

UNDERSTANDING FAMILY and RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE and ABUSE

EQUITY OFFICE TE ARA TAUTIKA
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Defining family violence

For the purposes of the University Family and Relationship Violence and Abuse Policy, Guidelines and materials, the terms Family Violence, Relationship Violence/Abuse or Domestic Violence will be used interchangeably when describing abuse within close relationships. The legislation uses both the terms, Family and Domestic Violence. The University is committed to being safe, inclusive and equitable. We affirm that family violence is unacceptable and that every person is entitled to respect, and to live free from fear and abuse.

In demonstrating its commitment to the health, safety and wellbeing of students and staff, the University has developed the [Family Violence Policy](#) and the [Family Violence Prevention and Management Guidelines](#)

These assist students and staff who:

- have experienced or are experiencing family violence
- are concerned about a student, friend or colleague or about safety on campus because they are aware of a family violence situation or
- are managing an employee experiencing family violence.

DEFINITION

The University recognises that family violence occurs in every sector of the community. It affects people of all ages, religions, ethnicity, socio-economic backgrounds. The occurrence of family violence is not dependent on gender, sexual orientation or gender identity.

While most victims of family violence are women being abused by an intimate partner, the NZ Domestic Violence Act (1995) covers violence occurring in a range of intimate, family and other close domestic relationships. Domestic relationships include: married couples, unmarried couples, gay and lesbian couples, children, family, anyone in a close relationship, and flatmates and others who may share a household which can include University accommodation.

Note: *Family, domestic or relationship violence is an abuse of power and usually involves a pattern of harmful coercive and controlling behaviours.*

Without intervention, it can increase over time becoming more serious and more frequent.

Family violence has many forms. It includes:

- **physical abuse** – hitting, punching, slapping, pushing, choking, punching, kicking, burning, stabbing, shooting, and threats to do harm
- **psychological abuse** – threats (to harm, to commit suicide, to report to authorities), harassment, control, stalking, jealous possessiveness, put-downs, isolation from friends and family, intimidation, verbal abuse, mind-games, humiliation, manipulation of children, malicious complaints
- **sexual abuse** – rape, coerced sex, unwanted sexual activity, forced pregnancy or abortions, forced involvement in prostitution or pornography
 - **Sexual coercion** includes a range of behaviours that a partner may use related to sexual decision-making to pressure or coerce a person to have sex without using physical force.
 - **Sexual assault** is any unwanted or forced sex act or behaviour that has happened without a person's consent. Sexual assault may include:
 - Rape (sexual intercourse without consent)
 - Indecent assault (unwanted sexual touching)
 - Acts of indecency (exposure)
- **financial abuse** – abuser makes all the financial decisions, does not allow victims to buy basic needs, makes victims account for every cent, steals their money, runs up debts in their name, forces them to work, or does not allow them to work when they want to
- **spiritual abuse** – abuser does not allow victim the freedom to follow their own faith or beliefs

Family violence becomes a University issue when it impacts on the performance, effectiveness, health, safety or wellbeing of students, staff and other members of the University community.

- 118,910 cases of family violence were reported to New Zealand Police in 2016, but 76% of incidences are not reported to the police
- Lost productivity associated with family violence was estimated to cost New Zealand between \$4.1 and \$7 billion each year.
 - Family violence affects people from all ethnicities and all socio-economic groups however groups with lower socio-economic status are at increased risk of violence.
- According to Fanslow and Robinson, between 33% to 39% of New Zealand women experience physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime.
- A study of 31 universities in 16 countries, including NZ, found at the median university, 29% of students physically assaulted a dating partner in the previous 12 months.
- A 2011 NZ University Students Association Campus Safety Audit found 87% of students surveyed had experienced some form of unhealthy relationship within their social circle.
- 20% of girls and 9% of boys in New Zealand report unwanted sexual touching or being forced to do sexual things.
- A 2013 University of Auckland study found small numbers of cases of violence were reported by students, but each case had a large impact in terms of time and resources.
- A study at Victoria University found the women who experienced sexual violence in the Halls of Residence were likely to disclose to informal support channels rather than formal ones.
- Nearly 53% of the LGBTQI community surveyed in NSW said they had previously been in an emotionally abusive relationship, and the figures were higher for transgender and intersex survey participants.
- People in violent relationships can, for a time, be at higher risk of violence when they separate (or are thinking about separating) from the violent partner.
- There is little statistical data recording men as victims of domestic violence. An Australian report found that men reported a range of physical abuse including direct assaults, and threatened with a knife. They did not report sexual assaults from their partner, but rather, verbal and emotional abuse.
- More than half of the participants in a large Canadian survey who had experienced family violence said it happened either at or near their place of work.
- Appropriate support, including from the person's employer, can help those experiencing violence to become safer. Without intervention, family violence can become more severe over time.

