

# Respectful relationships education toolkit

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## Overview

2022



**Our  
WATCH**  
End violence against  
Women And Their Children

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# Acknowledgements

## Acknowledgement of Country

Our Watch acknowledges and pays our respects to the traditional owners of the land on which our office is located, the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation. As a national organisation we also acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of Country across Australia and pay our respects to elders past and present.

## Acknowledgement of those involved in respectful relationships education work

Our Watch acknowledges the various organisations that have pioneered respectful relationships education in Victoria and elsewhere, particularly colleagues in the family violence and sexual assault sectors. Their efforts and advocacy have put gender-based violence prevention in schools at the forefront of prevention activity.

Our Watch acknowledges the following organisations and individuals whose work has directly informed our programs and the toolkit:

- Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria
- CASA House
- City of Melbourne
- Gippsland Women's Health
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- Queensland Department of Education
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- Trudi Peters, former Manager of the Respectful Relationships Education Pilot, Department of Education Queensland
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- Maria Delaney, Principal Consultant, Social Change Agency

First and foremost, Our Watch acknowledges the efforts and advocacy of other organisations that have pioneered respectful relationships education in Australia over a number of years. Our colleagues in the women's health, family violence and sexual assault sectors have put gender-based violence prevention in schools at the forefront of prevention activity.

Our Watch would like to congratulate all the schools that participated in both the Respectful Relationships Education in Secondary School Pilot (2014–2016) and the Respectful Relationships Education in Primary Schools pilot (2017–2019). It has been a privilege to have shared the journey with this group of leading schools. Both pilots would not have taken place without the schools' enthusiasm and willingness to support both the pilot and its evaluation. We wish them well in continuing this work over the coming years.

We would like to acknowledge our partnership with all the Victorian Department of Education and Training Project Leads and Project Liaisons, 2017–2021. Their expert work in assisting schools to implement a whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education has contributed to some of the additional resources and revisions of this updated toolkit.

This revised toolkit was written and collated by Genevieve Sheppard, Desiree Bensley, Letitia York, Dr Pamela Bjork-Billings and Jo Brislane.

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# Introduction

The respectful relationships education toolkit (the toolkit) consists of two documents:

- Overview – includes the evidence, background information and components of a whole-of-school approach to preventing gender-based violence in schools.
- Implementation steps – outlines the actions to be undertaken at each stage of the implementation cycle.

These resources have been developed to support schools in understanding, planning, implementing and sustaining a whole-of-school approach to preventing gender-based violence by promoting gender equality and respectful relationships.

Respectful relationships education can be adapted for schools across Australia to support a whole-of-school approach to this work in different local contexts. Each school is unique and will be at a different stage of addressing gender-based violence and promoting respectful relationships, non-violence and gender equality.

[Our Watch's Respectful Relationships Education website](#) features tools and resources to accompany this toolkit and may support the steps you take to implement respectful relationships education in your school. The information and resources it contains are not exhaustive or definitive, but the current accumulation of what we know. As Our Watch, along with education departments, schools and other experts, continues to build on the evidence base, we will update the toolkit and its associated tools and resources.



Visit [Our Watch's Respectful Relationships Education website](#) to access tools and resources that will support you to implement respectful relationships education in your school, from the classroom to the staffroom and in the wider community.



# What is respectful relationships education?



## ***Respectful relationships education***

Respectful relationships education is the holistic approach to school-based, primary prevention of gender-based violence.

It uses the education system as a catalyst for generational and cultural change by engaging schools, as both education institutions and workplaces, to comprehensively address the drivers of gender-based violence and create a future free from such violence.

## **Why schools?**

As education institutions, workplaces and community hubs, primary and secondary schools are widely recognised as key settings in which to promote respectful relationships, non-violence and gender equality. During their schooling, children and young people are in their formative years, and schools are places where respect and equality can be modelled, positive attitudes and behaviours can be shaped and young people given the skills to recognise discrimination and challenge gender stereotypes.

At the same time, students can be impacted by attitudes, structures and practices at school that perpetuate gender inequality and that can intersect with other forms of discrimination such as racism and ableism. To equip students to deal with the inequalities they can face in their daily lives, and to raise the next generation to form healthy relationships, schools are therefore important settings for the prevention of gender-based violence.

Respectful relationships education can play a central role in your school's ability to teach young people what gender-based violence can look like and how it can be prevented, and to support young people to develop healthy relationship skills. Students will grow into adults who can have relationships that are safe, respectful and equal.

It is helpful to understand why this work is important and what evidence tells us about best practice and effective approaches. A recent review of international and national evidence on respectful relationships education summarised seven core elements for best practice approaches (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> **It is important to note that some of these core elements are not under the control of, or the responsibility of, individual schools, but are directed at national, state and territory governments to incorporate into their education and social policy on the prevention of gender-based violence.**

**Figure 1: Seven core elements of effective respectful relationships education in schools**



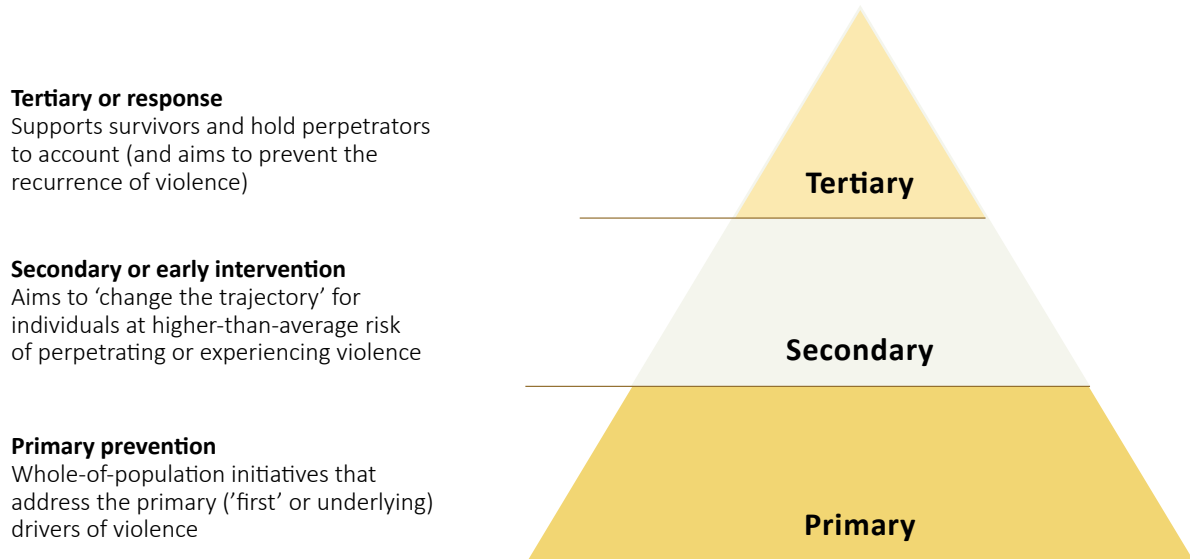
## A primary prevention approach

The primary prevention of gender-based violence is about stopping violence before it starts. It draws on public health approaches and is about changing attitudes, behaviours and practices to prevent undesirable consequences. Just as with other major social and health issues, such as smoking and drink driving, gender-based violence can be prevented by working across the whole population, using different strategies to address key drivers and stop violence before it begins.

Implementing a whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education in your school and the wider education system is one part of a jigsaw of approaches for primary prevention activity in Australia. Figure 2 shows the relationships between primary prevention and other work aimed at preventing violence against women.



**Figure 2: The relationships between primary prevention and other work to address violence against women**



Primary prevention takes a whole-of-population approach to challenge the social conditions that allow disrespect and gender inequality to exist. While a whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education focuses on primary prevention, it recognises that there needs to be activity operating at all three levels to ensure the approach to violence prevention is safe and comprehensive.

Children and young people are a key focus for the prevention of gender-based violence for several reasons. They are still gaining knowledge and forming their attitudes and are open to guidance and support. They are also beginning to form relationships and ideas about acceptable relationship behaviour. Australian schools offer an existing structure in which to promote gender equality and respectful relationships to a large workforce and near universal reach to Australia's children and young people.

School communities, including principals, parents, community organisations, teachers and other staff, can help prevent violence by:

- teaching students the skills to build respectful relationships
- teaching students to recognise and challenge gender-stereotyping and violence-supportive attitudes
- creating a safe, equal and inclusive school culture for staff and students.

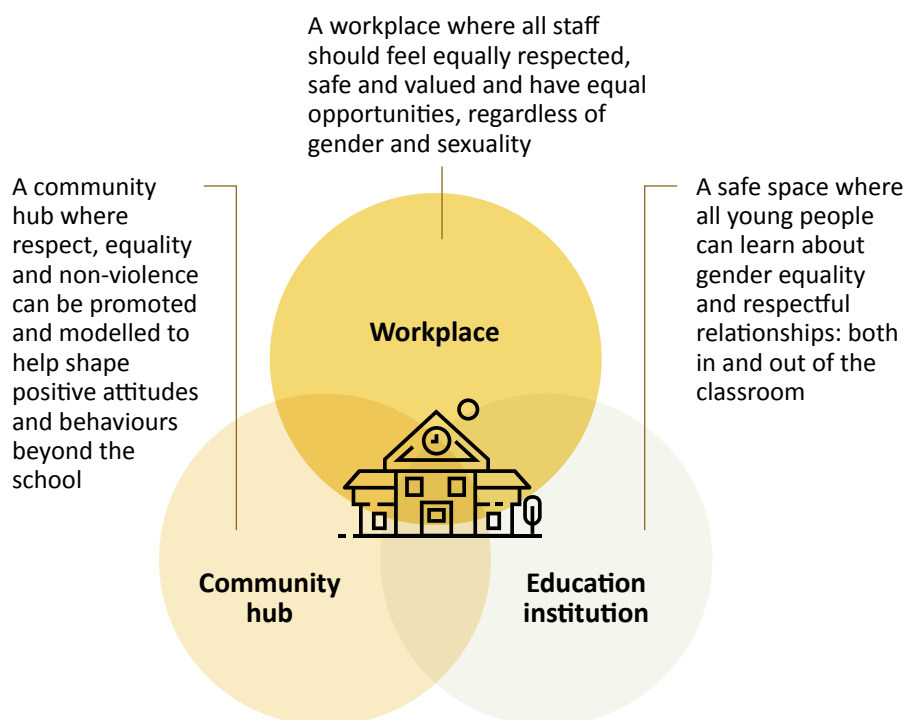
Through age-appropriate curriculum, modelling respectful relationships and implementing a whole-of-school approach to this work, respectful relationships education can:

- strengthen your school's commitment to gender equality
- shift staff and student attitudes towards gender equality
- challenge gender stereotyping among students
- improve school policies and procedures to facilitate gender equitable workplaces
- highlight and reduce barriers to promotion for women.

