather than who we are as a person.

Assumptions about gender limit us. They create expectations about who carries the parenting load and does most of the housework. Whose role it is to earn money, and the kinds of jobs we should have. Who gets to make decisions – at home, work, and in our communities. Who is allowed to be emotional, and who is allowed to be assertive. What we can wear and how we should look.

These ideas keep us from being ourselves and filter through our relationships, workplaces, and communities. They limit opportunities and choices and can lead to discrimination and violence. It's important to challenge assumptions about gender to help create a society where everyone is free to be themselves.

What could a world look like where we are all free and supported to be ourselves? It all starts with a conversation. These conversations matter because they challenge the underlying conditions that drive violence against women.



Find out more

- [Gender Stereotypes](#) – The Line.
- [Masculinity](#) – The Line.
- [Framing Masculinity](#) – VicHealth.
- [Challenging gender stereotypes in the early years: the power of parents report](#) – Our Watch.

Ways to challenge sexism

There are a range of ways you can respond to sexism, harassment, and disrespect towards women, depending on the context and your level of confidence:

Diffuse: Make light-hearted comments or give disapproving looks.

Check in: See if the person is okay.

Call it out: Declare the statement or behaviour offensive and explain why it is harmful.

Report: Access incident reporting systems or report to management or authorities where applicable.

If you believe someone is in immediate danger call 000 and ask for the police. Do not put yourself or the person who is being targeted at risk.

To help make sure your workplace is fair for everyone, you can:

- Ensure your recruitment and training processes are unbiased and inclusive
- Make sure everyone can work flexibly in a way that works for them, including parents
- Make sure that everyone helps with cleaning and putting on a morning tea – because it's everyone's job.
- Ensure workplace policies allow new dads to take proper parental leave.

“Carmen was saying something, and you cut her off again.”

“Thanks for bringing in the water glasses, Fatima – I'll stack them in the dishwasher after the meeting.”

“I know you've got to pick up the kids this afternoon; I'll make sure our meeting finishes on time.”

“The joke you made in yesterday's meeting was not funny, and actually not okay.”

“Priya, I'd really like to hear your ideas – you haven't had a chance to speak yet.”



Find out more

- **Change Makers** – Future Women.
- **Taking action | Tools and resources for the workplace** – Our Watch.
- **Inclusive Workplaces Training** – Minus 18.
- **Take action: Empowering bystanders to act on sexist and sexually harassing behaviours** – VicHealth.

In your sports clubs and events, you can:

- Provide equal resources and availability to women and men
- Make sure there's adequate, safe and accessible changing rooms for women
- Show that your community is safe and welcoming to LGBTIQ+ members – you could proudly display pride flags, and encourage all people to share their pronouns on name tags, email signatures, or when introducing themselves to someone new
- Offer equal awards and prizes to sports club members of all genders
- Make sure everyone is included on your rosters – kitchen duties, half time orange slices, taking home the laundry
- Role model respectful relationships and inclusion whenever you have the opportunity
- Make facilities and events accessible to people with disabilities
- Include Acknowledgements of Country in your events and at your facilities.

“I noticed you tried to book the rooms on Wednesday for extra training for the boys’ team. You know that’s when the women’s comp plays. Let’s find a time that works for everyone.”

“Did you realise that the women’s team are going out to bat without their thigh guards because they’ve got to choose between getting changed on the pitch or going across the road to the public toilets? This needs to change.”

“How come the men are getting cheques for their prizes, and the women are getting \$10 vouchers to the nail salon? Why aren’t they getting the same?”



Find out more

- **Equality and Respect in Sport** – Our Watch.
- **Carlton Respect.**
- **Sports, arts and entertainment: Tips to make venues more inclusive** – Vision Australia

In your home and with your friends, you can:

- Talk about how you can share the housework in a way that works for everyone
- Challenge assumptions about who will take on specific parenting roles, like who will organise doctors' appointments, who will make the lunchboxes, if either of you will work part-time while the kids are young
- Challenge the expectation that men need to be tough and strong. Make sure they know you'll listen and support them
- Call out sexist 'jokes' and behaviours – when you see them or one-on-one later
- Encourage your children to safely express their emotions.

