



Sexual Violence

What is sexual violence?

- Sexual violence is an umbrella term that is generally used to describe any unwanted, non-consensual sexual act, attempted act or threat. This includes any behaviour of a sexual nature that makes someone feel uncomfortable, frightened, intimidated or threatened.
- Sexual violence is not always physical or visible. It can be verbal, written or image-based and can be perpetrated face-to-face and via mobile and digital technologies including online.
- Examples of sexual violence include sexual assault (including rape), sexual harassment, stalking, sexting/ image-based abuse and stealthing (the non-consensual removal of a condom by a partner during sex).
- Sexual violence occurs more frequently between people who are known to each other rather than between strangers - often between current or previous intimate partners.
- Sexual violence can be experienced by anyone but women, LGBTIQ+ people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people living with a disability are at higher risk, particularly during early adulthood.
- Many acts of sexual violence such as sexual assault, stalking and sexting/image-based abuse are criminal offences under Victorian and/or Australian criminal law.
- In Victoria, it is a criminal offence to intentionally distribute an intimate image of a person under the age of 18 years to others, even if they agree to the image being sent.
- Sexual harassment that occurs in specific settings, including in the workplace, places of education and training and in the provision of goods and services, is unlawful and prohibited under both Victorian and Australian civil law.

If you don't feel okay, it's not okay.

- If you are with someone but are feeling unsure or uncomfortable about engaging in sexual activity with them it is okay to say 'no'. If you don't freely, willingly and enthusiastically agree to whatever your partner wants you to do, then your partner does not have your *consent* to engage in that sexual activity with you.
- Non-consensual sexual activity is a form of sexual violence and a criminal offence.
- It's also okay to change your mind. If you've started something together but no longer feel comfortable you have the right to ask your partner to stop. If you withdraw your consent at any point during sexual activity, your partner must respect your needs and stop what they are doing straight away.

There is always help available.

- If you or a friend or family member have experienced any form of sexual violence and would like to seek help, there is free and confidential support and advice available 24/7. Contact either:
 - [Sexual Assault Crisis](#) Line on 1800 806 292
 - [1800 RESPECT](#) on 1800 737 732.
- **If you are in immediate danger, call Victoria Police on 000.**

Being under the influence of alcohol and other drugs is never an excuse for sexual violence.

- Alcohol and other drugs can decrease our inhibitions, increase our confidence and impair our judgement and decision-making - all of which can increase the chances of engaging in non-consensual sex.
- Decide on your boundaries when it comes to sex. Know what you enjoy and feel comfortable doing.
- No one should be pressured into making a decision about having sex. If a partner says 'no' or otherwise shows that they might not be into what's happening, you should stop immediately and check in with them.
- Talk with your partner about what you both do and don't enjoy when it comes to sex and the importance of practising *safer sex*. Let your partner know that no condom/dam/glove = no sex.
- You always have the right to say 'no'. You also always have the right to change your mind. You are never to blame if you experience sexual violence, including when you've been drinking alcohol or taken other drugs.
- If someone is so affected by alcohol or other drugs that they are unable to freely agree, they cannot legally consent to sex. Being under the influence of alcohol and other drugs is never an excuse for sexual violence.
- If you witness someone engaging in any form of sexual violence, be an *active bystander* and intervene if it is safe to do so. This includes calling out attitudes that justify, excuse or downplay the seriousness of sexual violence or seek to shift the blame for such behaviour to the victim/survivor.