Glossary of key terms

About this Glossary

This Glossary provides definitions for many of the common terms and phrases used in the evidence base for preventing violence against women, as well as in the professional practice of this work.

Note on sources: This site acknowledges the use of content from *Gender equity training manual: A guide for women’s health services* (Women's Health Association of Victoria, 2016) in the development of definitions within this glossary. Other sources have been acknowledged where used.

Please note: We welcome your suggestions for adding to this Glossary. Please email pvaw@whv.org.au with any terms that you think would be useful to include in this Glossary.

Cultural safety, security and competence

Cultural safety is about understanding yourself, your identity and being aware of your own prejudices, values and beliefs, and the ways that these can influence your behaviour.

The term Kawa Whakaruruhau, meaning Cultural Safety, was developed within the New Zealand nursing field over concerns raised by Māori nursing students and leadership about the safety of Māori students in monocultural nursing schools. The term and its application has been further developed in New Zealand and in Australia through education and social work practice, including in consultation with Australian Indigenous social work practitioners.

In Australia, the terms cultural safety, security and competence are influenced by different histories and focus on acknowledging and affirming cultural differences, and addressing the power imbalances that exist between marginal and dominant groups. They involve addressing the risks to minority individuals and groups that this power imbalance can bring. An organisation or practitioner develops their cultural competence so as to provide cultural safety for individuals and communities, through an approach to service delivery and professional practice that is responsive to the beliefs, values and practices of different groups or populations. The term is particularly used to highlight differences between the values and practices of minority and marginal groups and those of the dominant culture.

The original definition of the term, defined culture as ranging anywhere from age or generation, gender, sexual orientation, occupation, religious beliefs, or disabilities. In Australia, the term has most commonly been applied to racial, ethnic and religious minorities, but is more recently being used and understood as applying more broadly.

Sources: Jungersen, K, 2002, Cultural safety: Kawa Whakaruruhau – An occupational therapy perspective, New Zealand Journal of Occupational Therapy, 49:1, pp 4-9; GLHV@ARCSHS, LaTrobe University, 2016, The Rainbow Tick guide to LGBTI-inclusive practice, LaTrobe University, Victoria.
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) is the preferred term for many government and community agencies as a contemporary descriptor for ethnic communities and/or communities of people from an immigrant or refugee background. CALD people are generally defined as those people born overseas, in countries other than those classified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as “main English speaking countries.” Other terms sometimes used to describe this populations group include ‘immigrant and refugee’, Non-English-Speaking Background (NESB), newly arrived and overseas-born.


Disability

Disability results from interactions between a person’s impairment, understood as functional limitations, and the social, physical and attitudinal barriers they face. Addressing disability involves removing these barriers and minimizing the impact of living with an impairment on a person’s life.

Source: GLHV@ARCSHS, LaTrobe University, 2016, The Rainbow Tick guide to LGBTI-inclusive practice, LaTrobe University, Victoria

 Discrimination

Discrimination is treating, or proposing to treat, someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic such as national or ethnic origin; sex, gender, pregnancy or marital status; age; disability; religion; sexual orientation; trade union activity; or some other characteristic specified under anti-discrimination or human rights legislation. Information on personal characteristics protected by law can be found on the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission website.


Diversity

The ways in which individuals and groups can differ from each other by way of attributes such as gender, ability, Aboriginality, religion and belief, culture, language, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, geography and age. They can have a significant impact on health needs, interests and outcomes. Some, such as ethnicity, are fixed, and others, such as socio-economic status, may change. Identity, circumstances and opportunities can be influenced by a combination of these attributes, and people often give priority to different aspects of their identities. This may also change over time. It is important to keep in mind the specific conditions experienced by marginalised groups of women and men.

Source: State of Victoria, 2011, Gender and Diversity Lens for Health and Human Services, Victoria
Domestic violence

Domestic violence refers to acts of violence that occur in domestic setting between people who are, or were, in an intimate relationship. These acts include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse. See also family violence.

