

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

TOOLKIT 2024
25 NOVEMBER – 10 DECEMBER



Join the **16 days of Activism** and help build communities where women are safe and equal. It all starts with respect.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY



Respect Victoria acknowledges Aboriginal peoples throughout Victoria as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waterways on which we rely. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present. We proudly acknowledge Aboriginal communities throughout Victoria and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living cultures.

We acknowledge the significant and ongoing impacts of colonisation and commit to working alongside First Nations communities to effect change. We recognise the ongoing leadership role of these 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.

CONTENTS

<u>ABOUT 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM</u>	5
<u>RESPECT IS...</u>	14
<u>HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM</u>	16
<u>CREATING A MEANINGFUL 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM</u>	19
<u>FORMS OF MASCULINITY AND CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES</u>	26
<u>CAMPAIGN MATERIALS</u>	27
<u>SOCIAL MEDIA AND MESSAGING TEMPLATES</u>	30
<u>PREPARING FOR BACKLASH</u>	31
<u>RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES</u>	34
<u>SUPPORT SERVICES AND REFERRALS</u>	36
<u>BEYOND THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM</u>	38
<u>TOOLKIT CONTRIBUTIONS</u>	40

SAFE AND EQUAL AND RESPECT VICTORIA

Safe and Equal is the peak body for Victorian organisations that specialise in family and gender-based violence across the continuum, including primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery.

Respect Victoria is the dedicated organisation for the prevention of family violence and violence against women in Victoria.

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, Safe and Equal member organisations and regional and state-wide women's health services who will support work with their primary prevention partnerships across Victoria.

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 – formally or informally.

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 that are inclusive and welcoming of all people. It includes information to help you coordinate meaningful events and activities, as well as information you can use to guide your community messaging.

This resource is updated each year based on your feedback – please share your thoughts with us by emailing contact@respectvictoria.vic.gov.au

ABOUT THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM



The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence was started by activists at the inauguration of the Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991.

Three decades on, the **16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence** against Gender-Based Violence is a widely recognised global campaign that encourages action to end gender-based violence.

During the 16 Days, organisations and individuals around the world raise awareness that men's violence against women is a fundamental violation of human rights.

Key dates

25 November: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

3 December: International Day of People with Disabilities

10 December: International Human Rights Day

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM IN VICTORIA

The 16 Days of Activism is a key part of communities' efforts to prevent violence against women in Victoria. It is embodied by a grassroots spirit and the collaborative approach is rolled out uniquely across the state.

The Walk Against Family Violence (in the Melbourne CBD) was first organised as a grassroots event in 2009 and now marks the start of the 16 Days of Activism in Victoria each year.

PRIMARY PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE

Primary prevention of violence is about changing the underlying social conditions that produce and drive this violence, that excuse, justify or even promote it – that is, challenging the gendered drivers of men's violence.

Violence against women is preventable if we change the culture that allows it to happen.

LEARN MORE

- [Change the Story: shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia](#) – Our Watch
- [What is Primary Prevention](#) – Safe and Equal
- [Pride in Prevention](#) – Rainbow Health Australia
- [Family Violence Prevention Resources](#) – MAV
- [Local Government Toolkit](#) – Our Watch

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 commonly used to describe men’s violence against women and girls.

Violence against LGBTIQ+ communities based on gender or gender norms is also a form of gender-based violence.

Men and boys can also be targeted by violence due to their gender, or because they do not conform to gender norms.

The United Nations global 16 Days of Activism campaign focuses on men’s violence against women, and this is what we predominantly refer to in this toolkit.

MEN'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The United Nations defines violence against women as “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.”

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.

The vast majority of family and gender-based violence is perpetrated by men – as is most violence against men.

95% of victims of all violence, whatever their gender, experience violence from a male perpetrator. The social story that men should be aggressive, dominant and non-emotional is a major contributor here.

Evidence shows that women's violence against male partners is usually motivated by self-defence.

LEARN MORE

- [Understanding intimate partner violence and sexual harassment](#) – Jesuit Social Services
- [Personal Safety Survey: additional analysis on relationship and sex of perpetrator](#) – Australian Bureau of Statistics

DRIVERS OF MEN'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

There are four factors that evidence has shown can 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 emphasise aggression, dominance and control.** For example, men using sexist or homophobic jokes to bond with each other.

