

What is domestic and family violence?

Domestic and family violence (DFV) occurs when one person in an intimate, personal, family or informal carer relationship uses violence or abuse to maintain power and control over the other person. DFV usually constitutes an ongoing pattern of behaviour but can be an isolated instance of abuse or violence.

DFV can affect anyone regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, culture, socio-economic group, and geographic location. The impact on individuals, children, families and the wider community is significant.



1 in 4 women have experienced **physical** or **sexual violence** from an intimate partner



1 in 14 men have experienced **physical** or **sexual violence** from an intimate partner

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence can exist within a range of intimate or previously intimate personal relationships including de-facto, engaged, married, previously married, separated, same-sex partners, couple relationships, and between custodial and non-custodial parents of a child.

Domestic violence is generally understood as **gender-based violence**. Most commonly, this form of violence involves male violence or abuse towards their female partner or ex-partner.

Men also experience DFV. The statistics above provide an indication of the incidence of DFV affecting Australian men and women.

What is family violence?

Family violence refers to violence and abuse that occurs between family, extended family and former family members, related either by blood or marriage and can include unrelated individuals who are regarded as a family member. Examples of family members include: nephews, nieces, cousins, grandparents, children, half-siblings, step-parents, step-siblings, aunts, uncles and in-laws.

Australian Bureau of Statistics [Personal Safety, Australia, 2021-22 Financial Year \(2023 Release\)](#)





Informal care relationships

Under Queensland legislation, DFV also includes violence or abuse within **informal care relationships**, where one person is dependent on another for help in their daily living activities (such as dressing, preparing meals or shopping) and where the volunteer carer controls, abuses and instils fear in the person they are caring for. Informal care relationships do not exist between a child and a parent of a child or where there is a fee paid for care.

Forms of DFV

Coercive control is a term used to describe a pattern of abusive, threatening, and manipulative behaviours used by an abuser to isolate, frighten and control their partner or family member.

It can include verbal, emotional and psychological abuse and manipulation, social abuse, financial abuse and use of technology to monitor, control and manipulate. It can also include threats or acts of physical and sexual violence as a means of asserting control. The various forms DFV can take are outlined below.



Physical abuse

Physical abuse includes directly assaulting a person, their child or a pet, as well as property destruction, the use of weapons and reckless behaviour. Examples include: kicking, punching, choking, slapping, shoving, hitting or sleep and food deprivation of adults or children.



Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is any unwanted sexual behaviour towards another person which occurs without the person's informed consent. Sexual abuse or violence includes: being forced or pressured into sexual acts, rape (including in marriage), and being forced to watch or engage in pornography. Often threats of sexual violence are used to control and instil fear within a relationship.



Verbal abuse

Verbal abuse intends to humiliate, degrade, demean, threaten, coerce or intimidate a person, using derogatory language or put-downs to highlight a particular part of a person's being or their societal role. As this abuse may be perceived as an attack on a person's identity, it can result in psychological harm and be closely related to emotional abuse.



Emotional abuse

Emotional or psychological abuse includes blaming the partner for the problems in the relationship, undermining a person's self-esteem and self-worth, withdrawing interest and engagement, or excessive jealousy. Threats can be made against children or their custody using legal processes, destroying property, abusing pets, or threatening personal injury.





Social
abuse

Social abuse involves the use of deliberate strategies to isolate or separate a person from their family, friends or community. Techniques used often include: rudeness to family and friends, moving to locations where the partner does not know others, and forbidding or preventing a partner or family member from meeting others.

Financial
abuse

Financial abuse involves the unequal control of finances and the deprivation of basic necessities. Examples include: controlling all finances, refusing access to money, withholding access to bank accounts, providing an inadequate 'allowance', controlling or using all wages earned or legally owed, or preventing a person from seeking or holding down a job.

Spiritual
abuse

Spiritual or cultural abuse can include one person preventing the other from taking part in their spiritual, cultural or religious practices. It can also include forcing the other person to engage in religious, cultural or spiritual practices, or misusing spiritual or religious beliefs and practices to justify abuse and violence.

Stalking

Stalking is a form of obsessive behaviour and a criminal offence that involves worrying or frightening someone by following them by foot or car, constantly contacting them by phone, text message and email, staying outside their house or workplace, monitoring their movements, using surveillance, cyber stalking, or tracking via social media or GPS.

Technology facilitated
abuse

Technology facilitated abuse is a form of controlling behaviour that involves the use of technology to harass, coerce, threaten, monitor or impersonate another person. This can include abusive and repeated texts, emails and social media messages, threatening phone calls, checking someone's text messages, social media and internet activity, restricting someone's access to a phone or to the internet and monitoring and stalking someone using technology.