Source: Our Watch et al., 2015, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Victoria.

Drivers of violence against women

Specific aspects of gender inequality which underlie or create the necessary conditions for violence against women to occur. They include social structures, norms and practices arising from gender inequality in public and private life. These factors work alongside and interact with other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage.

Source: Our Watch et al., 2015, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Victoria.

Early intervention (or secondary prevention)

Is action targeting individuals or population subgroups that are showing early signs of perpetrating violence or being subjected to it. It includes, for example, action that addresses controlling behaviours before they become established patterns, or action in environments in which there are strong signs that violence might occur because of a strong culture of devaluing and disrespecting women.

Elder abuse

Elder abuse is a form of family violence. It is any act which causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust. The abuser may be a: family member, friend, neighbour or carer. Abuse can be unintentional or deliberate. Elder abuse can take many forms including neglect and psychological, financial, physical, social, or sexual abuse. Elder abuse can happen to women and men. In Victoria, victims are most likely to be female, perpetrators slightly more likely to be male, and most abuse is committed by persons related to the older person or in a de facto relationship.


Equity

Equity is about fairness, and making sure all people have access to the same opportunities. This does not involve treating everyone the same. Rather, it involves recognising that everyone is different and providing individuals and communities with the things they need to ensure that everyone has the same opportunities.

Source: GLHV@ARCSHS, LaTrobe University, 2016, The Rainbow Tick guide to LGBTI-inclusive practice, LaTrobe University, Victoria
**Family violence**

Family violence is a broad term referring to violence between family members as well as violence between intimate partners. This includes, for example, elder abuse and adolescent violence against parents. Family violence includes violent or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour that coerce or controls a family member or causes that family member to be fearful. Family violence is a fundamental violation of human rights. Family violence is the preferred term in Aboriginal communities due to the broad definition of family relationships.


**Feminism and feminist frameworks**

Feminism is a range of political ideologies and movements that share a common goal: to define and advance political, economic, personal, and social rights for women and girls. Feminist belief and action ranges broadly. At one end, conservative versions of feminism seek advancement of women within and without changing current social structures. Transformative forms of feminism see women’s inequality tied to broader systems of power, privilege and social inequality within society, and seek transformation of these structures and inequalities across society, within organisations and communities.

*A feminist framework* is an approach, to theoretical analysis or everyday practice, that is based in feminist principles.

**Gender**

The socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women, men, boys and girls. These perceived differences between the sexes are socially, and not biologically, determined and are based on learned behaviour. As such, concepts of gender will differ within and between cultures, and change over time in response to cultural, religious, educational, historical and economic factors. While the social construction of gender is seen as a masculine/feminine binary, gender identity (how we view ourselves) is a spectrum, including people who identify as transgender, intersex or gender diverse.

**Gender analysis**

Gender analysis identifies, analyses and informs action to address inequalities that arise from the different roles of women and men, or the unequal power relationships between them, and the consequences of these inequalities on their lives, their health and wellbeing. It can be used to ensure that women and men are not disadvantaged by a policy, program or project, to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of activities, or to identify priority areas for action to promote equality between women and men.

Gender auditing

A method of assessing accountability to gender equality policy commitments, drawing on social auditing principles (rather than those of financial auditing). Distinguishing features of a gender audit are: accountability; comprehensiveness (a broad organisation or program scope of enquiry); and the assessment of organisational performance against both internal and external benchmarks. Another term for organisational participatory gender auditing is gender self-assessment.


Gender awareness or literacy

A person's level of understanding of the ways in which societies define and prescribe different identities, and values to ideas of female and male, which creates norms and attitudes around gender, and which affects access to and control of resources. This awareness is necessary for the application of gender analysis into projects, programs and policies.

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty.


Gender blind data

Data that ignores, or deliberately does not address, gender and the gender-based differences. Relying on gender blind data has the potential to perpetuate existing inequalities between the sexes.