“Come on mate, you are better than that.”

“I agree, that's not funny.”

“I'm glad you've trusted me and told me about this – I'm here whenever you need to talk.”

“I feel like a lot of the cooking and cleaning is falling on me lately – can we talk about how we can split this up more evenly?”



Find out more

- **Baby Makes 3** – Healthability.
- **The Conversation Guide, Lets Stop It At The Start** – Australian Government.
- **Family Man** – Movember.

**THIS 16 DAYS
OF ACTIVISM
AND BEYOND,
LET'S CHANGE
THE STORY
AND CREATE A
FUTURE WHERE
WE ARE ALL
SAFE, EQUAL
AND RESPECTED.**

CAMPAIGN MATERIALS



These materials have been developed for your organisation to use before and during 16 Days of Activism and beyond.

- **Safe and Equal's Fast Facts 2023** (Word and PDF) – this includes new data with a values based messaging approach.



- **Virtual selfie frame** – for you to drop an image (photo) of you/someone/people into the frame and share it on social media.



- **Online video background** – to use as a virtual background on any online meeting platform.



- **Email signature banner** – for your organisation to use in your email signatures.



- **Poster suite (A4, A3, A2)**



- **Respect Is...** (A4 Card) – to hold up in your photos or for socials, describing what respect is to you (in your own words). Words can be either handwritten or typed in using Adobe Photoshop or Canva.



- **Support services poster (A4, A3, A5)** – to ensure support services are always visible when running a 16 Days of Activism initiative.



- **Book list leaflet** – print and distribute to local libraries to showcase books that challenge traditional gender stereotypes.



● 16 Days of Activism Calendar



Don't forget to tag Respect Victoria in your social posts so we can share and like!

Twitter/X: @Respect_Vic
 Instagram: @respectvictoria
 Facebook: @RespectVictoria
 LinkedIn: Respect Victoria

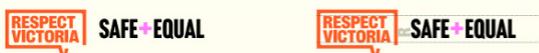
DOWNLOAD ALL FILES

- Media release template
- Respect Victoria logo – stacked version and mono options.

Using Respect Victoria's logo

- Always use our stacked brand mark in orange where possible.
- In terms of hierarchy, your council/organisations logo should come first, then Respect Victoria's logo, then your partner organisation's logo. Spacing and alignment example is shown below.

Respect Victoria's brand has had an update, so we have created and supplied updated campaign collateral that reflects our new look and feel. Although we encourage you to use these new assets, we understand if you plan to use kept physical items from last year to lessen your environmental impact.



- Our logo minimum size is 20mm for print and 100px for digital.
- The Victorian State Government logo must not be affixed to materials that you create yourself.

SOCIAL TILES AND MESSAGING TEMPLATES



This resource is designed to be both broad and varied to allow you to choose the messages that best suit your audience and community. You may choose to share them “as is”, or you may want to adapt the captions or statements to suit the audience you are speaking to.

For example, you may want to speak directly to the rights of women with disabilities, women from a faith community, trans women or First Nations women. Many women experience intersecting forms of discrimination, and very few people hold just one identity or experience.

This resource includes:

- 16 social media tiles (JPG)
- messaging templates, including supporting captions, alt text and supporting notes (PDF and Word)

For all social media activities, join the conversation by using the hashtags #16Days and #16DaysOfActivism. Make sure you tag us in your social media posts!

Twitter/X: @Respect_Vic

Instagram: @respectvictoria

Facebook: @RespectVictoria

LinkedIn: Respect Victoria

DOWNLOAD ALL FILES



BEYOND THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM



Efforts to prevent violence against women are more likely to be effective and to achieve lasting change when they are part of broader prevention activities to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women.

