

# Glossary of terms

At Our Watch, we use the term **violence against women** to refer to acts that can cause harm to women. **Violence against women** is any act of gender-based violence that causes, or could cause, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life. This definition encompasses all forms of violence that women experience (including physical, sexual, emotional, cultural, spiritual, financial, and others) that are gender-based.

It emphasises how:

- sexual assault, and family and domestic 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.

These terms encompass all forms of gender-based violence that women may experience:

- **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 abuse, assault, harassment, and coercion, such as touching, intimidation, forced marriage, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, and rape. Sexual assault is only one type of sexual violence and does not include sexual harassment, or broader and complex forms of sexual violence, such as technology-facilitated or image-based abuse.
- **Sexual harassment** - an unwelcome sexual advance, unwelcome request for sexual favours or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated, where a reasonable person would anticipate that reaction in the circumstances.
- **Sexism** - discrimination based on gender, and the attitudes, stereotypes and cultural elements that promote this discrimination.
- **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. These types of violence are usually not experienced in isolation, but as part of an overall pattern of abusive and controlling behaviour.
- **Non-partner sexual assault** - sexual violence perpetrated by strangers, acquaintances, friends, colleagues, peers, teachers, neighbours, and family members.

Intimate partner violence, domestic violence and family violence are terms used to describe violence that occurs in a current or former family or intimate relationship. They are often used interchangeably, but:

- **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.
- **Family violence** is a description preferred by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because it captures broader kinship networks and community relationships. It is also often used as way of discussing gender-based violence that occurs outside the context of an intimate partner or ex-partner relationship.
- **Domestic violence** – refers to acts of violence that occur in domestic settings between two people who are, or were, in an intimate relationship. It includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and financial abuse.
- We commonly use **victim/survivor** to refer to those who experience violence. This term recognises people are victims of crime and survivors with respect to their personal strength and resilience. Individuals will often have strong preferences about how they want to be identified, and this should be respected and reflected in your language. It's important to note that while violence has lasting impacts, it does not define the lives of those who have experienced it, or their futures.

### Other key terms:

- **Intersectionality** – describes the interactions between multiple systems and structures of oppression (such as sexism, racism, classism, ageism, ableism, heteronormativity, and cissexism), as well as policy and legal contexts (such as immigration status). It acknowledges that some people are subject to multiple forms of oppression and 'the experience is not just the sum of its parts.' An intersectional approach is 'a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other.' An intersectional approach is critical for preventing violence

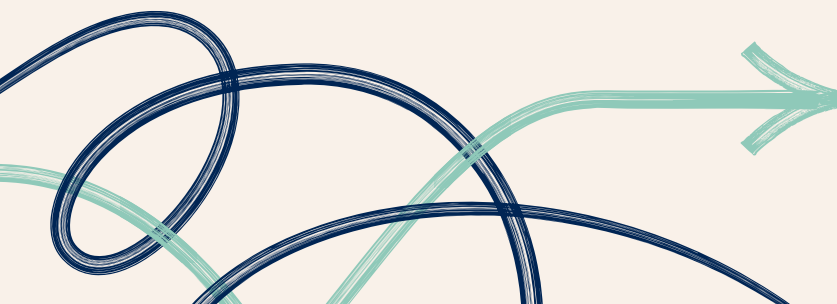
against women because power structures always intersect with other systems of power. Violence against women occurs in the context of both gender inequality and multiple other forms of structural and systemic inequality, oppression, and discrimination. All of these intersect to influence the perpetration of violence, the prevalence, nature and dynamics of violence, and women's experiences of violence. Understanding and addressing these intersections is necessary to effectively address the drivers of violence against women and prevent this violence across the population.

- **Backlash and resistance** – the resistance, hostility or aggression with which gender equality or violence prevention strategies are met by some groups. From a feminist perspective, backlash can be understood as an inevitable response to challenges to male dominance, power, or status, and is often interpreted as a sign that such challenges are proving effective.
- **Dominant forms of masculinity** – the particular attitudes, norms, stereotypes, roles and practices that men are expected to support, conform to or participate in, and that operate at and across structural, systemic, organisational, community, interpersonal and individual levels of society.
- **Gender equality** – involves equality for people of all genders. This term is used in the substantive sense to mean not only equality of opportunity but also equal or just outcomes (sometimes also called equity). It requires the redistribution of power, resources and responsibilities between men and women in particular, and the transformation of the underlying causes and structures that create and sustain gender inequality.
- **Gender norms** – the dominant beliefs and rules of conduct which are determined by a society or social group in relation to the types of roles, interests, behaviours, and contributions expected from girls and boys, men and women. Norms are not neutral in their effect, but rather create and maintain unequal relations of power.

- **Gendered drivers of violence** - the underlying causes that are required to create the necessary conditions in which violence against women occurs. They relate to the particular structures, norms and practices arising from gender inequality in public and private life, but which must always be considered in the context of other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage.
- **Patriarchy** - a social structure where the ideas, needs and actions of men are dominant over those of women (and non-binary people) and where men (as a group) hold social, political, cultural, and economic power. Patriarchy is associated with a set of ideas that seek to explain and justify this dominance and attribute it to innate differences between men and women.
- **Positive Duty** - Workplaces have a positive duty to address the drivers of sexual harassment and violence. [Respect@Work Amendments](#) place a positive duty on employers to eliminate, as far as possible workplace sexual harassment and discrimination, rather than just responding after it occurs. Employers must demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to ensure a workplace, including its culture, mitigates the risk of sexual harassment occurring.
- **Reinforcing factors** - factors which become significant within the context of the drivers of violence. These factors do not predict or drive violence against women on their own. However, they each play a role in influencing the occurrence or dynamics of violence against women. Reinforcing factors are context-specific; they have an influence in particular circumstances and at particular levels of the socio-ecological model.

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