DRIVERS OF MEN'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

There are also reinforcing factors that can interact with the gendered drivers to increase the prevalence, frequency, or severity of violence against women.

1. **Condoning of violence in general.** Including victim blaming, treating family violence as a family's private matter, and telling sexist jokes or jokes about rape.
2. **Experience of, and exposure to, violence.** Including abuse and maltreatment as a child, or being exposed to violence against their mother or other female caregivers.
3. **Factors that weaken prosocial behaviour.** Including natural disasters and crises, alcohol, gambling, environments dominated by male peer relations, and disadvantage and isolation.
4. **Resistance and backlash to prevention and gender equality efforts,** at both individual, community, institutional and structural levels.

On their own, these factors may not necessarily drive or create violence, but when they are combined with the gendered drivers, violence against women becomes much more likely.

Actively challenging gendered drivers and addressing reinforcing factors is key in preventing men's violence against women.

LEARN MORE

- [Change the story](#) – Our Watch
- [The Man Box 2024](#) – Jesuit Social Services
- [Driving Change](#) – Safe and Equal
- [Masculinities and Health](#) – VicHealth

FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

There are many different forms of violence, both physical and non-physical. It can include:

- physical violence and murder
- intimate partner violence, including dating violence
- sexual violence (perpetrated by someone known or by a stranger)
- sexual harassment (in workplaces, public spaces or online)
- sexual objectification and fetishisation, particularly of trans women and trans feminine people, women of colour, and lesbian, bisexual and queer women
- 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 over immigration status
- violence that occurs in institutional settings; for example, violence in prisons, in aged care facilities, disability or residential care settings, health facilities or educational institutions.

LEARN MORE

- [Coercive control, non-physical violence and relationship red flags](#) – Respect Victoria
- [Forms of family violence](#) – Safe and Equal

WHO EXPERIENCES GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?

Women from all cultures and backgrounds can experience gender-based violence. There is no part of society that is “immune” from men’s violence against women.

Intersecting forms of oppression, discrimination, power and privilege can further limit a woman’s access to resources, independence and perceived value, and increase the probability of violence against them. Broadly, these include ableism, ageism, class discrimination, heteronormativity, cisnormativity, and racism and colonialism. **That’s why efforts to prevent violence against women must include all women.**

The drivers of violence against women and against LGBTIQ+ people overlap. This means that prevention of men’s against women programs and activities that address these drivers should consider how to include LGBTIQ+ people (of all genders) in their design and delivery.

For example, education programs that talk about rigid gender stereotypes or sports campaigns that challenge masculine social norms that encourage misogyny, homophobia and transphobia should be designed in close consultation with the LGBTIQ+ community. In instances where their experiences are at the centre of the work, this should be led in partnership.

LEARN MORE

- [Intersectionality in Primary Prevention](#) – Safe and Equal
- [Resources for Community Services and Workers](#) – Zoe Belle Gender Collective
- [Violence Prevention Resources](#) – Women with Disabilities Victoria
- [Family Violence Resources](#) – VACCA

COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

To effectively drive down rates of violence against women – and to keep them down – we need a well-supported system that connects prevention, early intervention, response and recovery services.

We also need to recognise that everyone has a role to play in changing attitudes and behaviours, as well as the systems, policies and processes that allow violence to thrive.

RESPECT IS...

Respect is building healthy, equal relationships. It's seeking enthusiastic consent. It's promoting equality in your workplace and your sports club. It's making it clear that violence against women, and all forms of gender-based violence are unacceptable.

It's calling in your mate when they've said or done something harmful, and role modelling healthy ideas of what it means to be a man. Respect is knowing that you can help prevent violence against women.

Everyone deserves to be safe, equal and respected.

But right now in Australia, that isn't the reality.

More than 1 in 3 women have experienced men's violence. On average, a woman is killed by a man she knows every 10 days, and in 2024 that number is much higher. Safety for women is not a given in any community – and neither is respect.

Not all disrespect leads to violence against women – but all violence against women begins with disrespect.

