
Coercive control

Know the signs of abuse

Coercive control is when someone repeatedly hurts, scares or isolates another person to control them. It's domestic abuse and it can cause serious harm.

About coercive control

It's an ongoing and repeated pattern of behaviour

Some coercive and controlling behaviours can seem minor on their own, but when they're repeated or continuous, they can cause serious harm.

It includes physical and non-physical behaviours

It can include any behaviour which scares, hurts, isolates, or controls another person. It can include physical violence and sexual abuse, but it doesn't have to.

Everyone's experience is different

The abusive person often tailors the controlling behaviour to the person they're abusing. It can change over time.

It can happen in different types of relationships

It can happen when people are casually dating, in a serious relationship or separated. The abusive person could also be a family member, co-resident or a carer.

Coercive control is wrong in any relationship, but it will soon be a criminal offence in NSW when a person uses these behaviours towards a current or former intimate partner.

It's deliberate

Every time a person uses abusive behaviours, they're making a choice to do so, and are responsible for their abuse and its consequences.

Examples of abusive behaviours

These are just some examples of coercive and controlling behaviours:

- Deliberately harming a person's mental health or emotional wellbeing e.g., constantly insulting and criticising someone.
- Shaming, humiliating or belittling someone e.g., sharing private information about them or making jokes that harm their self-esteem and dignity.
- Using violence to hurt, control or intimidate someone e.g., physically hurting a person in any way, throwing or breaking things, or driving recklessly to make someone feel unsafe.
- Making threats e.g., threatening to withdraw visa sponsorship.
- Isolating someone from their friends, family and community e.g., taking away their phone so they can't contact family and friends.
- Limiting someone's freedom and independence or controlling their day-to-day choices e.g., making rules about what they can wear or preventing the person from leaving the house or going out alone.
- Controlling or limiting someone's access to money or their ability to make money e.g., not allowing them to work outside the home to earn money.

- Monitoring or tracking someone's activities, communications or movements in person or online e.g., reading their emails and text messages without their permission.
- Isolating someone from their culture or community or preventing them from expressing their cultural or spiritual identity e.g., not letting them speak their cultural language.
- Pressuring or forcing someone into sexual activity or controlling their reproductive choices e.g., making rules about when someone must have sex.
- Using systems, services and processes to threaten, manipulate or control another person e.g. making false reports to child protective or immigration services.

Coercive control and the law

From July 2024, **coercive control will be a criminal offence in NSW** when a person uses these behaviours towards a current or former intimate partner with the intention to coerce or control them. The law will only apply to abusive behaviour that happens after the date it comes into effect.

Whether you're experiencing coercive control from an intimate partner, a family member, a caregiver, or any other person, it's always wrong and there's support available.

Get help

If you're in immediate danger, call Triple Zero **000** and ask for Police.

If you or someone you know is experiencing coercive control, call [1800RESPECT 1800 737 732](tel:1800RESPECT) for support and information. Available 24 hours, 7 days a week.

If you are worried about your behaviour, call the [Men's Referral Service](tel:1300766491) on **1300 766 491**. Available 24 hours, 7 days a week. This is a free, confidential and anonymous service.

If you need an interpreter, call the Translating and Interpreting Service on **131 450** and ask them to contact the service you would like to speak to.

More information about coercive control and support services are available in English at nsw.gov.au/coercive-control.