

Is technology being used to scare, control or harm you?

You deserve support if you're being abused

Domestic and family violence can be physical or non-physical abuse and include things that happen online or use digital technology.

The abuser might be:

- a husband or partner
- a family member, including someone in your extended family or a carer
- an ex-partner
- someone you're dating.
- someone you share a home with

Sexual violence can also be a part of domestic and family violence. This can involve sexual behaviour that happens without consent and the abuse can be both physical and non-physical.

If you're abused, it's not your fault and you have the right to be believed.

The information in this fact sheet will help you deal with domestic, family and sexual violence that happens online or uses digital technology. It's important to know you are not alone and help is available.

If you are in immediate danger, call the police on Triple Zero (000).

Technology is often used as part of domestic, family and sexual violence

If online or digital technology is used to harm or abuse someone, it's called 'technology-facilitated abuse' or 'tech-based abuse'.

Examples include:

- keeping constant track of you online in a way that makes you feel worried or threatened (also known as cyberstalking)
- harassing or threatening you online or with a digital device
- sharing or threatening to share an intimate image or video of you online without your consent (also known as image-based abuse)
- restricting or controlling your access to devices and online accounts.



Domestic, family and sexual violence can be hard to talk about. Some people might feel like it's a private or family matter. Others might consider it shameful. But this type of abuse can be extremely harmful and against the law.

Domestic, family and sexual violence is:

- never OK and should not be tolerated
- an abuse of power
- mainly perpetrated by men in an intimate partner relationship or after separating from the relationship.

Find out more about domestic and family violence at [eSafety.gov.au/domestic-family-violence](https://www.esafety.gov.au/domestic-family-violence)

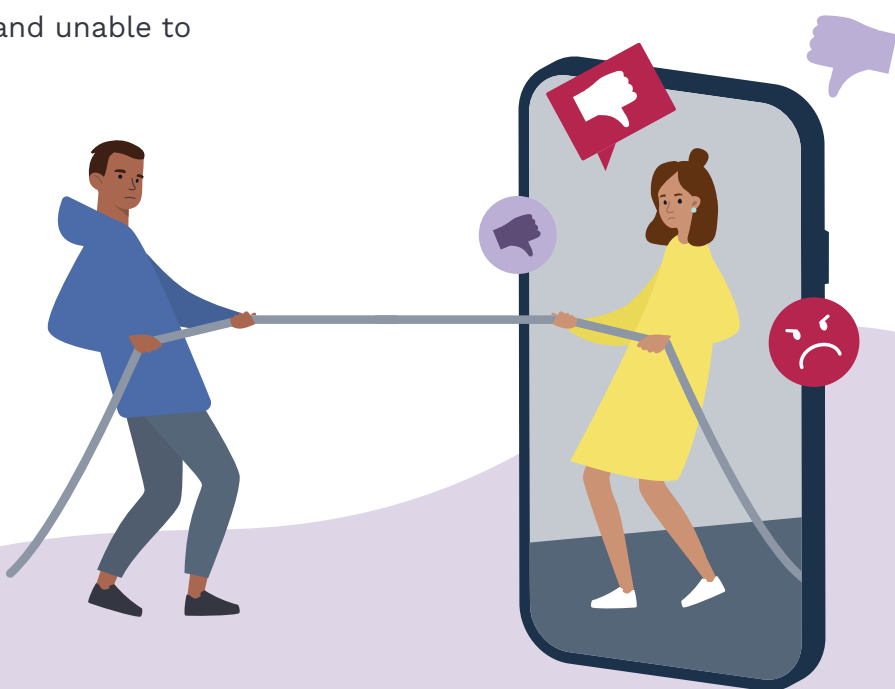
How technology can be used to control you

Digital technology can be used by an abuser to gain and keep power over you and undermine your confidence, freedom and independence.

When someone repeatedly uses digital technology or online accounts to control you, it's called 'tech-based coercive control'. This form of abuse is almost always a factor in domestic, family and sexual violence. The behaviour might be obvious and direct, but it can also be hidden and done in secret.

Tech-based coercive control is not a single act, but a pattern of behaviour used against you to:

- make you feel alone by cutting you off from your family, friends, services and money
- pressure you to do things you don't want to do
- pressure you to stop doing things you enjoy doing
- track where you are going and what you are doing
- confuse you to make you unsure about what is real and what is in your imagination
- isolate you so you feel trapped and unable to leave the relationship.