All of us have the power to change that by respecting women wherever we live, learn, work and play.

Join the 16 Days of Activism and help build communities where women are safe and equal. It all starts with respect.

You can use the "Respect Is..." theme in your 16 Days of Activism events and activities. It's deliberately adaptable to represent and suit the needs of your community.

TALKING ABOUT RESPECT



Helping your community or audience understand the link between respect and preventing violence – and recognising how “seemingly harmless” attitudes can escalate or excuse and justify harmful behaviour – is a vital step in supporting them to take action against violence. Use values-based messaging ([page 22](#)) to position your messages.

LEARN MORE

- [Stop It At the Start](#) – Australian Government
- [Primary prevention of men's violence and the sexist joke](#) – Jane Gilmore
- [That Ain't Love](#) – Djirra
- [What is the gender pay gap – and what does it have to do with preventing violence against women?](#) – Respect Victoria
- [Why we keep talking about housework when we're trying to prevent family violence](#) – Respect Victoria

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.

HOST AN EVENT OR ACTIVATION

Organise an event that engages your community and encourages lasting change.

See how to create a meaningful 16 Days of Activism event on [page 19](#), and make sure to make the most of [Safe and Equal's 16 Days of Activism resources](#).

Add your event to the [Victorian 16 Days calendar](#), coordinated by Safe and Equal, so people know about and can get involved in your event.

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

Safe and Equal



Respect Victoria



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 30](#), and learn how to deal with any backlash on [page 31](#).

PROMOTE THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM BEFORE AND DURING THE CAMPAIGN

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

Use the email signature banner and other assets on [page 27](#) to raise awareness – and encourage your workmates to use it too.

ENCOURAGE CONVERSATION

Conversations are a meaningful way of exploring important issues. Recognise that conversations happen in different ways.

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. Use the information from the resources in this toolkit to help inform and guide your conversations.



JOIN THE WALK AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE

Join the 16th annual Melbourne CBD Walk Against Family Violence on Friday 22 November to help create a Victoria 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!



To find out more and share information with your colleagues and community go to the [Walk Against Family Violence webpage](#).

THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM IS...



How to create a meaningful
16 Days of Activism with
impactful events and activities.

The most impactful events and activities are:

INCLUSIVE OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

All women are not the same and their experience of violence and access to services and supports will vary.

For example, two women from the same community may share similar experiences of family violence, but one's added experience of living with a disability could mean they have additional challenges navigating support services.

A trans woman might face stigma reaching out for support. Another woman could have difficulty finding information in her preferred language. Another might lack the financial means to leave a relationship, or face cultural expectations to stay. Another might have experienced similar gendered violence that was also layered with racism. These women have similar, but not identical, experiences.

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

LEARN MORE

- [Pride in Prevention Partnership Guide](#) – Rainbow Health Australia
- [Resources for Community Services and Workers](#) – Zoe Belle Gender Collective
- [Changing the picture](#) – Our Watch
- [Changing the landscape](#) – Our Watch and Women with Disabilities Victoria
- [Preventing Violence Against Women](#) – Multicultural Centre for Women's Health

The most impactful events and activities are:



CONNECTED TO YOUR COMMUNITY

You know your community best! Your 16 Days of Activism is an opportunity to put on events and activities that will be meaningful specifically for the people and places around you. Think of how you can involve community members along the way; co-designed events and materials (either with members of the public, or organisations you already partner with) can be a great way to engage different groups across your community. Reach out to organisations and leaders from diverse communities to get to know each other better and find out how you can make your events and activities safe, inclusive and relevant to them.

Use Canva to customise campaign posters (page 27) with messages and information for your community.

RESPECT VICTORIA

LEARN MORE

- [Improving our approach to community-led prevention](#) – Safe and Equal
- [Multi-lingual adaptations of Change the story](#) – South East Community Links
- [Preventing Violence Against Women with Disabilities and Multicultural Communities](#) – Women with Disabilities Victoria
- [Healthy relationships fact sheets](#) – Multicultural Centre for Womens Health
- [Building Youth Leadership in Violence Prevention](#) – FVREE

The most impactful events and activities are:

**MOTIVATING
PROACTIVE
INFLUENTIAL**

The 16 Days of Activism should feel like an optimistic and hopeful time! While the overall topic of men's violence is confronting, your activities can empower people to understand violence prevention and how they can contribute to the change. Let them know what they can do next, where they can continue learning, how they can join the call for change – and why their involvement matters.