# A whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education

A whole-of-school approach is the most critical aspect for the success of respectful relationships education in your school. It recognises the school as more than a space for young people to learn. As illustrated in Figure 3, the school is an important hub in the community and has the opportunity to lead, influence and contribute to healthy community culture. It is also a workplace where all staff deserve to be treated equally, regardless of their gender, sexuality, race, religion or ethnicity. When thinking about who will benefit from respectful relationships education, it is not just your students, but your staff, families and the wider school community.

**Figure 3: The school's role as a workplace, education institution and community hub**



As part of the whole-of-school approach, schools are encouraged to consider how respectful relationships education can be linked to other work within your school, such as Reconciliation Action Plans, and cultural safety and inclusive education initiatives. By doing so, your school can address other forms of disadvantage and privilege that intersect with gender inequality, which will contribute to preventing violence against all women.

While classroom activity and explicit classroom teaching is important, respectful relationships education must also focus on staff, organisational culture and school structures. For respectful relationships education to effectively address the drivers of gender-based violence, gender equality and respect need to be embedded across all six components of the whole-of-school approach outlined below (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Components of a whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education**



Preventing gender-based violence in schools requires recognising that every policy, practice and activity has the potential to challenge or reinforce existing stereotypes and gender inequalities.

An effective whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education requires considering all aspects of how your school operates to ensure you build a culture among both staff and students where gender stereotypes are challenged, gender-based discrimination is unacceptable, and gender equality is actively promoted and modelled.

## **The six components of a whole-of-school approach**

The boxes that follow outline each of the six components of a whole-of-school approach as well as examples of what this might look like in your school, noting that some of the examples are reflective of those identified in the essential actions outlined previously.



## Leadership and commitment

School leaders who are committed and dedicated to building their knowledge and understanding of respectful relationships education in order to drive cultural change within their school community are an essential component of a whole-of-school approach. School leaders are also an integral part of establishing and influencing the school culture through positive messaging, actively modelling and promoting gender equality and respect, and setting standards for acceptable behaviours for staff and students.

### How might this happen in your school?

- Appropriate financial and staffing resources are allocated to the promotion of gender equality and respectful relationships.
- A senior member of staff has responsibility for ensuring that activities on gender equality and respectful relationships are coordinated in the school.
- Succession planning and leadership development processes address the specific barriers women face in becoming leaders.
- Key issues and actions related to gender equality and respectful relationships are incorporated into strategic and annual plans.
- Your school's staff code of conduct includes a clear statement that all employees, students, parents/carers, volunteers and visitors will be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their sex, gender identity, socio-economic status, cultural background, sexual orientation or level of ability.
- Role modelling of appropriate and respectful behaviour in all interactions with staff and students.

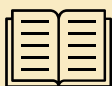


## Professional learning

Building staff capacity and knowledge in the prevention of gender-based violence ensures all staff can contribute to a safe, equitable and respectful school environment. This support includes strategies for tailoring a delivery that responds to the diverse learning needs of students – including students with disability, students who do not speak English as a first language, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and LGBTIQ students.

### How might this happen in your school?

- All school staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are provided with the opportunity to engage in professional learning that supports them to understand what causes or drives gender-based violence and the impact the school can have on preventing gender-based violence.
- All teachers are equipped to embed gender equality into general curriculum.
- All teachers are equipped to deliver specific gender equality curriculum, including content about gender inequality, gender-based stereotypes, power and control.
- All staff are equipped to identify and respond to disclosures of violence from staff and students.



## Teaching and learning

Respectful relationships education is most effective when it includes teaching that supports students to understand and analyse gender roles, norms and healthy relationships in ongoing and age-appropriate ways. It is essential that all school staff model the skills, knowledge and behaviours they are teaching in their classrooms when interacting with staff and students. This reinforcing action will have significant impacts on what students learn and understand about gender, respect and relationships.

### How might this happen in your school?

- Your school allocates classroom time to explicitly teach about concepts related to respectful relationships education, including problem-solving, help-seeking, gender, identity and positive gender relations on a regular and ongoing basis.
- Your school regularly reviews curriculum content and teaching and learning materials across curriculum areas to ensure equal representation of the range of identities and experiences of all members of the school community, including, but not limited to, those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, those who identify as LGBTIQ, and those with a disability.
- Your school allocates teaching time to classes or subjects that actively promote gender equality and challenge gender stereotypes.
- Teachers challenge disruptive and dominating classroom behaviour in a framework that understands gender equality – for example, male students are not allowed to misbehave through excuses such as ‘boys will be boys’.



## Support for staff and students

Your school can ensure staff and students who have experienced or used violence are supported to get the help they need.

### How might this happen in your school?

- Your school develops and disseminates policies and procedures on how to identify and respond to incidents, suspicions or disclosures that a staff member or student has experienced, been exposed to or used violence.
- Staff are regularly briefed on responding to disclosures from students, staff and other adults.
- Your school has referral protocols in place with relevant response organisations, including domestic and family violence and rape crisis services.



## Families and communities

Strong communication between your school and families can encourage respectful relationships education that is long-term and holistic. Partnerships with community organisations whose skills and knowledge can support this work are also effective.

### How might this happen in your school?

- Your school works in partnership with families and members of the wider school community to take action in support of gender equality and respectful relationships.
- Your school applies a gender lens across other areas of the curriculum, such as English and maths, to ensure messages that promote inclusion and gender equality are reinforced and modelled.
- Your school engages families in your whole-of-school approach by actively promoting respectful relationships education, in your school newsletter, website, policies, and any other communication materials.
- Your school participates in activities focused on gender equality and respectful relationships within the local and wider community, where relevant.
- Your school forms formal and informal relationships with community organisations that can provide support for preventing and responding to gender-based violence.



## School culture and environment

Embedding respectful relationships education in your school structures, policies, procedures and ethos can create lasting cultural change in your community.

### How might this happen in your school?

- Your school promotes and models an inclusive approach to respectful relationships education which reflects the diversity of society.
- Your school's values statement includes a focus on gender equality and respectful relationships.
- Communications indicating your school's commitment to gender equality and respectful relationships are made accessible/visible to staff and students – this includes opportunities to promote messages of gender equality and respect in extracurricular activities and school events.
- There is a known culture that prohibits material being placed or distributed within the school that is sexist or discriminatory, or that promotes negative gender stereotypes.
- Staff and students use language that is equitable and respectful, including the use of preferred pronouns, and do not unconsciously promote gender stereotypes or gender inequality.
- Female staff have access to appropriate private breastfeeding facilities, including storage and equipment-cleaning facilities for expressing milk.
- Appropriate modifications are made to work requirements for women returning from maternity leave.



## Responding appropriately to disclosures of violence

Implementing a whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships may result in more disclosures of current or previous experiences of violence and abuse, from both staff and students. Disclosures from people perpetrating violence may also increase. Disclosures can come from any member of the school community, including staff, students, parents or carers. This may be a result of:

- creating a safe space to disclose and acknowledge violence
- raising awareness of behaviours that are not acceptable
- building knowledge of the support that is available.

All Australian schools have a legal obligation to identify and respond to incidents, suspicions and disclosures of abuse from students (including family violence). It is important to note that a disclosure may be made to any member of the school staff. It is therefore imperative that all school staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have received training and understand how to safely respond to a disclosure from any member of the school community as a first step in implementing a whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education.

Your state or territory department of education can refer you to the relevant regulations about this issue. To assist you to respond to disclosures of abuse in your school, visit [1800RESPECT – Support services webpage](#) for a list of services in your area.

# Gender-based violence

In Australia, we use both **violence against women** and **gender-based violence** to refer to acts that can cause harm to women. These terms emphasise how:

- these forms of violence disproportionately affect women
- violence occurs in a social context where power and resources are distributed unequally between women and men
- violence reinforces this gendered power imbalance.

Gender-based violence is not just physical – it includes behaviours that are controlling or which cause psychological, emotional and financial harm. All violence is unacceptable, no matter who perpetrates it and who experiences it. But the scale and nature of gender-based violence requires our immediate attention. This is not an inevitable problem in Australia. Rather, it is the product of complex yet modifiable social and environmental factors. Put simply, gender-based violence is preventable.

The below terms are all forms of [gender-based violence](#):

- **Physical violence** can include punching, choking and damaging property. It can be fatal due to physical injury.
- **Sexual violence** is any sexual activity that occurs without consent and includes assault, harassment and coercion.
- **Emotional or psychological abuse** is used to threaten, intimidate, belittle or humiliate someone, and includes threats of violence or death towards a woman, her children, family or pets.
- **Spiritual or religious abuse** can involve forcing someone to participate or preventing someone from participating in spiritual or religious practices without their consent.
- **Financial or economic abuse** involves controlling access to money and possessions without consent. It can include limiting access to funds, forcing someone to spend money or sell belongings, or interfering with someone's schooling or work.
- **Technology-facilitated abuse** uses technology (such as emails, text messages or social media) to control, abuse, harass, punish and humiliate people.
- [Imaged-based abuse](#) is a form of technology-facilitated abuse and specifically involves the taking and distributing of nude, semi-nude or sexual images without consent, or threatening to do so. It also includes taking and distributing images of a person without religious or cultural clothing that they would normally wear in public, making digital alterations to any of these images and/or making digital alterations to create new images (e.g. sticking an image of a person's head onto a nude image of someone else, making it look like a nude image of the person)

These types of violence are usually not experienced in isolation, but as part of an overall pattern of abusive controlling behaviour.

Gender-based violence is not only experienced by adults – it is also experienced by young people. An Australian survey of over 6,000 years 10–12 students across Australia found that:

- 16 per cent of male and 37 per cent of female respondents reported having had unwanted sex<sup>2</sup>
- Young women experience rates of sexual harassment and violence higher than any other age group
- Young Australian women experience online abuse and violence at higher rates than the global average.