Get leadership on board

Leadership involvement and support is essential for getting traction on gender equality. When leadership is on board, they can encourage and support bystander action to prevent violence against women by embedding it into organisational policies, codes of conduct and performance management.



Find out more

- [Advice on how to secure support from leadership](#) – Our Watch.

Review reporting and resolution processes

Having an effective reporting and resolution process in your organisation supports people to take action easily and safely against sexism, disrespect and sexual harassment.



Find out more

- [How to be an Active Bystander](#) – VicHealth.
- [Work Related Gendered Violence](#) – WorkSafe.
- [Workplace Equality and Respect](#) – Our Watch.

Ensure your organisation has an equal opportunity, sexual harassment, or gender equity policy

Policies provide a blueprint for the kind of workplace culture you want to achieve. To encourage bystander action, you need policies that let staff and other stakeholders know what behaviours are inappropriate, what action can be taken, and how privacy will be protected. This information does not have to be in a standalone bystander action policy, but can be included in other policies, such as an equal opportunity or sexual harassment policy.

Policies should be accessible, accompanied by complaint and grievance procedures, and communicated to all staff.



Find out more

- [Prevention Toolkit for Local Government](#) – Our Watch.
- [Family Violence Prevention Resources](#) – MAV.
- [Local Government Guide for Preventing Family Violence and All Forms of Violence Against Women](#) – MAV.

Attend, deliver or organise gender equality or bystander action trainings or workshops

Keep up to date with gender equality training and professional development workshops for individuals and workplaces.



Find out more

- [Training and Events](#) – Safe and Equal.
- [Prevention in Action](#) – Our Watch.
- [Partners in Prevention Network](#).
- [Women's Health Victoria](#).
- [No To Violence](#).

Develop a code of conduct

A code of conduct is an important guide for employees when thinking about how they are expected to behave in the workplace.

Use these tools and resources beyond the 16 Days of Activism

The tools and resources provided in this toolkit have been deliberately designed to be useful beyond the 16 Days of Activism. We encourage workplaces, councils, organisations, and community members to use these resources to support bystander action, prevent violence against women and promote gender equality.

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES



Responding to disclosures

When you open-up conversations about gender equality, respectful relationships and violence against women, there's a good chance that someone may share that they have experienced or witnessed violence. Here's how to respond to disclosures like this effectively.

The three most important things you can do when responding to disclosure are:

1. **listen without interruption or judgement**
2. **believe and validate their experience**
3. **provide information about referral pathways**

These are some ideas of what you could say – but it's important you only say these genuinely, and that you use your own words.

- What happened is not okay, and it was not your fault.
- I'm glad you told me.
- No one should have to experience what you've been through.
- Do you feel safe at the moment?
- I'm not a specialist in helping people with experiences like yours – but I can give you the contact details of a support service (**see page 35**) you can talk to if you want.

Remember your own self-care

Self-care is a priority and necessity – not a luxury. If you find yourself feeling down, depleted, or irritable you may need to take some time out. There are lots of ways you can do this, including:

- Reach out to someone. This could be a family member, trusted friend or colleague, your manager, a counsellor, or another support person, including the support services on **page 35**.
- Find a way to rest and recharge. Have some time with no goals – spend time reading, take a day off, spend some time outside, see your friends, take a nap... whatever helps you reenergise
- Play – have fun and do things that make you laugh. This might look like playing with children and pets, creative activities, watching a favourite comedy.



Find out more

- **Responding to Disclosures virtual training** – Safe and Equal.

TRY TO

- **Listen**, without interruption or judgement, giving the victim survivor time to share their experience.
- **Believe** what the victim survivor is saying to you.
- **Affirm** the victim survivor is brave in being able to come forward.
- **Emphasise** that they are not to blame for their experience.
- **Be honest and open** about your skills and knowledge and the types of support you can provide.
- **Provide information** about specialist support services ([see page 35](#)) in a way that is safe and supportive. Ask them if they would like some personal or professional support, and whether they would like any help identifying particular services.
- **Keep the conversation confidential.** The only exception is if you believe the person's safety is at immediate risk (call 000), or you become aware that a child's safety is at risk.