Connect with influential people or settings (businesses, organisations, clubs, etc) in your community and ask them to demonstrate their commitment to learning and change.

Values-based messaging is an evidence-based approach to framing your communications in a way that builds on strengths.

LEARN MORE

- [Resources to support your Values-Based Messaging from PreventX 2024](#) – Safe and Equal
- [Communicating for Connection: Values-based messaging for primary prevention in multicultural and faith-based communities](#) – Safe and Equal
- [Pride in Prevention Messaging Guide](#) – Rainbow Health
- [Framing gender equality](#) – VicHealth
- [Passing the Message Stick](#) – Get Up and Australian Progress
- [Framing Age Message Guide](#) – South Melbourne Primary Care Partnership
- [By Us, For Us Disability Messaging Guide](#) – Disability Access Network Australia
- [Messaging for a Movement](#) – Safe and Equal
- [Gender Equality in Advertising and Communications Guidelines](#) – shEqual

The most impactful events and activities are:



INFORMATIVE AND RELEVANT

Understanding violence against women and what the scope of it looks like is a necessary step in ending it. It's also important to make the link between your activities, the gendered drivers of violence ([page 7](#)) and the individual and systemic changes that will create safer communities for everyone.

Help people understand how gendered violence affects them and the people in their community – many people believe violence against women is a problem, but that it doesn't happen near them.

Use evidence-based information, relate to examples in your community, and be prepared to correct non-factual beliefs or attempts to derail the conversation.

Abstract events or activities that don't make a clear connection to the prevention of violence against women can feel tokenistic or disconnected, and invite undue backlash or resistance.

LEARN MORE

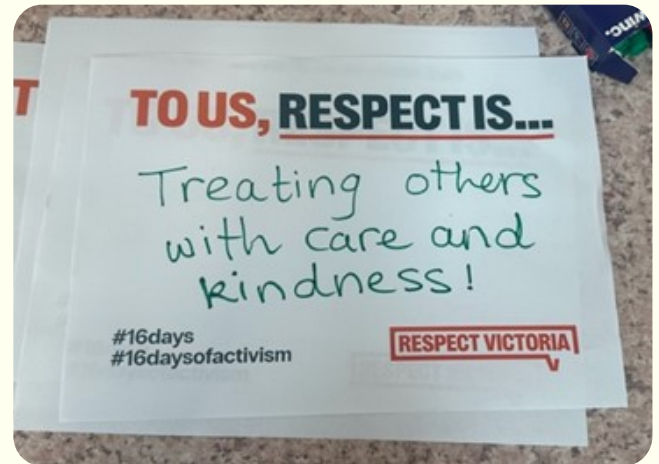
- [How to Use Statistics in Primary Prevention](#) – Safe and Equal
- [Fast Facts on Family and Gender-based Violence](#) – Safe and Equal

The most impactful events and activities are:

SAFE AND TRAUMA INFORMED

Safety considers OHS, but importantly, also considers the emotional and cultural safety of all attendees. You might like to remind attendees that your activities are a safe place, but not a therapeutic space. This means not going into detail about experiences of violence without training in speaking about lived experience in a trauma-informed way.

Give people a clear understanding of the topics that will be discussed, and invite them to take a break if they need.



Understand how to respond to people who disclose that they have experienced or witnessed violence ([page 34](#)) and make sure the contact information for support services is easily available ([page 36](#)). If your event could be particularly challenging, consider engaging specialist support available onsite for attendees.

In person and online, encourage people to ask questions, but take care to moderate questions or conversations that intentionally or accidentally derail productive conversation.