Additional research in Australia has observed that young LGBTIQ people frequently experience harassment based on their sexuality or gender identity, and that this occurs most at school and is predominantly perpetrated by their peers.<sup>3</sup> More recently, the Writing Themselves In 4 National Report, which surveyed over 6,000 LGBTIQ people aged 14–21 found that in the past 12 months:

- 40 per cent of participants had experienced verbal harassment
- 22 per cent had experienced sexual harassment or assault
- almost 10 per cent had experienced physical harassment or assault based on their sexuality or gender identity.<sup>4</sup>

A comprehensive understanding of the types of violence experienced by young people based on their gender can support appropriate responses for young people, and also prevention approaches that seek to address the underlying drivers of gender-based violence, including in schools.

Intimate partner violence, domestic violence and family violence are terms used to describe violence that occurs in current or former family or intimate relationships. The terms are often used interchangeably. However:

- **Domestic violence** refers to acts of violence that occur in domestic settings, such as the home, between two people who are, or were, in an intimate relationship. **Intimate partner violence** may be more relatable for people – particularly younger people – who are in a relationship but are not living together or legally married, and for people in same-sex relationships.
- The term **family violence** is a broader term than domestic violence and refers to not only violence between intimate partners, but also to violence between other family members. For example, as a result of a young person who identifies as LGBTIQ disclosing their sexuality to family members, they may experience abuse, violence, disownment, isolation and/or exclusion from the family home by members of their immediate or extended families. In Indigenous communities, ‘family violence’ is often the preferred term as it encapsulates the broader issue of violence within the extended families, kinship networks and community relationships, as well as intergenerational issues.

Family violence can cause lifelong devastation for families and can be especially damaging for children and young people. Experiences of family violence may result in long-term physical, psychological and emotional trauma.

In addition, it is critical to understand that a child’s exposure to family violence constitutes child abuse, and action must be taken to protect the child, and to mitigate or limit their trauma.

Your state or territory department of education can refer you to the relevant regulations about this issue. To assist you to respond to disclosures of abuse in your school, visit [1800RESPECT – Support services webpage](#) for a list of services in your area.



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## A public health approach to preventing gender-based violence

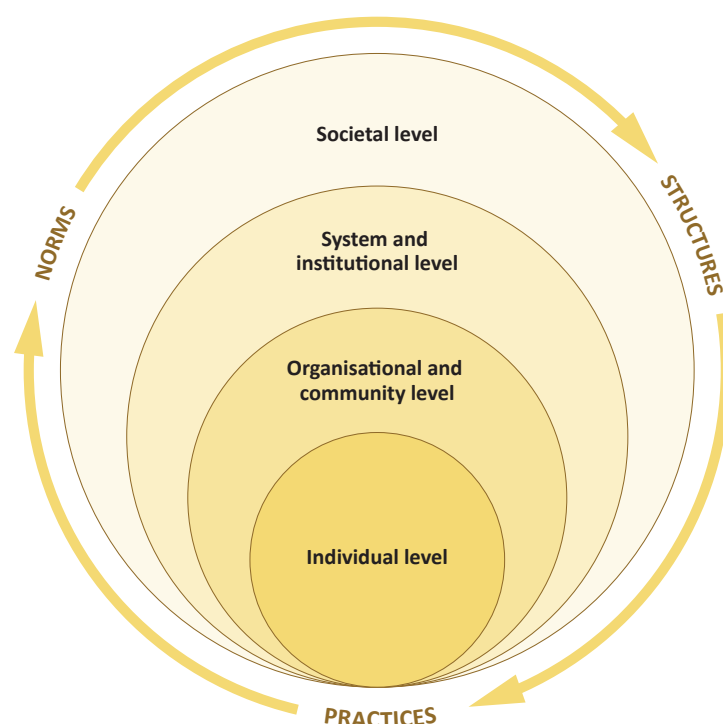
The socio-ecological model of behaviour (Figure 5) shows how individual behaviour is influenced by the attitudes, norms and structures of our societies, institutions, communities and individual relationships. The kinds of roles and behaviour ascribed to gender and the way these are put into practice in society can be described as norms, practices and structures.

- **Norms:** These are the most common or dominant ideas we have about what other people should do and how they should act, for example the belief that women should be the primary carers of children and the expectation that boys 'don't cry' are gender norms.
- **Practices:** These are the everyday practices associated with these norms, such as over-representation of women employed in the childcare sector and the tendency for parents to tell male children to 'toughen up'.
- **Structures:** These are the laws and systems that organise and reinforce an unequal distribution of economic, social and political power, resources and opportunities between men and women. The low pay for female-dominated caring professions such as childcare and aged care is one example of this, as is a school which has a boys' football team and not one for girls.

Preventing gender-based violence is not just about changing individuals – it's also about changing the society and culture in which individuals develop their attitudes towards violence. We need to address norms, practices and structures across all levels of society in order to prevent gender-based violence. If we only work on changing norms without also working to change structures, the changes to the norms are unlikely to stick. If we change the structures without changing the practices, the new structures will have little impact. If we change practices, but don't tackle the underlying norms, those changes will not last. By working across different levels of society, we have more influence and create more positive change. Below Figure 5 on the following page, potential actions are suggested at the individual, community, institutional and societal level which can contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence in the education setting.

As workplaces, educational institutions and community hubs, schools have a unique opportunity to influence gender inequality. Every school can contribute significantly to changing the structures, attitudes and norms that perpetuate gender inequality and allow violence to occur.

**Figure 5: A socio-ecological model for preventing gender-based violence**



## Potential actions in the education system across the socio-ecological model

### Potential actions at the INDIVIDUAL level

- Every student receives age-appropriate, ongoing, scaffolded and inclusive respectful relationships classroom education, which address the drivers of gender-based violence, across the lifespan of their primary and secondary schooling.
- All staff, teaching and non-teaching, are supported through a comprehensive and ongoing professional development strategy, to build their knowledge and understanding of gender-based violence and how it can be prevented.

### Potential actions at the ORGANISATIONAL AND COMMUNITY level

- A whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education, which is inclusive for LGBTIQ young people, and addresses policy, practice, culture and leadership, is embedded across the school.
- The whole-of-school approach recognises the importance of everyone within the school community and engages staff, students, families and community organisation in its ongoing approach to prevent gender-based violence.

### Potential actions at the SYSTEM AND INSTITUTIONAL level

- Governments, alongside state and territory Departments of Education, recognise, prioritise and adequately resource a sustainable approach to respectful relationships education nationally.
- Curriculum materials that address the drivers of gender-based violence are embedded in the Australian Curriculum across all classroom levels, F-12.
- State and Territory education departments and other education systems create policies to encourage and actively promote female leadership.

### Potential actions at the SOCIETAL level

- Schools are recognised by the community as educational institutes, workplaces and community hubs that have a significant role to play in positively influencing social issues, including gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence, and are supported by society in this work.

## What drives gender-based violence?

There are certain factors or expressions of gender inequality that consistently predict – or drive – higher levels of gender-based violence. Emerging evidence shows that there is overlap between the drivers of violence against women and drivers of violence against the LGBTIQ community.<sup>5</sup> These include the four key drivers of violence shown below in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Gendered drivers of violence**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>1</b> <b>Condoning of violence against women</b></p> <p>Attitudes, words, systems and actions that trivialise, make light of, or justify violence against women allow people to think violence is acceptable or excusable.</p>   | <p><b>2</b> <b>Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life</b></p> <p>When men control decision-making and resources in the home, workplace or community, they have an opportunity to abuse power, while women have less power to stop it, call it out, or leave.</p>           |
| <p><b>3</b> <b>Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity</b></p> <p>When there is only one way to 'be a man' and strict ideas about what individuals can and can't do based on their gender, which impacts on people's choices, behaviours and expressions. Violence can be used to punish individuals who don't conform to the societal expectations of their gender.</p> | <p><b>4</b> <b>Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control</b></p> <p>When aggression and disrespect are seen as natural parts of being 'one of the boys', it is more likely violence towards women will be excused – by the perpetrator, their peers, and the community.</p> |



International and Australian research clearly demonstrates that violence against women is driven by gender inequality.<sup>6</sup> Gender inequality is where men and women do not have equal social status, power, resources or opportunities, and their voices, ideas and work are not valued equally by society. Having a low level of support for gender equality is the strongest predictor of attitudes supporting violence.

Most Australians believe that people can play a range of roles regardless of their gender, but there is still a persistent belief among some people that someone's gender means they are naturally more suited to certain responsibilities in public and private life or have distinct personal characteristics (for example, girls are more sensitive and caring than boys). For example, 20 per cent of young people surveyed in the National Community Attitudes Survey believe that there is no harm in men telling sexist jokes to their male peers and 43 per cent of participants think it is natural for a man to want to appear in control of his partner in front of his male friends.

These attitudes and behaviours undermine gender equality and excuse violence by suggesting that there are characteristics and behaviours deemed acceptable for males and females, for example that boys must be strong and tough and girls should be kind, caring, and nurturing. This is problematic for everyone as it reinforces the notion that there is only one way to be a boy and one way to be a girl, and when we step outside these behaviours – as when boys portray more traditional feminine traits, or vice versa – there is often a social cost, such as isolation, bullying and ridicule from peers.

The adherence to rigid gender stereotypes can be particularly harmful for young people who identify as LGBTIQ or gender diverse. The expectation that everyone must be attracted to the opposite sex, or that people must dress or pursue interests according to gender stereotypes, disproportionately affects LGBTIQ people. The result is discrimination, inequality and intolerance of people who identify outside of these norms.



Visit [Our Watch's Respectful Relationships Education website](#) to access tools and resources that will support you to implement respectful relationships education in your school, from the classroom to the staffroom and in the wider community.

## **Gender inequality is not experienced in the same way by everyone**

Not all women, men and gender diverse people experience gender inequality in the same way. For example, a female Aboriginal student attending a school predominantly made up of students of Caucasian Anglo-Australian heritage may experience sexism and racism, which makes their experience of schooling different to that of a Caucasian, Anglo--Australian female student. We must be careful to specify that when an Aboriginal person experiences racism, violence or discrimination, it is not their Aboriginality that is the problem or the cause. Rather, the 'problem' or cause, and thus the site for attention and focus, lies in the social norms, political, economic and/or legal structures that devalue and discriminate. Each of these structures has a history rooted in colonisation and dispossession, and continues to perpetuate racism and discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait people.