It is important to recognise however, whether you are a professional service and have a responsibility for escalating an issue.

TRY NOT TO

- **Find** out the details.
- **Fix** the situation for them.
- **Suggest** the situation is somewhat their fault – don't ask questions like 'why do you put up with it?' or 'how can you still stay with them?'
- **Give advice** or tell them what to do – it will reduce their confidence to make their own decisions.
- **Judge or criticise** their choice – even if you don't agree with it.
- **Criticise the perpetrator** – it may only make the victim survivor want to defend the perpetrator. Focus on criticising the abusive behaviour and let them know that no one should abuse them.
- **Provide counselling** – if you are not a counsellor or do not have specialist training in responding to disclosures, be honest and open about that.

PREPARING FOR BACKLASH



When you bring up gender equality messages, it is likely that you will face resistance or even backlash. It is an uncomfortable experience for most people when their long-held beliefs are challenged – and naturally they want to resist.

Experiencing resistance is not necessarily a bad thing, and in some instances can indicate that you are having a difficult but necessary conversation to help someone think about, or reflect on, an issue in a new way.

Proactively preparing for resistance and backlash is important for developing strategies and responses, and for caring for your own safety and wellbeing.

To prepare, you might:

- share this section of the toolkit with your co-workers
- organise internal training and briefing
- customise or develop backlash response templates
- share internal communications guides
- connect local advocates and practitioners for support in responding to backlash
- use existing networks, including social worker advocates
- reflect on past experiences in managing backlash.

In previous years, councils and organisations involved in 16 Days of Activism grassroots initiative have shared their approaches for responding to resistance and backlash including:

- blocking or removing offensive comments on social media; not responding to less offensive comments; providing a standard response explaining the rationale for 16 Days of Activism
- arranging a phone call or in-person discussion with the person to acknowledge their comments, allow them to vent, and ensure they hear your reply
- engaging multiple managers to take the lead in providing responses to their departments.



Find out more

- **Unpacking Resistance training** – Safe and Equal
- **Overcoming Resistance and Backlash** – Safe and Equal

Responding to resistance and backlash

Preparing for potential resistance and coming up with responses in advance will help you communicate better on the spot and may help you open more conversations with the community. You could prepare standard responses for you and your team to utilise, or practice framing and crafting productive responses.

Dealing with online abuse

It's easy for people to say online what they wouldn't say in person – so resistance is often expressed through social media.

As a social media moderator, it's important to strike a balance between allowing audiences to self-moderate, and intervening when comments are offensive and derail constructive conversation.

Having clear moderation guidelines will support you to effectively manage resistance on online forums.

How to frame responses to resistance

Using values-based messaging ([see page 12](#)) as a framework can be a useful way to develop your response.

Remember: don't get too caught up in an unproductive conversation with someone who is determined to not change their mind. Do use evidence to debunk their untrue statements, but don't let them pull you into a repetitive or unproductive argument – move on and don't let them frustrate you.

Example resistance statement response: The following example shows how a common question about gendered violence can be framed and responded to, using values – based messaging. We’ve used statistics from Safe and Equal’s Fast Facts 2023 ([see page 22](#)) to reinforce the message.

“WHAT ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN?”

VISION

I agree with you that all forms of violence and discrimination are unacceptable.

BARRIER

Men and women experience family violence, most commonly from a male perpetrator. This campaign focuses on violence against women because there is clear evidence that women experience violence at disproportionate rates. Women also experience casual and structural sexism daily in a way that men do not.

Most family and gender-based violence is perpetrated by cisgender men against women, children, LGBTIQ+ people – as well as other men. 95% of all victims, regardless of gender, experience violence from a male perpetrator.