LEARN MORE

- [Trauma-informed events checklist](#) – MHCC
- [Rainbow Tick Standards](#) – Rainbow Health Victoria
- [A Guide to Hosting LGBTQ+ Events Safely](#) – ACON
- [9 Ways to Make Absolutely Everyone Feel Welcome at Your Event](#) – Eventbrite

The most impactful events and activities are:



ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE

Accessible events consider the logistics that enable people to participate. This could include making sure the location (including online settings) is accessible for people with limited mobility or who use mobility aids or assistive technology. It could include having an Auslan interpreter or live captioning. It could include inviting people to move around or leave the room if needed. Availability of accessible toilets is very important. Also ensure availability of gender neutral bathrooms with sanitary bins.

Ask participants and speakers if they have access needs or accommodations that they would like you to be aware of.

LEARN MORE

- [Hosting accessible and inclusive in-person meetings and events](#) – Australian Human Rights Commission
- [Together: Building an Inclusive Youth Sector](#) – Youth Disability Advocacy Service

FORMS OF MASCULINITY AND CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES

Respect Victoria has been doing a lot of work to highlight how to challenge assumptions about gender and when they can become harmful. As part of 16 Days, you may want to highlight how some gender roles can be harmful, and how they can be challenged in safe and supportive ways.

Treating assumptions about gender as rules to live by can create problems – for instance assumptions and beliefs that men are dominant and aggressive, and women weak and vulnerable.

These assumptions become harmful ideas that we, often unknowingly, can take into our homes, relationships, workplaces and communities.

These assumptions can drive violence against women, but they also negatively impact the health and wellbeing of men and boys.

LEARN MORE

- [Willing, Capable and Confident](#) – Respect Victoria
- [The Man Box 2024](#) – Jesuit Social Services
- [Gender Stereotypes](#) – The Line
- [Masculinities and health](#) – VicHealth
- [Challenging gender stereotypes in the early years: the power of parents report](#) – Our Watch
- [Respect Starts With A Conversation](#) – Respect Victoria

CAMPAIGN MATERIALS

THESE MATERIALS HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED
FOR YOUR ORGANISATION TO USE DURING
THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AND BEYOND.

[Download the assets](#)

- **8 x posters:** ready to print, or customise for your community.



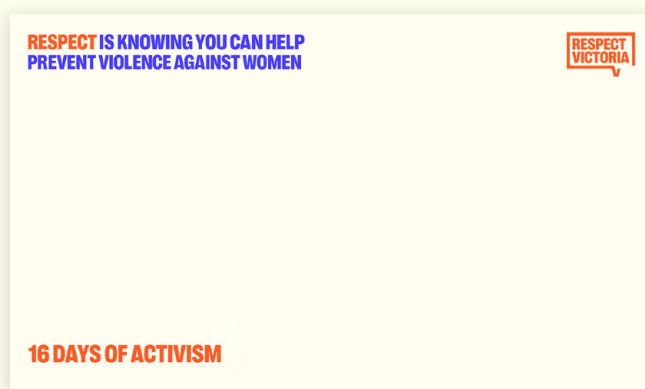
- **Email signature banner:** let your network know about the 16 Days of Activism.



- **Respect Is... card:** let event attendees share what respect means to them on this printable asset.



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



Download the assets

- RESPECT VICTORIA**

28

USING RESPECT VICTORIA'S LOGO ON YOUR OWN DESIGNS

- Use our stacked brand mark in orange where possible.
- In terms of hierarchy, your council/organisation's logo should come first, then Respect Victoria's logo, then your partner organisation's logo.
- Our logo minimum size is 20mm for print and 100px for digital.
- Do not use the Victorian State Government logo on materials you create yourself.



SAFE + EQUAL



SAFE + EQUAL

REUSING EXISTING ASSETS

Respect Victoria's branding was updated in early 2023. Although we encourage you to use this year's assets, it's totally fine if you reuse physical or printed items from previous years to lessen your environmental impact.

SOCIAL MEDIA 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.

[Download the assets](#)

- **16 social media tiles (JPG)**



- **Messaging templates** – including supporting captions, alt text and supporting notes.

For all social media activities, join the conversation by using the hashtags #16Days #16DaysOfActivism.

Make sure you tag us in your social media posts!



PREPARING FOR BACKLASH

When you bring up gender equality or prevention of violence against women messages, it's likely that you will face resistance or even backlash. It's an uncomfortable experience for most people when their long-held beliefs are challenged.