Signs of tech-based abuse

Every person's experience of tech-based abuse is unique, but there are some common signs. You might notice these types of behaviours:



Tracking and surveillance

- Messaging your friends or family to check what you are doing.
- Secretly tracking your device locations to check where you are.
- Installing hidden cameras or security systems in the home, car or children's toys to monitor what you do.



Sexual violence and abuse

- Recording your sexual or intimate activities without your permission.
- Pressuring you to engage in sexual activities online.
- Sending you unwanted sexually explicit images, videos or messages.



Harassment

- Repeatedly calling or sending you messages demanding to know information like, 'What are you doing?' or 'Who are you with?' and expecting an immediate response.
- Threatening to reveal your sexual preferences online if you argue with them.
- Creating fake social media accounts to post embarrassing or abusive content about you.



Isolation

- Spreading rumours or lies about you in text messages or in social media posts to damage your friendships and other relationships.
- Refusing to let you work or study by restricting your access to devices, transport apps or key cards.
- Damaging, destroying or removing your assistive technology, such as hearing, mobility or accessibility aids.



Financial abuse

- Limiting your access to money by blocking your access to online banking.
- Checking your online activity to make sure you're not applying for jobs.
- Gambling your joint money online and blaming you for their online gambling problems.



Restricting privacy and independence

- Changing the passcodes on your online accounts or devices, so you can't use them without help or permission.
- Insisting on joining your telehealth calls or other online appointments.
- Accessing your fitness devices to track your eating habits, weight, menstrual cycle or location.



Gaslighting

- Secretly changing the settings on your smart home devices, so that heating, lights or the television turn on at unexpected times.
- Trying to confuse you by creating a fake internet browsing history that they accuse you of creating.
- Refusing to admit they're tracking or monitoring you, even when there is evidence to show they are.



Safety tips to discuss with a trusted support person

- Check what accounts your abuser can access, including your email, bank and social media details.
- If it's safe, change passwords and set up multi-factor authentication across accounts.
- Check for apps you don't recognise on your phone and log out of online accounts when not using them.

How does tech-based abuse affect children?

Children can be negatively impacted when they see a parent experiencing physical or non-physical abuse.

A child can also directly experience tech-based abuse as part of domestic and family violence. This includes:

- monitoring or stalking
- harassment, threats or intimidation
- blocking their online communication.

In some cases, children might also experience tech-based coercive control. For example, your partner might change their online accounts or devices to monitor or stalk you when you are with them. Your partner might also monitor their accounts or devices to control or manipulate them.

Domestic, family and sexual violence can be distressing for you and the children in your life. Setting some rules around the use of digital devices and accounts can help protect them from tech-based abuse.

If your child needs physical and emotional support because of tech-based abuse, contact a support service worker to help you and your children.

Find out more about how to keep children safe online in domestic and family violence situations at [eSafety.gov.au/keeping-your-family-safe](https://www.esafety.gov.au/keeping-your-family-safe).

You have the right to be safe and help is available

For confidential and free information, counselling and support, you can call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or text 0458 737 732 any time of the day, 7 days a week.

It may be best to make contact from a trusted person's phone or device, if you think yours is being tracked or monitored. If an abusive person learns that you are seeking help and information, their behaviour may get worse.



If you require translation services, you can:

- call **1800RESPECT** on **1800 737 732** and ask for an interpreter
- call the Translating and Interpreting Service on **131 450** and ask them to contact **1800RESPECT**.

To find migrant, refugee and culturally and linguistically diverse services in your area, visit: 1800respect.org.au/services/search

If you are experiencing serious online abuse, talk to a support worker about how eSafety can help to remove harmful online content. You can also make a free and confidential report to eSafety.gov.au/report.



If you're experiencing image-based abuse, eSafety can support you

Image-based abuse is when someone shares, or threatens to share, an intimate image or video of you without your consent.

This includes:

- you being naked or partly naked
- your genitals, bottom or breasts – even if you have underwear on
- you during a private activity – such as undressing, using the toilet, showering, having a bath or getting sexual
- you without clothing of religious or cultural significance, if you normally wear it in public.

If this has happened to you, it is not your fault.

eSafety has legal powers to have this type of content removed from social media sites, websites and other online environments. You can make a free and confidential report to eSafety.gov.au/report.

You can also report image-based abuse to the police. They may be able to charge the person responsible and help protect you. This is very important if someone is threatening to hurt you or your children.

Find out more about image-based abuse at eSafety.gov.au/image-based-abuse.