SOLUTION

Advocating for the safety, equality and rights of women doesn’t detract from the safety, equality and rights of others. We are trying to create a society where we are all safe, equal and respected – which means challenging the underlying conditions that drive violence against women.

There are some great resources out there to help you prepare and respond to resistance and backlash – do take the time to check them out with your team.



Find out more

- [Overcoming Resistance and Backlash – a Guide for Primary Prevention Practitioners](#) – Safe and Equal.
- [Encountering resistance: Strategies to respond to resistance to gender equality initiatives](#) – VicHealth.

SUPPORT SERVICES AND REFERRALS



Support services and referrals

During the 16 Days of Activism – and beyond – it's important to let your community know where they can find further support. Make sure you have this poster displayed and available as a handout.

DOWNLOAD ALL FILES

At a minimum, the Safe Steps phone number should be included on any collateral you are creating for the 16 Days of Activism.

If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 000 and ask for the police. If you or someone you know is experiencing family violence, help is available.

FINDING SUPPORT

SAFE STEPS

Safe Steps is a confidential and supportive family violence response line for Victoria. Phone services available 24/7. safesteps.org.au 1800 015 188

THE ORANGE DOOR

The Orange Door offers family violence support and services for all Victorians. Find your nearest location: orangedoorvic.gov.au

ELIZABETH MORGAN HOUSE

Elizabeth Morgan House Aboriginal Women's Service provides culturally safe, holistic case management and support. EMH is open 24/7. emhaws.org.au 1800 364 297

DJIRRA

Djirra is a culturally safe place where practical support is available to all Aboriginal women, particularly those who are currently experiencing family violence, or have in the past. djirra.org.au 1800 105 303

If you or someone you know is experiencing violence or using violence, help is available.

INTOUCH MULTICULTURAL CENTRE AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE

inTouch is a specialist family violence service that works with multicultural women, their families, and their communities.

intouch.org.au 1800 755 988

1800 RESPECT

1800 RESPECT is the national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service. Phone and online services are available 24/7. 1800respect.org.au 1800 737 732

KIDS HELPLINE

Kids Helpline is a counselling service for Australian children and young people aged between five and 25 years. Phone and online services are available 24/7. kidshelpline.com.au 1800 55 1800

RAINBOW DOOR

Rainbow Door is a free specialist LGBTQ+ helpline providing information, support, and referral to all LGBTQ+ Victorians, their friends and family. rainbowdoor.org.au 1800 729 367

MEN'S REFERRAL SERVICE

Men's Referral Service provides anonymous and confidential telephone counselling, information, and referrals to men, to help them take action to stop using violent and controlling behaviour. ntv.org.au 1300 766 491

SENIORS RIGHTS VICTORIA

Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) provides information and advice to help prevent elder abuse and safeguard the rights of older people. seniorsrights.org.au 1300 368 821

If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 000 and ask for the police. Respect is a future where we are all safe, equal and respected.

RESPECT VICTORIA

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS



Backlash

Describes extreme, aggressive, or organised forms of resistance to preventing gendered violence. Resistance can range from denial to passive attempts to maintain the status quo. Examples may include men's rights groups inciting misogyny or online trolls abusing social commentators.

Coercive control

Coercive control is defined as a course of conduct or behaviour that is aimed at dominating and controlling another person. Coercive control can involve strategies like physical, sexual, verbal and/or emotional abuse; psychologically controlling acts and manipulation; depriving someone of resources and other forms of financial abuse; social isolation; exploiting systems, including the legal system to perpetrate harm; stalking, deprivation of liberty; intimidation; technology-facilitated abuse; and harassment (ANROWS, 2021).

Disclosure

Occurs when someone tells another person about violence they have experienced, perpetrated, or witnessed. Undertaking prevention of violence against women activities can lead to an increase in disclosures as people learn more about harmful attitudes and behaviours and think about their own lives. In some cases, it is because the activity has created a safe space for people to discuss their experiences.