Gender discrimination

The situation in which people are treated differently because of their gender, rather than on the basis of their individual skills or capabilities.

Gender equality

Gender equality is the outcome reached through addressing gender inequities. It is the equal participation of women, men and gender diverse people in all spheres of public and private life and the equal valuing by society of women, girls, boys, men and gender diverse people.

Source: State of Victoria, 2011, Gender and Diversity Lens for Health and Human Services, Victoria

Gender equity

The provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women, men and gender diverse people. The concept recognises that people have
different needs and access to power and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalances across genders. It is not about the equal delivery of services or distribution of resources; equity recognises diversity and disadvantage, and seeks to direct resources and services towards those most in need to ensure equal outcomes for all.


Gender inequality

The unequitable distribution of power, resources, opportunity and value afforded to women, men and gender diverse people in a society due to prevailing gendered norms and structures.

Source: Our Watch et al., 2015, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Victoria.

Gender mainstreaming

The process of assessing the different implications for women, men and gender diverse people of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women, men and gender diverse people’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that all genders benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.


Gender neutral

This refers to interventions which are intended to affect all people in the same way and assumes that a policy or program will have a neutral impact on people. It has not taken into account the differences in women, men and gender diverse people’s roles or access to resources which will inhibit or facilitate their participation. Gender neutral policies or programs will only result in equitable outcomes by accident, not design, and will often unintentionally perpetuate or exacerbate existing inequalities in people’s lives. Also called ‘gender blind’.


Gender planning/action plan/strategy

A framework for addressing gender issues in an organisation, or in the design and implementation of a program or strategy, based on gender analysis. It identifies strategies, activities, resources, gender capacity-building initiatives, targets, and indicators for ensuring that both women, men and gender diverse people participate and benefit equally.
Gender responsive, sensitive and inclusive

An approach that takes gender into account, acknowledging the different experiences expectations, pressures, inequalities, and needs of women, men and gender diverse people.


Gender sensitive data

Information generated through the use of sex disaggregated data and through applying a gender analysis or a gender lens. It informs program and policy design by recognising the different experiences of women, men and gender diverse people and provides an analysis and explanation of the differences in the data. It is the opposite of gender blind data as gender is recognised and taken into account.


Gender identity spectrum

The recognition that gender identity is not a binary construct where there are only women and men but, rather, a spectrum, or continuum, spanning from man to woman with an infinite number of gendered states in between.


Gender transformative

Gender transformative policy and practice examines, challenges and ultimately transforms structures, norms and behaviours that reinforce gender inequality and strengthens those that support gender equality.


Gendered norms

Gendered norms consist of a set of 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, boys, women, men and gender diverse people.

Source: Our Watch et al., 2015, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Victoria.

Gendered practices

The everyday practices, processes and behaviours undertaken at the individual/relationship level, organisational/institutional level and societal level that reinforce and perpetuate gendered norms and structures.

Source: Our Watch et al., 2015, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Victoria.
Gendered structures

The laws and systemic mechanisms that organise and reinforce an unequal distribution of economic, social and political power and resources between women, men and gender diverse people.

Source: Our Watch et al., 2015, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Victoria.

Homophobia, biphobia, transphobia

These terms have distinct meanings as described below, and refer to the fear, hatred or intolerance of people of a particular sexual or gender identity, that often leads to discriminatory behaviour or abuse.

**Biphobia** - fear, hatred or intolerance of people who are bisexual, or perceived to be bisexual.

**Homophobia** - fear, hatred or intolerance of people who are same-sex attracted or are perceived to be same-sex attracted, including lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

**Transphobia** - fear, hatred or intolerance of people of who are transgender, or perceived to be transgender.

Source: GLHV@ARCSHS, LaTrobe University, 2016, The Rainbow Tick guide to LGBTI-inclusive practice, LaTrobe University, Victoria

Human rights

Agreed international standards that recognise and protect the dignity and integrity of every individual, without distinction. The rights that we are entitled to simply because we are human, regardless of citizenship, ethnicity, nationality, ethnicity, language, sex, gender, sexual orientation or abilities and disabilities.


