

WHAT IS COERCIVE CONTROL?

Coercive control is a less visible part of family and domestic violence that can affect anyone, regardless of their background. It happens when someone tries to dominate and control another person, like a spouse, partner, or family member, using manipulation and fear.

UNDERSTANDING COERCIVE CONTROL

Migrant and refugee communities

WHAT DOES COERCIVE CONTROL LOOK LIKE?

Coercive control is about having power over someone else. For migrant and refugee individuals, the following situations can increase opportunities for coercive control to occur:

Immigration status and fear of deportation



Your spouse, partner or his family might use your immigration status or visa to maintain control, threaten to have you deported or withhold documentation. For example:

- Threatening to report you to immigration authorities or police if you attempt to leave the relationship.
- Refusing to assist with or complete your visa paperwork in order to keep you dependent on them.

Cultural or religious expectations



Your spouse, partner or his family member might use cultural or religious beliefs to control your behaviour and who you can talk to. They may also prevent you from practicing your religion or spiritual beliefs. For instance:

- Forcing you to act in a “traditional way” because you are a woman.
- Stopping you from going to religious services or cultural gatherings.

Financial dependence and control



Financial abuse can involve not letting you have access to your own money, or controlling how you spend it. For example:

- Tracking bank accounts, not allowing you access to them, or refusing to give you money for things you need.
- Demanding dowry payments from your family.
- Scaring you by saying that they will end the marriage if their financial demands are not met.

Language barriers and isolation



Your spouse, partner or his family may stop you from finding help or understanding your rights by taking advantage of your limited English. For example:

- Stopping you from attending language classes or interacting with English-speaking people. This may restrict you from asking for help from people.
- Isolating you by stopping you from contacting or seeing your family, friends, neighbours and accessing services in the community.

Using the legal system



You might not know about your legal rights in Australia, which can lead to a spouse or partner using this to manipulate or frighten you. This can include:

- Threatening you with legal action to stop you from getting help or using your rights.
- Using your limited legal knowledge to lie to you about Australian laws.

Remember, coercive control can look different for everyone. If something doesn't feel right, reach out and talk to someone who can support you. There are some services you can speak to about coercive control on the next page.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Leaving an abusive situation can be difficult. You might face barriers like fear, financial issues, immigration concerns, and emotional ties to the person using coercive control. It's okay to seek support and take steps towards leaving when you feel ready and safe to do so.



You can contact:



inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence

Call **1800 755 988** to speak to support staff.
Open 9:00am-5:00pm
Monday- Friday
www.intouch.org.au



Safe Steps

Call **1800 015 188** for crisis support, information and accommodation.
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
www.safesteps.org.au



1800RESPECT

Call **1800 737 732** for domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support.
Live online chat available.
www.1800respect.org.au



The Orange Door

Find help for family violence near you.
www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au



DEVELOP A PLAN FOR YOUR SAFETY

Create a plan with steps you can take to protect yourself. This may include identifying safe places you can go to, like a library or community centre and having a trusted person to contact in emergencies. The organisations listed on the left can help you to do this.



RECORD INCIDENTS

Keep a record of times when coercive control happens in your relationship, including dates, witnesses, and any other specific details. Hide this document in a safe place.



HIDE VALUABLES AND IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Find a secret and secure place to hide valuables like jewellery and important documents, such as identification and immigration papers.



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Understand your rights in Australia in relation to marriage, immigration, and domestic violence laws. There are free legal services that can support you. Call Legal Help on **1300 792 387** for more information.



ACCESS CULTURALLY SENSITIVE SERVICES

Look for support services that are culturally sensitive and offer interpreters. These services can provide the understanding and assistance you need while respecting your cultural background. See the list of services on the side.

If you need an interpreter for any of these services, call TIS (Translating and Interpreting Services) on **131 450** and ask them to call the above numbers. Visit www.tisnational.gov.au