While gender inequality needs to remain at the centre of efforts to prevent gender-based violence, it must be addressed alongside other forms of discrimination and disadvantage such as racism, ableism and homophobia. A comprehensive approach involves challenging not only gender inequality, but other forms of structural inequalities, negative stereotypes and discrimination, including those based on Aboriginality, disability, age, class and socio-economic status, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and refugee status. For example, in the education system this may mean including strategies to address teachers' expectations of students based on stereotypes of gender and race, such as the assumption that male students from particular cultural backgrounds have more problematic classroom behaviours than those from dominant western cultures, or that the same level of academic achievement is not expected for all students, based on their socio-economic background.

Schools need to consider the nature of their community and to connect with their department of education and specialist organisations who have knowledge, expertise and experience working with and supporting a range of diverse communities. For example, where respectful relationship education activities are implemented in schools with high proportions of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students, they should be developed and implemented either by, or with the engagement of, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander parents, elders and community members. This will help ensure that from the outset they are designed to be culturally safe, locally relevant and able to effectively engage Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students.

A considered approach such as this ensures that schools can understand the ways that racism, ableism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination operate within their school and seek to address them alongside gender inequalities.

## Healthy masculinities and respectful relationships education

Because the overwhelming majority of acts of violence – against people of all genders – are perpetrated by men, addressing masculinities and engaging men and boys in preventing gender-based violence, such as through a whole school approach to respectful relationships education, is critical. This engagement must be meaningful and genuine and go beyond just saying ‘no’ to violence. Not all men are violent and not all boys will grow up to be violent men, but all men and boys have a role to play in ending violence and inequality.

Research tells us that young men feel pressure to conform to particular norms and stereotypes of what it means to be a man, such as always having to act tough, being in control, being natural leaders, suppressing their emotions, being attracted to the opposite sex, and being hypersexual. These ideas and stereotypes of masculinity help to maintain gender inequality and can drive men’s use of violence. This doesn’t mean that all expressions of masculinity are wrong or bad or that they automatically lead to violence-supportive attitudes or behaviours. Rather, when men and boys have a rigid attachment to these outdated stereotypes that can be particularly harmful and can drive sexist and disrespectful behaviours and gender-based violence.

Norms and stereotypes of masculinity are produced, promoted, and practiced through institutions such as schools, and peer relationships among young men and boys are often formed and mediated by these socially dominant ideas of masculinity.<sup>7</sup> Everyone, regardless of gender models and reinforces gender stereotypes, whether they are aware of it or not. Therefore, schools are an ideal setting to challenge negative and outdated norms and stereotypes and role model and promote healthier, more positive ideas about masculinity.

Masculinities are diverse in that men and boys have many different experiences and express their masculinity in many different ways. Men and boys also have different relationships to power and privilege depending on other aspects of their identity and social location. Some men and boys hold significant power and privilege, while others experience inequality and discrimination such as racism, classism, homophobia, and ableism. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, LGBTIQ people, people with a disability and people living in rural and remote locations experience particular and additional discrimination and marginalisation.<sup>8</sup>

Addressing masculinities in the school setting is not about blaming and shaming men and boys, rather it aims to explore and address what it is to be a ‘man’ in the world today, where these ideas have come, how they impact and influence our attitudes, behaviours and relationships and encourage men and boys to question and reject ideas about masculinity that are limiting and harmful. Shedding light on masculinity as being ‘socially constructed’ and social expectation placed on men, can also help in understanding that this is not an individual problem, but rather a collective social and institutional problem. This can also assist in alleviating feelings of individual responsibility that may be experienced by some men and boys. Young people are already leading the way in challenging outdated gender stereotypes and forging their own expressions of gender identity that make sense for them. As supportive adults in their lives, teachers and others in the school setting can help this process by providing safe spaces for these discussions, reflections, and experiences to occur.

Work to address masculinities should be done as part of a whole school approach to respectful relationships education, rather than addressing it as a separate issue. It should be centred in work to address gender inequality and the drivers of gendered violence and be incorporated into both professional learning for all staff as well as teaching and learning resources used in the classroom. With support from state/territory departments of education this work should:

- **Provide opportunities for men and boys to explore and reflect upon their personal male privilege and power**, and to critically explore their own assumptions about gender roles and stereotypes. They can also prompt thinking about how aggression and sexism are common and dominant in some expressions of manhood.
- **Take an intersectional approach** which enables an understanding of the differences amongst men and boys and how these differences shape men's/boy's experiences of masculinity. This includes ensuring culturally responsive and trauma informed approaches are embedded in all work addressing masculinity to ensure engagement is effective, meaningful, and respectful for men and boys from diverse backgrounds, with diverse life experiences.
- **Deliver classroom content in mixed gender classrooms, wherever possible.** This avoids reinforcing a gender binary and as everyone can hold problematic or harmful attitudes about masculinity and male peer relations,<sup>9</sup> this approach engages everyone in addressing and challenging dominant ideas about masculinity.
- **Ensure the voices of women and girls remain central and valued.** One of the risks identified with increasing involvement of men and boys in prevention is that women and girls may be unintentionally marginalised, or their leaderships and roles undervalued or overlooked. While engaging men and boys in prevention work is critical, it is vital that this work occurs alongside initiatives which empower women and girls and promote their independence and decision making.
- **Take a strengths-based approach that focus on men's and boy's capacity for positive change** including the benefits that challenging harmful notions of masculinity can bring men/boys as well as women.

Providing opportunities to learn about, discuss, and reflect on masculinities as part of a whole school approach to respectful relationships education is essential for building safe, equitable and respectful relationships for all members of the school community and ensuring that men and boys are actively engaged in efforts to end gender-based violence.



Visit [Our Watch's Respectful Relationships Education website](#) to access tools and resources that will support you to implement respectful relationships education in your school, from the classroom to the staffroom and in the wider community.

# Gendered drivers and schools

The four gendered drivers of violence against women impact our individual experiences, as well as influencing and forming the cultures of our organisations, our institutions and our community more broadly.

This is true for schools (which are both education institutions and workplaces), and the classroom. The section that follows shows a few examples of how the drivers of violence against women may occur in the school and community.

## How the gendered drivers of violence can show up in our schools

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### Condoning of violence against women

Comments, questions, jokes and systems that excuse, make light of or justify violence against girls and women allow people to think violence is acceptable or excusable.

#### How might this look in school?

- School-based messaging which focuses on changing girls' behaviour, such as the need for girls to dress appropriately or avoid drinking too much alcohol, rather than a whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships and consent.
- Parents minimising aggressive behaviours of boys towards girls, for example by saying 'It's just boys being boys' or 'It's his way of telling you he likes you' or 'He just wants to play with you.'
- A classroom conversation on sexting that focuses primarily on why girls shouldn't take/send intimate images, or how they can 'safe sext', rather than on why it's not okay to share intimate images that have been sent without consent.
- Teachers and leadership allowing transphobic and homophobic slurs such as 'That's so gay' to go unaddressed.
- When there has been an incident in the schoolyard or classroom and the victim is removed from the situation, for example the student is taken to the school library at lunchtime while the perpetrator is allowed to keep playing outside.
- The misgendering of young LGBTIQ and gender diverse students, for example if a student identifies as non-binary and requests that they be referred to using the pronouns 'they/them' and the school disregards this and continues to refer to them by their assigned sex at birth – that is, 'he/him' or 'she/her'.
- Normalising violent behaviours – allowing kids to get away with these behaviours because of their own difficult personal circumstances, for example 'He's going through a lot at the moment/He's got problems at home'.
- When a teacher responds to a student report of an incident with 'What did you do first?'
- Excusing of boys' behaviours in the schoolyard with statements like 'The boys are just being rough', 'That's how they play', while girls might be discouraged from participating in some activities that are seen to be 'too rough'.
- Excusing comments, threats and verbal insults made about a student's appearance or what they are wearing with comments such as 'Well, look what she's wearing.'

### **How does condoning of violence against women drive higher levels of violence?**

- When people or institutions (like schools) ignore or respond inappropriately to instances of gender-based violence it causes direct harm to the person experiencing the violence as it sends a message that this type of violence is not serious and does not warrant intervention. It also contributes to a culture which reinforces victim-blaming, and excuses, justifies and condones such violence.
- Men who hold such beliefs are more likely to perpetrate violence against women.
- Both women and men who hold such beliefs are less likely to take action to support victims/survivors and hold perpetrators to account.
- Our individual attitudes influence how seriously we take the issue and how we respond to it, both in public and in our roles as educators.

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### **Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life**

When men control decisions and resources, in the home or in public, they have an opportunity to abuse their power, while women have less power to stop it, call it out, or leave.

#### **How might this look in school?**

- The assumptions that male principals/teachers are 'stronger' or 'firmer' than female teachers, and therefore a preference for male teachers/leadership, is created and also reinforces the idea that men make better disciplinarians.
- Schools creating activities or developing curriculum that 'engages boys' in their learning, without the same consideration for what 'engages girls'.
- Women who don't do paid work being called 'stay-at-home mums', which devalues domestic labour.
- A male parent's work being seen as more important than the female parent's work, so that when a school needs to contact a parent during school hours, for example to pick up a sick or injured child, the female parent is generally contacted.
- Unequal parental involvement in the operational aspects of the school – for example, often the female parent is involved in the PFA, fundraising or canteen duties while the male parent may be on the school council and possibly hold key roles such as president or vice-president.
- Teachers preferencing and giving more weight to male students' voices when responding to questions or discussion in the classroom.

### **How does men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life drive higher levels of violence?**

- Sends the message to both women and men that women and girls are not as important and hold less value in society.
- Reinforces the stereotype that men make better leaders and hold more powerful positions.



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## Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity

Gender stereotypes are oversimplified ideas, messages and images about differences between men and women that can be limiting, harmful and create unequal access to opportunities.