Immigrant and refugee communities

This term can be defined, used and understood in various ways. The term ‘immigrant and refugee communities’ is used on this site to describe people living in Victoria who were born overseas or whose parent(s) or grandparent(s) were born overseas in a predominantly non-English speaking or non-Western country. This term is used to highlight the impact of the migration and settlement process on communities. It is recognised that not everyone who fits this description will identify as or consider themselves to be an immigrant or refugee, or will use these words to describe themselves. It is also recognised that categories like ‘immigrant’ and ‘refugee’ are loaded with many meanings. These words change and are shaped by political and social forces and cut across a whole range of policy issues and areas such as health, housing, settlement, law, justice, immigration and citizenship. Other terms that can be used to describe these types of communities include: culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD); ethnic or ethno-specific; overseas-born; and non-English-speaking background (NESB).

Source: Chen, J, 2017, Working with immigrant and refugee communities to prevent violence against women, Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health, Melbourne.
**Integrated health promotion**

Integrated health promotion is an approach used in Victoria to support the delivery of evidence-based initiatives that tackle the socio-economic determinants of priority health and wellbeing problems. The term specifically refers to organisations and agencies within an area (or catchment) working collaboratively to plan, implement and evaluate a mix of health promotion interventions and strategies, including: health education and information; workforce development and training; organisational capacity building; community strengthening; policy and legislative reform.

**Inclusive practice or service provision**

The provision of services that is respectful and aware of the culture and beliefs of the recipient. This includes the provision of services that recognise and affirm the values and practices of different ages, abilities, sexualities, genders, cultures, and religions.

Source: GLHV@ARCSHS, LaTrobe University, 2016, *The Rainbow Tick guide to LGBTI-inclusive practice*, LaTrobe University, Victoria.

**Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is a way of seeing or analysing the dynamics of power and social inequality in our society. It can be described in different ways: as a theory or approach, a lens or framework, and so on. What is essential to the idea of intersectionality is the recognition that inequalities are rarely the result of any single or distinct factor, like race, socio-economic status or gender. Rather, they are the outcome of different and interacting social positions, power relations and experience. In the context of preventing violence against women, this approach includes recognising how gender inequality interacts with other power and social inequalities.


**Intimate partner violence**

Any behaviour by a woman, man or gender diverse person within a current or past intimate relationship (including current or past marriages, cohabitating or non-cohabitating couples) that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to those in the relationship. This is the most common form of violence against women.


**LGBTI and gender diverse**

These are two terms that are often used together but which have different meanings.

- **LGBTI** is an acronym for the terms lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex.
  - **Lesbian** - a woman whose primary emotional and sexual attraction is toward other women.
Gay - a person whose primary emotional and sexual attraction is toward people of the same sex. The term is most commonly applied to men, although some women use this term.

Bisexual/bi - a person who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to people of more than one sex. Often this term is shortened to ‘bi’.

Trans/Transgender - a person whose gender identity or expression is different from that assigned at birth or those who sit outside the gender binary.

Intersex - Intersex status has a specific meaning under State and Commonwealth Equal Opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation. Intersex, however, refers to a person who is born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads and chromosome patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies.

Same-sex attracted – is also a term that is used alongside LGBTI. It refers to a person who has sexual and/or emotional attraction toward people of one’s own sex.

- Gender diverse is a broad term that encompasses a diversity of gender identities and gender expressions including: bigender, trans, transgender, genderqueer, gender fluid, gender questioning, gender diverse, agender and non-binary. Gender diverse refers to identities and expressions that reject the belief that gender is determined by the sex someone is assigned at birth.