Impacts on study and work

Multiple studies have shown that the abusive behaviours perpetrators engage in can negatively impact their victims' ability to function effectively at work and maintain employment. Perpetrators may undertake a range of disruptive behaviours designed to harm their victim or their ability to work. In the following table, the tactics that perpetrators may use have been grouped into three categories: sabotage, stalking and on-the-job harassment.

Abusive tactics used by perpetrators as it impacts on the workplace

Sabotage Actions to either stop the victim going to work or causing them to be late, for example:	Stalking Behaving in threatening ways towards the victim, for example:	On-the-Job Harassment Behaviours that directly interfere with the victim working, for example:
Disabling the victim's vehicle	Watching victim while they work	Making a scene at the victim's workplace
Failing to arrive for or interfering with childcare	Lurking outside of the workplace	Not allowing the victim to finish their work
Hiding or destroying work uniforms or clothing	Waiting for the victim to finish work	Threatening the victim or their co-workers
Hiding car keys or taking transport money	Meeting the victim on their route home	Repeatedly calling or texting the victim
Physically restraining, harming	Following the victim to or from work	Physically assaulting the victim or co-workers

Adapted from Swanberg J, Logan T, Macke C. *Intimate partner violence, employment and the workplace consequences and future direction. Trauma, Violence and Abuse* 2005;6(4): 286-312

Staff or students experiencing family violence may:

- Be distressed, depressed, anxious, distracted and fearful at work/study
- Need to take time off work/classes to attend court, or to seek medical attention, counselling or other support
- Leave their job/course because they are hiding from their abuser
- Have a protection order which could have implications for the University (e.g., the violent person cannot contact or come to the University)
- Have their ability to work/learn sabotaged by the violent person (e.g., through damage to their car so that they are late for work/classes or work taken home may be destroyed)
- Be unable to meet course assessment deadlines or requirements

Colleagues and friends of the staff member/student being abused may:

- Be distressed or fearful on witnessing their colleague's/friend's experience of abuse
- Have an increased workload by taking on some of the victims workload, potentially decreasing their overall effectiveness
- Provide emotional support and advice to victims

- Alternatively, be unaware of abuse and think the person who is experiencing family violence is lazy, unfriendly or self-absorbed
- Occasionally intervene if the abuser is harassing their colleague/friend at the University.

Employees or students who are perpetrators of family violence may:

- Pose a risk to the victim
- Pose a risk to the victim's colleagues and friends on campus
- Pose a risk to other workers, students and visitors at the university
- Use University time and resources to harass, stalk and monitor their victim (e.g., calling the victim many times a day to control what they are doing)
- Have a protection order against them, which means that they are not allowed access to certain areas or buildings
- Need to take time off to attend court or stopping violence programmes.

People who are subject to family violence tend to have a more disrupted work history, are on lower incomes and have had to change jobs frequently. Stable employment gives them the economic resources and social support to escape and recover from family violence.

Health impacts

Adverse health outcomes consistently linked to family violence are well documented and include: physical trauma, (e.g., musculoskeletal, soft tissue, genital trauma); psychological trauma, (e.g., depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse); non-communicable diseases (e.g., cardiovascular disease, hypertension), plus chronic back pain, chronic pelvic pain, irritable bowel syndrome, and suicide.

Many people who free themselves from violent family situations continue to experience emotional, physical and psychological symptoms long after they achieve physical and emotional safety.

The World Health Organisation has stated that violence against women is a significant global public health problem. Women who have been physically or sexually abused by their partners report higher rates of a number of important health problems. For example, they are 16% more likely to have a low-birth-weight baby. They are more than twice as likely to have an abortion, almost twice as likely to experience depression and, in some regions, are 1.5 times more likely to acquire HIV, as compared to women who have not experienced partner violence.

Family violence is also prevalent in the LGBTI community with Lesbian or gay people twice as likely to have experienced intimate partner violence or sexual however, it is less reported and health issues are less recognised or dealt with.

A 2003 study reported that family violence was the third largest health problem facing gay men.

By supporting people who are subject to family violence to remain in paid employment, the University can assist people find their pathway out of violence and keep the whole workplace safer.

Power, coercion and control

Family violence is usually characterised by the pattern of actions that an individual uses to intentionally control or dominate their partner. This has been described in the “Power and Control Wheels”, originally developed with abused women and children in Duluth Minnesota in 1984.

More recently, intimate partner violence has been described as a pattern of harmful behaviours, likely to include a range of controlling and coercive behaviours that may or may not include physical violence. Abuse is usually personalised to most effectively target the things or people a particular person holds dear.

Someone experiencing abuse is trapped not only by the abusive behaviours but also by:

- Ineffective, unhelpful or unsafe responses from services/organisations and other people, and
- Social inequities e.g. sexism, racism, colonisation, poverty, heteronormativity, etc.