### How might this look in school?

- Primary school-aged boys always being asked to carry the heavy sports equipment, rather than the girls.
- Gender-stereotyped school awards, with girls receiving awards for compliance – for example, behaviours such as being helpful, kind, a good listener – and boys receiving awards for achievement such as first place in a sports competition.
- Gendered school uniforms, including those that limit the activities girls choose to participate in at school. Also, when the uniform is not gendered but the cut and fit of the pants/shorts is suited to a male body.
- The teaching of respectful relationship education which only focus on heterosexual relationships and does not include same-sex attracted or gender diverse young people in discussions, visual representations or other teaching and learning materials about sexuality, healthy relationships and consent.
- Gender imbalance in choices for extracurricular activities at school, particularly in team sports, for example a boys' football team, a girls' netball team.
- Stereotypical allocation of teachers to subjects within a school – for example, male PE and tech teachers and female teachers for home economics and school support staff, including admin and aides.
- Name-calling and putdowns with a gendered focus, for example 'You're gay', 'You throw like a girl', 'Man up!'
- Gender-stereotyped reading material, including picture books and textbooks that show men and women in gender stereotypical roles, such as Dad at work and Mum at home providing the majority of the caregiving.
- Only illustrating examples of girls challenging gender stereotypes, such as girls participating in STEM activities, sport and trades, and not illustrating examples of boys participating in more traditionally female-dominated roles such as the arts and dance, and caregiving roles such as childcare.
- Limitation of girls' choices of activities at lunchtime in the schoolyard – for example, while the school oval is accepted as a play area that all students can access, boys dominate the space and this is not challenged.
- Unconscious bias in relation to staff task allocation, recruitment and promotion such as only offering full-time roles for leadership positions.

### **How does rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity drive higher levels of violence?**

- The expectation that everyone must be attracted to the opposite sex, or that people must dress or pursue interests according to gender stereotypes, disproportionately affects LGBTIQ people. The result is discrimination, inequality and intolerance of people who identify outside of these norms.
- The labelling and confining of people into one of two groups of rigid 'acceptable' gender stereotypes and norms can pressure people to hide or suppress parts of their diverse identities.
- Rigid stereotypes create 'boxes' of acceptable behaviours, activities and attributes that are seen to be appropriate for men and women. The problem with this is that those who step 'outside the box' are often penalised for not conforming – this can range from not being accepted socially, to missing out on jobs or promotions, to discrimination or exclusion. In addition, others can be 'rewarded' for keeping to their box, for example girls receiving praise for their physical appearance and boys for being stoic or tough. This penalising and rewarding plays a substantial role in the reinforcing of gender inequality.
- Sometimes, and often unconsciously, traits assumed to be 'masculine' are given greater status or value than those associated with being 'feminine'. For example, when women are described as 'assertive' this is often an insult equated to being 'bossy' or 'aggressive', and when a man is seen as sensitive this is often assumed to indicate weakness. Although these norms are slowly changing, they still remain powerful and impact on people's perception and expectations of themselves and those around them.

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### **Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control**

For some men, making jokes and comments that reinforce the idea that women should be valued less than them is a way of bonding and gaining the approval and respect of their peers, creating spaces for violence against girls and women to occur.

#### **How might this look in school?**

- Male students using a social media site to rate their female peers based on their looks.
- Shifting the responsibility of the girls to accommodate for the boys' behaviour (compliant behaviour expected from girls) – for example, boys won't move to sit with the girls in the class activity so the girls are asked to move instead.
- Male teachers not addressing or calling out inappropriate behaviour from male students.
- Boys baiting girls by purposely making sexist comments then saying they are 'just joking', and claiming girls must be 'weak', 'sensitive' or 'can't cope' when they call out sexist comments.
- Boys being pressured and/or harassed to share nude photos of their partner by other male students.
- Male teachers/coordinators having a joke with male students after a female teacher/leader has reprimanded boys for their behaviour.

### **How do male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control drive higher levels of violence?**

- These norms and cultures lead to an environment where in order to gain or maintain male acceptance, men/boys may be more likely to excuse other men's violent and disrespectful behaviour towards women because they fear rejection from their peers.
- The emphasis on aggression and sexual conquest in peer relationships of men may lead to a greater tendency for some men to use or support violence.

## Essential actions to reduce gender-based violence

Gender inequality affects everyone, and everyone has a role to play in preventing it by promoting a safer, fairer and more respectful world. Because gender inequality is the core of the problem, gender equality must be at the heart of the solution. We know what drives gender-based violence, so we now need to understand the essential actions we need to take in order to prevent this violence from happening. Figure 7 identifies five essential actions to prevent gender-based violence, based on promoting and normalising gender equality in both public and personal relationships.

**Figure 7: Gendered drivers of violence and the essential actions required to reduce violence against women**



## What do the essential actions to address the drivers of gender-based violence look like in schools?

Gender equality makes communities safer and healthier. It means everyone can reach their full potential and flourish, including in education. Table 1 outlines some examples of how schools can incorporate the essential actions to reduce violence against women.

**Table 1: How schools can implement essential actions to reduce violence against women**

| Essential action   | What this might look like in schools  |
|--|---|
| <b>1</b> Challenge the condoning of violence against women | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School leaders develop a comprehensive and ongoing professional development strategy to build the capacity of all members of school staff (teaching and non-teaching) to understand the impact and prevalence of different forms of violence, and the role they can play in preventing gender-based violence.</li><li>• The explicit teaching of respectful relationships education in the classroom supports students to understand and analyse gender roles, norms and healthy relationships in an inclusive, age appropriate and ongoing manner.</li><li>• When referring to incidences of gender-based violence, the school focuses on the actions/behaviour of the person who used the violence and does not blame the individual who has experienced the violence, i.e. questions are not raised about the conduct, sexuality, dress or other circumstances regarding the victim.</li><li>• All incidences of gender-based violence (physical and non-physical) are addressed promptly and adequately by the school. This includes calling out inappropriate language and slurs directed at students because of their sexuality, gender, race, ability or religion.</li><li>• Consistency in disciplinary action is ensured for incidences of gender-based violence (physical and non-physical), which highlight the impact all types of violence have on all students, i.e. non-physical forms of violence are given as much attention and treated as seriously as physical forms of violence.</li></ul> |

| Essential action   | What this might look like in schools  |
|--|---|
| <p><b>2</b> Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships</p>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school baseline assessment (outlined in Step 3 of the <a href="#">implementation steps</a>) is completed to gain a better understanding of how your school is tracking against gender equality and respectful relationship indicators. This includes capturing student voice through completion of the student baseline assessment.</li> <li>• Job share or part-time arrangements are supported, valued and promoted in leadership positions, and this is highlighted in recruitment advertisements.</li> <li>• Roles on school councils/boards are not unconsciously determined based on gender, i.e. are president/vice-president roles generally male-dominated? Who takes on the secretary/finance roles?</li> <li>• Classroom teachers give equal time and weight to all students in their class. Some teachers may unintentionally prioritise the thoughts and opinions of male students. As part of a professional development strategy, all staff are encouraged to unpack and understand unconscious bias and how it may unintendedly impact teaching practices.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>3</b> Build new social norms that foster personal identities not constrained by rigid gender stereotypes</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role model challenging restrictive and rigid gender stereotypes and roles for both men and women and encourage students to do the same where they feel safe and comfortable to do so. For example, promoting carers leave for male staff, creating part time leadership positions and role modelling positive, equal and respectful relationships in interactions between staff and students, regardless of gender.</li> <li>• Teaching and learning materials and content taught through respectful relationships recognise, promote, and celebrate LGBTIQ relationships and identities.</li> <li>• Through classroom activity, encourage students to challenge rigid ideas and expectations of masculinity and femininity, and critically explore their own assumptions about gender roles and stereotypes. This could be through examinations of their own life experiences, texts used in class, their school environment.</li> <li>• Language used across the school does not reinforce negative gender stereotypes, for example 'You throw like a girl', 'Those girls' behaviour is so nasty and catty', 'Man up', 'That's so gay'.</li> <li>• When deciding on teacher classroom allocation, gender impacts are considered, i.e. are women more likely to be placed in the junior school classrooms as they are assumed to be more caring/nurturing? Are male teachers given preference for STEM-related subjects in secondary school?</li> <li>• The school's uniform list is not split into a 'boys' and 'girls' list, but all items are available to any student.</li> </ul> |

| Essential action  | What this might look like in schools  |
|---|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive language is used when addressing staff and students, for example ‘folks’ or ‘everyone’ rather than gendered terms such as ‘guys’ or ‘ladies’.</li> <li>• When referring to families, diversity is acknowledged by using words like ‘parents’ or ‘carers’ instead of ‘Mum and Dad’.</li> <li>• The potential impact celebration days, such as Mother’s/ Father’s Day, can have on students is borne in mind, through exclusion from activities to perpetuating stereotypes of what conventional relationships and families ‘should’ look like.</li> <li>• A gender lens is applied across all subject areas to ensure equal representation of women in teaching and learning materials and curriculum content, for example when considering leaders throughout history, celebrating female leaders, but also unpacking the barriers and lack of diversity in many aspects of leadership and the impact this has on the policies we see across society today.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>4</b> Support men and boys in developing healthy masculinities and positive, supportive male peer relationships</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masculinity is addressed as part of a whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education, through incorporation into both professional learning materials as well as education resources and curriculum. This could include the development of materials that build a deeper understanding of masculinities and challenging young men’s rigid attachment to dominant ideas of masculinity ie that men should be tough, stoic and should take control in relationships.</li> <li>• Language used across the school does not reinforce masculine stereotypes or the idea that all boys/men are the same, for example ‘Boys will be boys’, ‘You know what boys are like’, ‘Boys need to blow off steam’.</li> <li>• In line with school policy, normalise and promote to male parents on staff the uptake of primary caregiving for their children and/or flexible work arrangements to undertake unpaid care or domestic work.</li> <li>• Engage men and boys in efforts to prevent violence against women. For example, taking a strengths-based approach that focuses on men’s/boys’ capacity for positive change and the benefits that challenging harmful notions of masculinity can bring boys/men, as well as girls/women.</li> <li>• Include and/or refer to diverse representations of men and boys across school communications and in classrooms including in texts, imagery and discussions. This will include men and boys modelling respectful, safe and equitable behaviours within relationships. This is not about saying men and boys are not already doing this, it’s about countering dominant ideas in media and popular culture of masculinity being linked to dominance, aggression, control or hypersexuality.</li> </ul> |