Domestic violence

Is sometimes interchanged with 'family violence'. Victorian legislation and policy documentation uses the term 'family violence' as it is more inclusive of diverse family units and kinship networks. As noted below 'family violence' encompasses more than just violence occurring in a domestic situation.

Family violence

Involves patterns of coercive, controlling, and abusive behaviors inflicted on victim survivors resulting in fear for their own or someone else's safety and wellbeing. Family violence can take many forms including coercive control, physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, and cultural violence. It also includes financial/economic abuse and technology-facilitated abuse.

Family violence can occur within a diverse range of family units including:

- intimate partners (current or former): married or de facto couples with or without children
- other family members; including siblings, step-relations, extended kinship connections
- adolescent or adult children and their parents
- older people and their adult children, relatives, or carers
- people with disabilities and their relatives or carers
- other family members; including but not limited to siblings, step-relations, chosen family, extended family members, kinship networks and communities.

Gender-based violence

Describes violence rooted in gender-based power, inequality, and discrimination.

Gender-based violence causes or can cause physical, sexual, psychological, or financial harm. It can occur in the home, at work, online or in public. People of all genders can experience gender-based violence, including transgender and/or non-binary people.

Gender-based violence is sometimes used interchangeably with 'violence against women' because of the disproportionate number of women and girls who experience violence.

Gender equality

Is the outcome reached through addressing gender inequality. Achieving gender equality is not about erasing gender differences, but protecting and upholding people's rights, responsibilities, and opportunities, and ensuring that access to these is not dependent on their gender or the sex they were assigned at birth.

Intersectionality

Describes the interactions between multiple systems and structures of oppression (such as sexism, racism, classism, ageism, ableism, heteronormativity and cissexism), as well as policy and legal contexts (such as immigration status). It acknowledges that some people are subject to multiple forms of oppression and 'the experience is not just the sum of its parts.'

An intersectional approach is 'a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other'.

Intersectionality highlights the intersection of multiple forms of power and privilege. An intersectional approach is critical for preventing violence against women because patriarchal power structures always intersect with other systems of power. Violence against women occurs in the context of both gender inequality and other multiple forms of structural and systemic inequality, oppression and discrimination. All of these intersect to influence the perpetration of violence, the prevalence, nature and dynamics of violence, and women's experiences of violence.

Understanding and addressing these intersections is necessary to effectively address the drivers of violence against women and prevent this violence across the population (Our Watch, 2021).

Perpetrator

Is the term most used in Victoria to describe people – mainly men – who choose to use family violence or commit violence against women. 'Offender' or 'sexual violence offender' are used to describe perpetrators of violence in clinical or legal contexts.

Primary prevention

Is a public health approach that addresses the underlying causes of a problem to prevent it from occurring in the first place. It is geared towards education, upskilling individuals, communities and organisations to identify the issue, and generating systems and practices to stifle the issue's 'progress'.

Prevention of/preventing violence against women (PVAW)

Often used interchangeably and generally understood to mean the primary prevention of violence against women.

While there is an established evidence base around the drivers of violence against women, our understanding of what drives other forms of family violence is still emerging.

Resistance

Is an active pushing back against initiatives that aim to prevent violence against women and promote gender equality. Examples may include denial of the problem, refusing to make a change or dismantling a change initiative.

Respect

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

TOOLKIT CONTRIBUTIONS



Safe and Equal, on behalf of **Respect Victoria**, will be distributing funding to support local prevention activities during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. Funding is available to each of the 79 local councils. Consortium funding to the regional and state-wide women's health services will support work with their primary prevention partnerships across Victoria.

This toolkit was first developed by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) in 2020 and since updated in partnership with Safe and Equal and Respect Victoria.

We acknowledge the contributions of our 2023 Project Advisory Group members: GenWest Gippsland Women's Health, Northern Grampians Council, Victorian Council Of Social Services (VCOSS), Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), No To Violence (NTV) and Maroondah City Council.





For more information relating to this toolkit,
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