The original [Power and Control Wheel](#) describes the tactics of abuse of women by male partners.

[LGBTQ relationship violence](#) using the Power and Control Wheel is described here.

Power and Control in [dating relationships](#) can be found on the Sophie Elliot website.

[Immigrant and Refugee Power and Control Wheel](#)

[Post Separation Power and Control Wheel](#) explains how children can be used post break-up

[Shine Safer Homes NZ 2020](#) describes coercive and controlling behaviours and layers of entrapment.

See also [Positive Relationships](#) and [I want to stop using violence](#) on www.equity.auckland.ac.nz/itsnotok for more information.

Online harassment and cyber abuse

Hopkins and Ostini report digitised domestic violence or technological tactics, increasingly being used by perpetrators to control and terrorise current or former intimate partners. For example, circulating and publicizing (real or false) intimate information or photographs, posting derogatory statements on public blogs, slander and threats on social media sites, computer monitoring and cyber-stalking.

The Pew Research Centre surveyed internet users and found harassment, i.e., name calling to more threatening behavior, was a common part of online life. 73% of adult internet users had seen someone being harassed in some way online and 40% had personally experienced it, according to the survey.

For more information see [Online harassment and cyber abuse](#)

Case studies

Case Study 1: Ngaire, Staff

Ngaire is a staff member. She is often late for work, takes many little breaks during the day, seems distracted and doesn't always complete tasks. Her line manager has discussed her poor performance with her on a number of occasions and at the most recent discussion she disclosed that her partner regularly physically assaults her.

Case Study 2: Noor, Student

Noor is a Pakistani student. She was brought to New Zealand by her father in her last years of high school. The father is strict and controlling. Noor is only allowed to attend University and study and the only social life permitted is with some relatives and family friends. She has been requesting more freedom and this has been met by verbal aggression including threats that Noor will never see her mother again if she doesn't do as he says. He has also been stalking Noor around the University, making sure she doesn't talk to any men and that she goes straight home after class. Noor is distressed by this and wants to leave her father and live by herself but is fearful of the consequences.

Case Study 3: John, Staff

John is a staff member who recently ended a relationship with a woman. She was very unhappy with this and now constantly phones, texts and emails him (at work) sometimes 30 times a day. She is now threatening to harm herself if John doesn't see her again.

Case Study 4: Alan, Student

Alan is a student who has previously disclosed to some staff and classmates that he is gay. He hasn't disclosed this to his family. He has been in a relationship with someone for about four months but now wants to end it. When Alan told his partner he was ending the relationship, the partner became physically violent and is now threatening to "out" Alan to his family. Alan recently missed an assignment deadline and is not attending all his classes.

Case Study 5: Kim, Student

Kim is a student who lives in a University apartment. At a recent party she got very drunk and reports she had sex with one of the male students also living in the apartments. They had been part of a group of friends but she had never had sex with him before. He now tries to follow her into her room and wherever possible gropes her and talks as if he expects her to have sex again. She feels she has encouraged this situation and doesn't have a right to say no.

Case Study 6: Louise, Staff

Louise is a staff member whose husband intermittently sexually and physically abuses her. She has used all her sick leave and annual leave in doctor and hospital appointments, and in moving house after she left him earlier in the year and went into hiding. She recently went back to live with him. Now her daughter Jane has been injured (by Louise's husband) and she has asked for time off work to care for her so that Jane is not left at home alone with him.

- [Are You OK](#) has a wide range of useful information and resources about family violence.
- [Child, Youth and Family Services](#) provides services to families and children. 0508 FAMILY or 0508 326 459
- [Domestic violence and disabled people](#) is a booklet with information about the risk of violence and what you can do to keep yourself safe if you have a disability.
- [Family Justice video](#) is a free resource from the Ministry of Justice which features the true stories of four women and their experiences and interviews with men who have been perpetrators of family violence.
- [Family Services Directory](#) lists information about social service organisations that provide support, services and programmes across New Zealand
- [Glenn Foundation Stories of Change](#): Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner Dr Jackie Blue shares her personal experiences with domestic violence.
- [Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura - Outing Violence](#) focuses on building Rainbow communities in Aotearoa New Zealand free of partner and sexual violence.
- [A Jasmine and the Nightshade](#) is a short film by University of Auckland students which aims to create awareness about family violence.
- [New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse](#) is a national online centre for collating and disseminating information about family violence in Aotearoa/New Zealand.
- [Sophie Elliot Foundation](#) aims to shift attitudes to relationship violence.
- [White Ribbon Campaign](#) focuses on men speaking up against violence against women.
- [You Me Us](#) is a resource for LGBTI about healthy relationships and where to go for support if things go wrong.

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