| Essential action   | What this might look like in schools   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>5</b> Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools commit to taking a whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education, examining all aspects of how the school operates, including organisational culture, leadership and school structures, in addition to implementing teaching and learning materials in individual classrooms.</li> <li>• The whole-of-school approach must ensure that students are taught to critically analysis the world around them and to identify, question and challenge the attitudes, behaviours and structures that underpin violence, rather than focusing on it as a problem for the individual.</li> <li>• In addition to being an educational institute, schools are also workplaces and community hubs, a place which connects people. Schools can have fluence and impact beyond the school gates and where appropriate engage with local community organisations, including sporting groups and community services to ensure messages about gender equality are reinforced throughout the local community.</li> <li>• In communication materials (including school newsletters, websites and other promotional materials) there is positive and equal representation of people of all genders as well as different types of relationships and families in our society, including same-sex relationships.</li> <li>• Teachers work alongside students to actively engage in and promote observance days or gender equality and human rights campaigns, for example 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence, National Reconciliation Week, Pride Month, Harmony Day.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>6</b> Address the intersections between gender inequality and other forms of systemic and structural oppression and discrimination, and promote broader social justice</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school recognises First Nations people as the owners of the land where the school resides and engages with local elders and community to appropriately celebrate and observe local culture. The school integrates First Nations peoples' culture and history into the teaching and learning of the Australian Curriculum in an authentic way.</li> <li>• School leaders, staff and students are supported to develop their understanding of how other forms of discrimination, such as racism, ableism and homo- or trans- phobia impact on young people's experiences of gender inequality and take action to address these forms of discrimination.</li> <li>• Schools engage with specialist organisations, which could include violence response services, local or state based LGBTIQ organisations, disability organisations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations, to ensure an inclusive and safe approach to respectful relationships education.</li> </ul>  |

| Essential action   | What this might look like in schools   |
|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexuality and relationships education includes content and representation of all types of relationships including, but not limited to, those who identify as gender diverse, and/or with a disability.</li> <li>• As part of a comprehensive professional development plan, teachers are also supported to understand the nature and impact of gender-based violence on LGBTIQ young people and how to confidently deliver LGBTIQ-inclusive content in their classrooms.</li> <li>• Preferred pronouns are used for staff and students by respectfully and privately asking the person what terms they use to describe themselves and consistently using those terms.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>7</b> Build safe, fair and equitable organisations and institutions by focusing on policy and systems change</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School leaders make a commitment to embedding a whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education. This involves including:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– setting targets and measures in strategic planning and annual implementation documents,</li> <li>– ensuring adequate resourcing, including staffing, and</li> <li>– developing an ongoing professional development strategy for all staff, teaching and non-teaching</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure explicit teaching of respectful relationships education materials, which includes information on power, control and gender, is timetabled on a consistent and ongoing basis, across all year levels.</li> <li>• Through the support of Departments of Education schools develop a communication for engaging with families about your school's commitment to respectful relationships education. This could include through newsletters and websites, and information about respectful relationships is highlighted in induction programs and open nights.</li> <li>• School councils and boards are provided with information, evidence and guidance around the importance of respectful relationships education and are engaged in the implementation process.</li> <li>• All staff, teaching and non-teaching have the skills and knowledge to respond to a disclosure of violence appropriately and safely.</li> <li>• Meaningful opportunities for students to lead on gender equality initiatives are created, including through developing meaningful consultation processes, support for students engaging in activism events and ensuring school leasers hear, value and action the voices of students.</li> <li>• Schools ensure all spaces within the school, including classrooms, outdoors spaces, toilets, gyms, libraries etc, are safe and accessible spaces for all students including those who identify with a disability, as LGBTIQ, or from a culturally diverse background.</li> </ul> |

| Essential action  | What this might look like in schools   |
|---|--|
| <p><b>8</b> Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys in public and private spheres</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through a whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships, the school promotes and models respectful and healthy relationships between staff and students.</li> <li>• Age-appropriate teaching and learning materials are used each year, across all classrooms, and do not solely focus on social and emotional learning, but explicitly teach about gender, the impact of gender stereotypes on identity and power imbalances within friendships and intimate relationships.</li> <li>• Any bystander programs delivered to support staff and students to take safe and appropriate action when they see or hear an incident of gender-based violence, include responding to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. When staff/students take bystander action, such as calling out sexist jokes or demeaning comments, they are supported by school leadership and policies, and appropriate action is taken.</li> <li>• As part of cross-curriculum learning students are taught about being safe and respectful in an online environment, including the nature and impact of image-based and technology-facilitated abuse.</li> </ul> |

The supporting [implementation steps](#) resource supports your school in undertaking a gender equality assessment to explore how the school is promoting gender equality and respectful relationships, and will help to identify additional actions your school can take to address the drivers of gender-based violence.

# The evidence behind respectful relationships education

Strong evidence demonstrates that to successfully create school cultures which promote equality and respect, we must teach children and young people the skills to engage in respectful and equal relationships.<sup>10</sup> Cultural change is also driven by supporting teachers and school leaders to set a tone of respect within the wider school community.

## The benefits of respectful relationships education

Best practice respectful relationships education can shift the gendered drivers of violence at individual, school, system, policy and broader societal levels when integrated effectively into the education system.

In the short term, respectful relationships education can challenge violence-supportive attitudes that some staff and students may hold. It can support more respectful behaviour, counter gender stereotyping among students, and strengthen schools' commitment to gender equality at the institutional level.

In the longer term, respectful relationships education has the potential to contribute to reduced rates of gender-based bullying and harassment, shift school cultures towards being more gender equitable, and challenge violence-supportive norms.

The potential for respectful relationships education to create shifts in the gendered drivers of violence within schools is evidenced in Australian evaluations of respectful relationships education. These have found:<sup>11</sup>

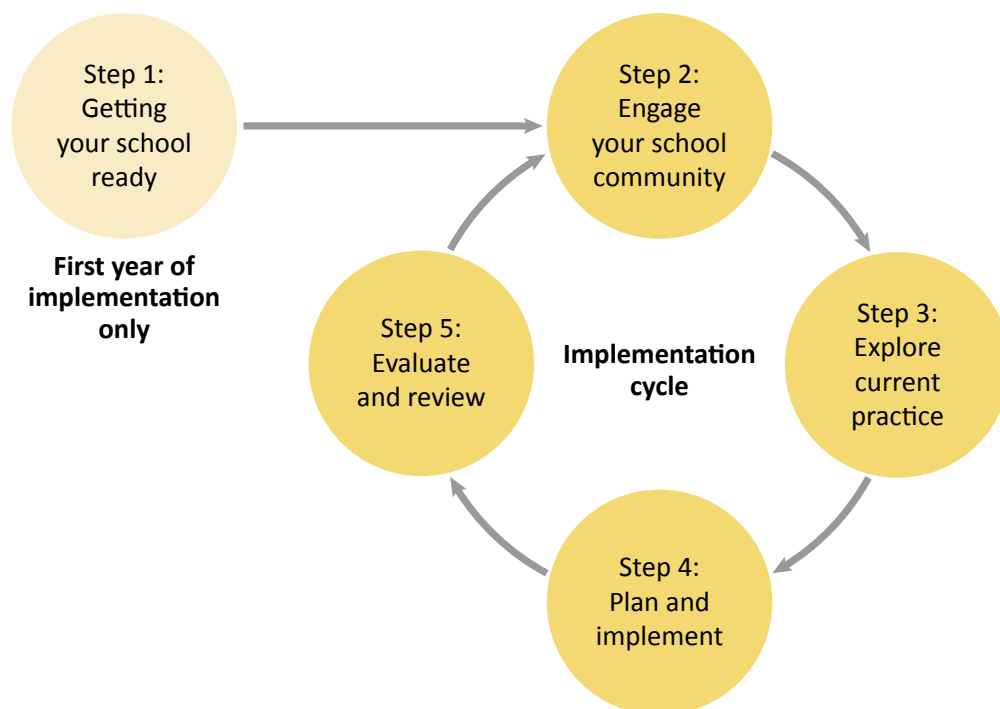
- increased student knowledge of, and confidence in discussing, issues of domestic violence, gender equality and respectful relationships
- increased positive student attitudes towards issues of gender equality and respectful relationships
- decreased student adherence to gender-stereotypical attitudes
- increased teacher understanding of the importance of respectful relationships education
- improved student classroom behaviour
- improved teacher–student relationships
- increased understanding of respectful relationships, gender equality and gender-based violence among school leadership – including principals

While a longitudinal evaluation of respectful relationships education in Australia has not yet been undertaken, given its recency, international research has demonstrated that school-based prevention initiatives can reduce future violence perpetration and victimisation of students.<sup>12</sup>

# Respectful relationships education implementation steps

A whole-of-school approach brings together school communities, including leadership, staff, students and families, to work through a continuous improvement cycle of planning, implementing and review. Figure 8 below shows the steps a school will take to embed respectful relationships education. Gaining a thorough understanding of this Overview document contributes to your school's readiness to undertake respectful relationship education work. The [implementation steps](#) document outlines the cycle needed to embed respectful relationships education in a holistic and effective way.

**Figure 8: The five-step cycle for embedding respectful relationships education in a school**



This five-step cycle will assist your school to:

- build your understanding of gender-based violence and violence prevention
- understand where your school is at in its journey to gender equality – every school is at a different stage in promoting gender equality and respectful relationships
- prioritise and set goals
- implement sustainable strategies
- monitor activities and outcomes.

Schools may move through the steps in different ways and at different paces. Respectful relationships education is a long-term journey for schools to undertake as both workplaces and places of education. Schools which are already doing some work in this area may move into the 'Planning and implementing' stage at a seemingly faster pace, while schools for whom this work is new may take up to 12 months to set up their team and begin to explore their current practice. While each school will work at its own pace, it is essential that this work is prioritised and that schools develop a thorough plan for implementation that is sufficiently resourced, in order for this work to be meaningful and sustainable.

# Resources to support implementing respectful relationships education



Visit [Our Watch's Respectful Relationships Education website](#) to access tools and resources that will support you to implement respectful relationships education in your school, from the classroom to the staffroom and in the wider community.

Evidence-based age-appropriate curriculum is a key part of the whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education, and research shows that participatory, interactive teaching is essential for effective delivery. This may include the use of visual and interactive resources such as those contained on Our Watch's education website.