- Sistergirl and Brotherboy is used in some Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander communities to describe or identify a person assigned female or male at birth and identifying or living partly or fully as another gender. However, in other Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander communities, these terms are simply familiar terms used to describe friends or relatives.

Source: GLHV@ARCSHS, LaTrobe University, 2016, The Rainbow Tick guide to LGBTI-inclusive practice, LaTrobe University, Victoria.

Prevention of violence against women

In the prevention of violence against women field, prevention of violence against women is used as a shortened version of the term primary prevention of violence against women. Primary prevention is a public health approach that aims to prevent a health problem from occurring in the first place by tackling its underlying causes or determinants.

Primary prevention of violence against women involves addressing the gendered drivers and reinforcing factors for violence against women. Primary prevention is distinct from addressing violence once it has happened (called response or tertiary prevention), and from working with high risk groups showing early signs of violence (called early intervention or secondary prevention).

Regional (action) planning

All regional women’s health services develop and deliver regional strategies and/or action plans and these act as a central point around which all other work is planned. This is referred to as regional planning or regional action planning. Regional planning is a...
collaborative process within regions whereby a community makes decisions about how they can contribute together to the prevention of violence against women. This process is formalised through the development of an agreed regional strategy or plan – which can involve a wide range of community strategies, actions and activities. This plan is then collectively implemented and evaluated.

Reinforcing factors for violence against women

Factors which become significant within the context of the gendered drivers of violence against women. These reinforcing factors do not predict or drive violence against women on their own, however when they interact with the drivers they can increase the frequency or severity of violence.

Source: Our Watch et al., 2015, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Victoria.

Response (or tertiary prevention)

Actions addressing violence once it has occurred, that aim to reduce its impact and to prevent its reoccurrence or escalation. It includes support and treatment to women and their children who are affected by violence and programs and interventions for men who use violence.

Sex

The biological differences between females, males and intersex people. This includes the reproductive organs and their functioning as well as sex-specific hormonal activity. Individuals may identify and be recognised as being a sex other than the one they were assigned at birth or during infancy, or as being intersex or of an indeterminate sex.

Sex disaggregated data

Data that is collected and presented separately on females and males to reflect differences. Such data needs to recognise sub-groups of women and men, enabling cross-classification for ethnicity, culture, age or sexual orientation.

Sexism

Discrimination based on gender and the attitudes, stereotypes and cultural elements that promote this discrimination. The legal definition of ‘sex discrimination’ is when a person is treated less favourably than a person of the opposite sex would be treated in the same or similar circumstances


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. For
example, comments about a person’s private life or the way they look, sexually suggestive behaviour, jokes, comments or emails, or repeated requests to go out.


**Sexual assault**

Sexual assault is any sexual behaviour that makes a person feel frightened or threatened. It is sexual activity to which the person does not consent or is incapable of giving consent due to intimidation, youth or incapacity. Sexual assault can take various forms, some of which are criminal offences, including: touching or kissing; being made to look at pornographic photos; voyeurism; rape; incest; and stalking.


**Socio-ecological model**

A feature of public health and is used to demonstrate how violence is a product of multiple, interacting social factors. The model conceptualizes how the drivers of violence manifest across the personal, community and social level and illustrates the value of implementing multiple mutually reinforcing strategies across these levels.


**Unconscious bias**

Unconscious beliefs and values that heavily influence how we view and evaluate both others and ourselves. These beliefs and values are often gained from social values and culture, family, and a lifetime of experiences. They create thought patterns, assumptions and interpretations that help us to process information quickly and efficiently. However, they can cause us to make decisions that are not objective and that can devalue or exclude people. Unconscious bias is one of many factors that contribute to, for example, continued discrimination against women and minority groups in organisations.


**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 (including physical, sexual, emotional, cultural/spiritual, financial, and others) that are gender-based. This may also be referred to as ‘men’s violence against women’ in recognition that the vast majority of violence against women is committed by men.