Encountering 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. Any backlash you receive is likely to come from a small but vocal section of your community – it's unfortunate but true that unhappy groups are louder than the supportive ones.

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 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 (in a duty of care for others reading); not responding to less offensive comments
- 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.

LEARN MORE

- [Facing resistance in your work](#) – Safe and Equal
- [Resistance and backlash in primary prevention of violence against women](#) – Our Watch
- [Unpacking Resistance training](#) – Safe and Equal
- [Overcoming Resistance and Backlash](#) – Safe and Equal
- [\(En\)countering resistance](#) – VicHealth

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 ([page 22](#)) 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

A common resistance question can be, “What about violence against men?” The following example shows how you could frame your response, using values-based messaging. We've used statistics from [Safe and Equal's Fast Facts 2023](#) to reinforce the message.

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, LGBTQ+ 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.

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.

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

- listen without interruption or judgement
- believe and validate their experience
- provide information about specialist support.

These are some ideas of what you could say – but it's important to be genuine, and to 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 you can talk to if you want.
- A family violence specialist can help you work out your next steps, make a safety plan, and connect you with other services.

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES

WHEN RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES, TRY TO:

- give the victim survivor time to share their experience
- affirm the victim survivor is brave in being able to come forward
- emphasise that they are not to blame for their experience
- provide information about specialist support services (**page 36**) in a way that is safe and supportive. Ask them if 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), you become aware that a child's safety is at risk, or you have an obligation as a mandatory reporter.

AFTER BEING TRUSTED WITH A DISCLOSURE, TRY NOT TO:

- find out the details
- fix the situation for them
- 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 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 family violence, be honest and open about that.

**SAFE AND EQUAL'S
RESPONDING TO
DISCLOSURES VIRTUAL
TRAINING IS A VALUABLE
RESOURCE.**

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. There are many specialist services that can provide culturally safe and relevant support. If you or someone you know is experiencing family violence, help is available.

Make sure you have the Support Services poster ([see the campaign assets on page 28](#)) displayed and available as a handout.

At a minimum, display the contact details for [Safe Steps: Victoria's 24/7 family violence response centre](#).

If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 000 and ask for the police.

If you anticipate your event may be triggering for attendees, consider engaging specialist counselling services to attend and be available during and after the event.

REMEMBER YOUR 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 36](#).
- 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 movie.

LEARN MORE

- [Support for Professionals](#) – 1800RESPECT
- [Supporting Wellbeing for Prevention Practitioners in Multicultural and Faith-based Communities](#) – Multicultural Centre for Women's Health and Safe and Equal
- [Family violence workforce health, safety and wellbeing guide](#) – Family Safety Victoria

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.

ENCOURAGE ADVOCACY AND ALLYSHIP

Increasing the number of people in your community who will advocate for equality and violence prevention in a variety of settings is essential for reinforcing broad social change. Leaders and influencers in workplaces, community groups, sports places and services have immense potential for shaping attitudes.

ATTEND, DELIVER OR ORGANISE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

LEARN MORE

- [Advice on how to secure support from leadership](#) – Our Watch
- [Promote gender equality to sports leaders](#) – Our Watch
- [Building Youth Leadership in Violence Prevention](#) – FVREE
- [Men as Allies: supporting women and girls in community sport](#) – Change Our Game

LEARN MORE

- [Training and Events](#) – Safe and Equal
- [Prevention in Action](#) – Our Watch
- [Partners in Prevention Network](#)
- [Women's Health Victoria](#)
- [No To Violence](#)
- [Prevention of Violence Against Women and Promotion of Gender Equality eNews](#) – MAV

CONNECT AND COLLABORATE WITH OTHERS

Organisations and groups across Victoria are working toward the same goal: preventing men's violence. Reach out to people in similar roles or settings and share insights on what is working well and what you're learning from your challenges. Ask questions and learn from each other. Engage with the women's health service in your region and see where you can align with their regional primary prevention strategy. Tell them how your 16 Days of Activism went! There's a lot of knowledge to be shared across our communities.

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.

TOOLKIT CONTRIBUTIONS

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For more information relating to this toolkit, email Respect Victoria at contact@respectvictoria.vic.gov.au