One-off sessions are neither appropriate nor adequate for effective respectful relationships education and **it is important that these tool and resources are used to complement rather than replace evidence-based age-appropriate curriculum delivered by teachers who have received adequate training and support.**

The Our Watch tools and resources website page is not comprehensive or definitive, but the current accumulation of what we know, and we continue to improve our evidence and guidance.

It is at the discretion of schools and individual teachers to select which content they feel is appropriate to use with their students.

## Glossary – key terms and definitions

**Bystander** – someone who sees or hears about an act of sexism, harassment, discrimination or any other form of inappropriate or violent behaviour. People who witness such behaviour (but who are not involved either as perpetrators or victims/survivors) are increasingly recognised as having the potential to be powerful allies in challenging sexist and discriminatory behaviours and attitudes.<sup>13</sup>

**Bystander action** – actions taken to identify, speak out and challenge violence, and the harassment, sexism, discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes that contribute to violence against women and girls. It does not usually refer to taking physical action. Examples include calling out disrespectful language or behaviour, changing the topic, eye rolling, enlisting support from others, referring to organisational policies, or changing discriminatory workplace policies and practices. These actions can be taken in the moment or afterwards.<sup>14</sup> In some cases, there are legal obligations for bystanders to act, such as in child abuse cases, and in training and employment contexts. In other situations, bystanders are motivated by a moral or ethical obligation.

**Child abuse** – any act committed against a child that is likely to cause physical or emotional harm. According to the Victorian *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*, it includes any action involving a sexual offence; physical violence; emotional or psychological harm; and the neglect of a child.<sup>15</sup> Child abuse may occur in families and social institutions, or be perpetrated by the state.

**Coercive control/controlling behaviours** – a pattern of behaviours used in intimate relationships to exert power, domination and control over partners, including gaslighting (psychological manipulation designed to undermine the victim's/survivor's confidence in her own perceptions), all of which result in fear and isolation. Some examples include preventing the partner from seeing or communicating with friends and family, controlling and monitoring her movements including by tracking her phone or stalking, and, in extreme cases, depriving her of her liberty through forced confinement.<sup>16</sup> Coercive control is part of a web of interconnected and varied types of physical and sexual violence, threats, and emotional and economic/financial abuse.

**Disclosure** – when someone tells another person about violence that they have experienced, witnessed, or perpetrated. Undertaking activities to prevent violence against women can often lead to an increase in disclosures. This is because effective primary prevention initiatives raise awareness about harmful attitudes and behaviours and create a safe space for people to discuss their experiences.<sup>17</sup>

**Domestic violence** – acts of violence that occur in domestic settings between two people who are, or were, in an intimate relationship. It includes acts or threats of, or fear of, physical, sexual, emotional/psychological and economic/financial abuse<sup>18</sup> and coercive control by the perpetrator.

**Drivers** – the norms, practices and structures arising from gender inequality in public and private life, which create the necessary conditions in which violence against women occurs. They must always be considered in the context of other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage.<sup>19</sup>

**Economic or financial violence/abuse** – behaviour that unreasonably controls another person by denying them economic or financial autonomy; withholding the financial support needed to enable the victim and/or survivor or her children to meet reasonable living expenses; or threatening to do so. The Victorian *Family Violence Protection Act*



2008 identifies many specific examples of economic and financial abuse. These include the following actions, threats to take these actions, and coercing a victim and/or survivor to comply with them:

- taking control of assets and income
- removing or keeping a family member's property, and disposing of property (including when jointly owned)
- preventing the victim and/or survivor from seeking or keeping employment
- claiming social security payments
- signing a power of attorney
- signing a contract to purchase goods or services, taking out a loan, taking out a financial guarantee, and establishing or underwriting a business.<sup>20</sup>

**Emotional or psychological violence/abuse** – behaviour that torments, humiliates, intimidates, harasses or is offensive to an intimate partner or family member. Examples include:

- repeated derogatory and racial taunts
- threatening to disclose private matters such as sexual orientation
- threatening to withhold medication
- preventing someone from making or keeping connections with their family, friends or culture
- preventing someone from engaging in cultural or spiritual practices, and preventing them from expressing their cultural identity
- threatening to self-harm (with the intention of tormenting the victim and/or survivor)
- threatening the death or injury of another person such as a loved one, or a pet.<sup>21</sup>

**Evidence/evidence-based** – this term refers to models, approaches or practices found to be effective through evaluation or peer-reviewed research and is often used in policy and programming documents. Evidence is usually published and may be found in full or summarised in academic research documents, organisational reports, program evaluations, policy papers and submissions. There is a strong evidence base on strategies for preventing violence against women in Victoria, in Australia and globally, and this continues to be tested. As our understanding of what drives violence against women in different population groups and settings increases, the evidence base will continue to evolve.<sup>22</sup>

**Family violence** – a broader term than 'domestic violence', this refers not only to violence between intimate partners but also to violence between other family members (and those with family-like relationships such as carers of people living with disabilities). Family violence includes patterns of coercive, controlling, abusive, violent or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour that coerces or controls a family member or causes them to be fearful for their own or someone else's safety and wellbeing.

The Victorian *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* identifies the following **types of family violence**:

- physical and sexual abuse
- emotional or psychological abuse
- economic or financial abuse
- actions that are threatening, coercive or in any other way controlling or dominating and cause a person to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of themselves or another person
- behaviour that causes a child to hear witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of family violence.

The Act also includes some specific examples, including forcing someone to marry, and using threats, coercion or other forms of abuse to demand or receive dowry. Intentionally damaging property, depriving a victim and/or survivor of liberty, and injuring or killing an animal are also specifically mentioned in the Act, as well as threatening these actions.<sup>23</sup>

In Indigenous communities, family violence is often the preferred term as it encapsulates the broader issue of violence within extended families, kinship networks and community relationships, as well as intergenerational issues.<sup>24</sup> Victorian legislation and policy documentation use the term 'family violence' as it is understood to be more inclusive of diverse family units and kinship networks, in addition to covering other forms of violence within a family. These forms include violence between girlfriends and boyfriends, including within dating relationships; other family members, such as siblings, step-parents and extended kinship connections; adolescent and adult children and their parents; older people and their children, relatives or carers (elder abuse); and people with disabilities and their carers, even when carers are not related to the victim and/or survivor.<sup>25</sup>

**Gender and sex** – 'gender' refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, attributes and expectations of men, women, girls and boys and people of all genders and identities in a society. This is learned, changes over time, and varies according to cultural, religious, historical and economic factors across and within cultures. In contrast, 'sex' refers to the biological and physical differences used to define humans as female, male or other.<sup>26</sup>

**Gender-based violence** – violence that is used against someone because of their gender. It describes violence rooted in gender-based power inequalities and gender-based discrimination. While people of all genders can experience gender-based violence, the term is most often used to describe violence against women and girls,<sup>27</sup> because the majority of cases of gender-based violence are perpetrated by men against women.<sup>28</sup>

**Gender equality** – equality of rights, opportunities, responsibilities and outcomes between people of different genders.<sup>29</sup> It includes the redistribution of resources and responsibilities between men and women and the transformation of the underlying causes and structures of gender inequality to achieve substantive equality. It is about recognising diversity and disadvantage to ensure equal outcomes for all, and therefore often requires women-specific programs and policies to end existing inequalities.<sup>30</sup> Gender equality does not mean erasing gender differences, but that people's rights, responsibilities and opportunities are not dependent on their gender.<sup>31</sup>

**Gender equity** – fairness and justice in the distribution of rights, responsibilities and resources between women and men and gender diverse people, according to their respective needs. The concept recognises that people have different needs and power related to their gender, and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a way that ensures equal outcomes and benefits.<sup>32</sup>

**Gender identity** – a person's innate, deeply felt psychological identification of their gender, which may or may not correspond to the person's designated sex at birth.<sup>33</sup>

Many terms may be used to self-describe gender identity and these are discussed below (see **LGBTIQ and gender diverse**).<sup>34</sup> A person's gender identity may be different from their biological and physiological sex, and may change over their lifetime.<sup>35</sup>

**Gender inequality** – unequal distribution of power, resources, opportunity and value between men, women, boys, girls and people of all genders and identities, due to prevailing gendered norms and structures.<sup>36</sup>

**Gender roles** – functions and responsibilities expected to be fulfilled by women and men, boys and girls within society or culture.<sup>37</sup>

**Gender stereotypes** – rigid, simplistic assumptions and generalisations about the abilities, attributes, skills, behaviours, preferences and roles that people should have or demonstrate, based on their prescribed or perceived gender. Like other aspects of gender, stereotypes are learned and internalised, so they are often seen as natural, innate and true; people who don't neatly fit the stereotype are seen as exceptions or special cases. Stereotypes may be positive or negative. Negative stereotypes lead to unfair treatment, sexism, discrimination and exclusion.<sup>38</sup>

**Gender transformative approaches** – approaches that explicitly challenge harmful gender roles, practices, norms, structures and systems, in order to foster more equitable distribution of power and resources between men, women, LGBTIQ and gender diverse people.<sup>39</sup>

**Gendered drivers** – the specific elements or expressions of gender inequality that are strongly shown by the evidence base to drive or cause violence against women, and that need to be systematically challenged and changed to prevent it. They describe structures, norms and practices that reinforce gender inequality in public and private life. The four key drivers are:

- condoning of violence against women
- men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life
- rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity
- male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.<sup>40</sup>

It is important to distinguish between the drivers of gender inequality which cause violence against women, and **reinforcing factors** that may increase its frequency and severity (see **Reinforcing factors**, below).

**Gendered norms** – a set of dominant beliefs and rules of conduct which are learned and reinforced by a social group, and which determine the types of roles, interests, behaviours and contributions expected from girls and boys, women and men.<sup>41</sup>

**Gendered practices** – the everyday practices, processes and behaviours undertaken at an individual/relationships, organisational/institutional and societal level that reinforce and perpetuate gendered norms and structures.

**Gendered structures** – the laws and systematic mechanisms that organise and reinforce an unequal distribution of economic, social and political power and resources between men and women.

**Image-based abuse** – taking and distributing images of nude, semi-nude or sexual images without consent, or threatening to do so. It also includes taking and distributing images of a person without religious or cultural clothing that they would normally wear in public, and making digital alterations of any of these types of images.<sup>42</sup> It is one of several forms of **technology-facilitated** sexual abuse. Image-based abuse can affect and be perpetrated by both women and men, but recent research indicates that more perpetrators are male than female, victims/survivors are more likely than not to be known by the perpetrator, and women are more likely than men to fear for their safety as a result. People living with disabilities, those who identify as LGBTIQ, and Indigenous people are at highest risk, along with people aged 16 to 24. Women are more likely to experience image-based abuse at the hands of a former intimate partner.<sup>43</sup> In this context, image-based abuse is a form of sexual abuse and emotional/psychological abuse, and, where threats are involved, of coercive and controlling behaviour by perpetrators.

**Intersectionality** – describes the complex ways that different aspects of identity overlap and intersect with structures and systems of power and oppression. It recognises that our identities are made up of multiple interrelated attributes (such as race, gender, ability, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, sexual identity, socio-economic status and a history of colonialism and dispossession), and that these expose people to multiple forms of discrimination, disadvantage, cultural and structural oppression, and violence.<sup>44</sup>

An intersectional approach to preventing violence against women recognises that women's experience of gender inequality cannot be separated from their experience of other aspects of their identity or their access to resources, power and privilege. It recognises that the drivers, dynamics and impacts of the violence that women experience is compounded and magnified by their experience of other forms of oppression and inequality, resulting in some groups of women experiencing higher rates and/or more severe forms of violence, and facing barriers to support and safety that other women do not experience.<sup>45</sup>

**Intimate partner violence** – any behaviour by someone within an intimate relationship (including current or past marriages, domestic partnerships, familial relations, people who share accommodation and dating relationships) that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to the other person in the relationship. This is the most common form of family violence and the most common form of violence against women.<sup>46</sup>

**LGBTIQ and gender diverse** – LGBTIQ refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or intersex. Gender diverse refers to people who do not identify as a woman or a man. In the same way that sexual orientation and gender expression are not binaries, gender identity is not a binary concept either. Some people may identify as a-gender (having no gender), bi-gender (both a woman and a man) or non-binary (neither woman nor man). There is a diverse range of non-binary gender identities such as genderqueer, gender neutral, gender fluid and third gendered. Language in this space is still evolving and people may have their own preferred gender identities that are not listed here.<sup>47</sup>

**Perpetrator** – Perpetrator is the term most used in Victoria to describe people – mainly men – who use family violence or commit sexual violence against women. This term is used regardless of whether the person has ever been arrested, charged with a crime, or had an intervention order issued against them. The terms 'offender' or 'sexual violence offender' are also used to describe perpetrators of violence, usually in clinical or legal contexts. The term 'child sexual offender' is used to describe a person who commits child sexual abuse. The term 'men who use violence' is sometimes used instead of 'perpetrator', usually in clinical or therapeutic contexts focused on accountability and behaviour change, including with young men.<sup>48</sup>

**Prevention of violence against women (PVAW)** – refers to three different types of prevention: primary prevention, secondary prevention and tertiary prevention/response.

- **Primary prevention** – whole-of-population initiatives that address the primary (first or underlying) drivers of violence against women, in order to prevent it from occurring in the first place. This draws on public health approaches and requires changing the social conditions of gender inequality that excuse, justify or promote violence against women and their children.
- **Secondary prevention** – aims to change the trajectory for individuals at a higher than average risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence against women.
- **Tertiary prevention/response** – supports victims/survivors, holds perpetrators to account and aims to prevent the recurrence of violence.<sup>49</sup>

**Reinforcing factors** – these factors are not sufficient in themselves to predict or drive violence against women. However, when they interact with elements of gender inequality that cause or drive violence against women (the **gendered drivers**, see above) they may increase the probability, frequency or severity of violence against women. These reinforcing factors include:

- condoning of violence in general
- experience of, and exposure to, violence
- factors that weaken prosocial behaviour
- resistance and backlash to prevention and gender equality efforts.<sup>50</sup>

It is important to recognise that most people living with, or impacted by, these reinforcing factors do NOT use violence, and that these factors are not necessarily present when violence against women is perpetrated.

**Resistance and backlash** – the resistance, hostility or aggression which occurs in response to efforts to advance gender equality and prevent violence against women. Challenges to established gender norms and identities, and entrenched ideas about the roles of men and women, are often resisted by those who strongly adhere to such norms and see them as traditional or natural. From a feminist perspective, backlash is an inevitable response to challenging male dominance, power or status, and is often interpreted as a sign that such challenges are proving effective. Resistance can range from denial and attempts to discredit arguments about gender inequality or the gendered nature of violence, to strategies that undermine or co-opt change, to concerted efforts to preserve existing gender norms and hierarchies. The term ‘backlash’ is commonly used to describe the more extreme, aggressive and organised forms of opposition with the result that progress towards violence prevention and gender equality can be slowed or even reversed. In some cases, backlash can lead to or reinforce violence against women.<sup>51</sup>

**Respectful relationships** – refers to relationships among intimate, romantic or dating partners when they are characterised by non-violence, equality, mutual respect, consideration and trust.<sup>52</sup>

**Respectful relationships education** – primary prevention work undertaken in education and care settings to address gender inequality and the gendered drivers of violence against women. It involves taking a holistic, whole-of-school approach which sees schools as both education institutions and workplaces, to create a future free from gender-based violence. While respectful relationships education usually takes place in schools and early childhood services, it can also take place in sporting clubs, youth groups and other community settings where children and young people learn, live and play.<sup>53</sup>

**Settings** – environments in which people live, work, learn, socialise and play, where activities to prevent violence against women can take place. The evidence base identifies the following settings where prevention efforts can have a significant impact:

- education and care settings for children and young people such as schools and early childhood services
- universities, TAFEs and other tertiary education institutions
- workplaces, corporations, and employee organisations
- sports, recreation, social and leisure spaces
- the arts

- health, family, and community services
- faith-based contexts
- the media
- popular culture, advertising and entertainment
- public spaces, transport, infrastructure and facilities
- legal, justice and corrections contexts.<sup>54</sup>

**Sex and gender discrimination** – discrimination is treating, or proposing to treat, someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic, including by bullying them. In Victoria it is against the law to discriminate on the basis of someone’s sex or characteristics associated with their sex, such as carer responsibilities, pregnancy and breastfeeding, and because of sexual orientation, gender identity or lawful sexual activity, or what people assume these to be.<sup>55</sup>

**Sexism** – discrimination based on gender, and the attitudes, stereotypes and cultural elements that promote this discrimination. Sexism refers to the language, attitudes, behaviours, and conditions that create, support or reinforce gender inequality. Sexism can take many forms, such as jokes or comments, sexual harassment, or sex discrimination. It can be perpetrated by individuals or embedded within the structures and systems of institutions and organisations.<sup>56</sup>

**Sexual assault/violence** – sexual activity that happens where consent is not obtained or freely given. It occurs any time a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity such as touching, sexual harassment and intimidation, forced marriage, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, image-based abuse, sexual assault and rape. Both terms refer to a broad range of sexual behaviours that make a person feel uncomfortable, intimidated, frightened or threatened.<sup>57</sup>

**Sexual harassment** – unwelcome sexual behaviour which could be expected to make a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment can be physical, verbal or written. It does not include consensual interaction, flirtation or friendship, or behaviour that is mutually agreed upon. Sexual harassment is against the law under the Victorian *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* and can include:

- comments about a person’s private life or the way they look
- sexually suggestive behaviour, such as leering or staring
- brushing up against someone, touching, fondling or hugging
- sexually suggestive comments or jokes
- displaying offensive screen savers, photos, calendars or objects
- repeated requests to go out, requests for sex, sexually explicit emails, text messages or posts on social networking sites, and
- sexual assault.<sup>58</sup>

**Structural/systemic discrimination and disadvantage** – the norms, policies and systems present within politics, the legal system, education, workplaces and healthcare that present obstacles to groups or individuals achieving the same rights and opportunities available to the rest of the population. The term **systemic** refers to patterns of discrimination that are reflected within social norms and reinforced through law, education, the economy, healthcare and politics and result in privileging certain groups and individuals over others.<sup>59</sup>

**Technology-facilitated abuse** – abuse that occurs across any internet-enabled platform or device. A 2015 survey of domestic and family violence frontline workers found that 98 per cent of clients had experienced technology-facilitated abuse. The most common forms include:

- harassment – including menacing and frequent calls, emails and texts, abusive comments on social media, encouraging third parties to harass the victim and/or survivor, hacking into the victim’s bank, email or social media accounts and locking her out of them, and using technology to control or manipulate home appliances, locks and other connected devices.
- monitoring and stalking – using phones, drones or other devices such as toys, extracting location data, and constantly checking on a woman via text, phone calls or social media.
- impersonation – creating a fake account to harass or abuse the victim and/or survivor or her friends and family.
- threats and punishment – including sharing or threatening to share intimate images without her consent (image-based abuse), ‘doxing’ (posting private information on social media or elsewhere online), and sending abusive messages threatening harm, including reputational harm.<sup>60</sup>

**Victim and/or survivor** – the term most commonly used in Victoria to describe people, including children and young people, who have experienced family violence or gender-based violence. This term is understood to acknowledge the strength and resilience shown by people who have experienced or are currently living with violence. People who have experienced violence have different preferences about how they like to be identified and may choose to use ‘victim’ or ‘survivor’ separately, or another term altogether.<sup>61</sup>

**Violence against women** – 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. This definition encompasses **all forms of violence that women experience** and is broader than what is covered by the term ‘family violence’. It includes physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, cultural/spiritual and economic/financial abuse, coercive and controlling behaviours, technology-facilitated and image-based abuse, and other types of violence that are gender-based (see also **Gender-based violence**).<sup>62</sup> Violence against women includes acts which occur and are perpetrated within the family, within the community, including in social institutions and organisations, and which are perpetrated or condoned by the state.<sup>63</sup>

**Violence prevention** – in respectful relationships education this refers to the primary prevention of gender-based violence. Primary prevention programs focus on stopping violence against women before it occurs, rather than intervening once an incident has already happened. Prevention involves working with whole communities to address the attitudes, behaviours, norms and practices that drive gender-based violence.

**Whole-of-school approach** – in respectful relationships education this refers to providing students with multiple exposures to key messages across the curriculum and in different areas of the school and community. It involves engaging not just students, but school staff (teaching and non-teaching) and the wider school community in the process of cultural change.



# Endnotes

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