

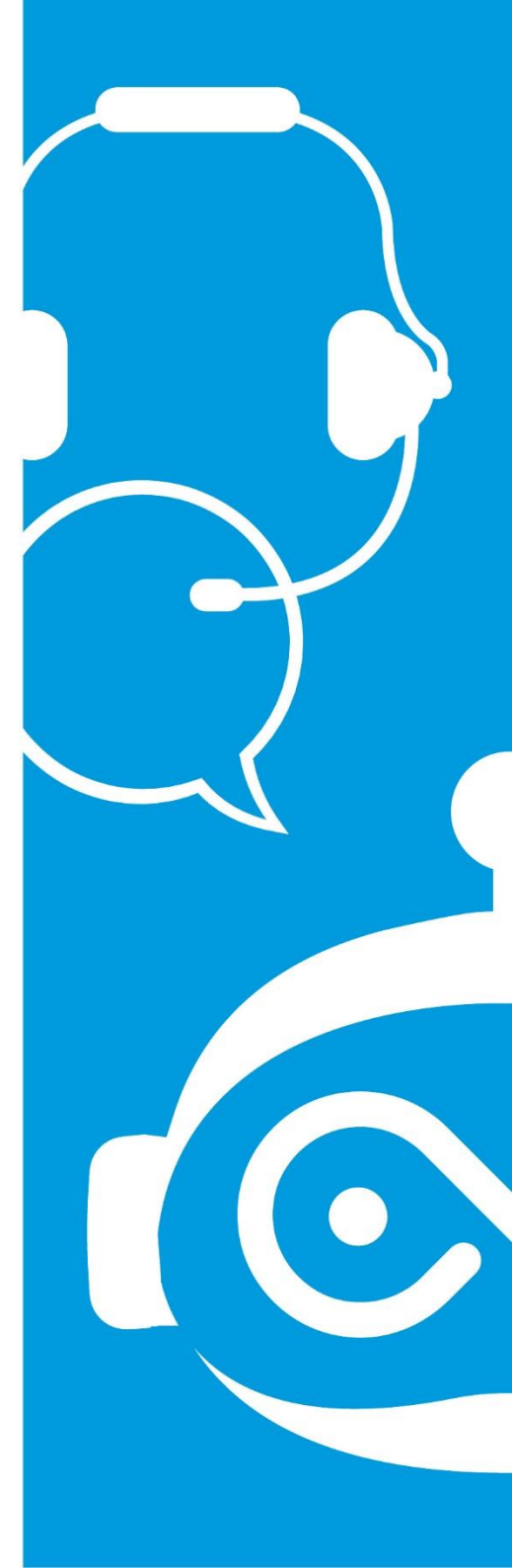


GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: COERCIVE CONTROL OF TECHNOLOGY

What is it?

Coercive control of technology, often referred to as "tech-based coercive control," is a troubling **digital phenomenon** that revolves around the use of digital tools to assert power and control over individuals within intimate relationships. This form of abuse leverages technology to monitor, manipulate, and dominate a partner, causing harm, fear, and a profound violation of privacy and personal autonomy.

Coercive control of technology is a particularly insidious form of abuse because it leverages the very tools that have become integral to our daily lives. Victims often find it challenging to escape such situations due to the digital footprint left behind, coupled with the fear of repercussions.



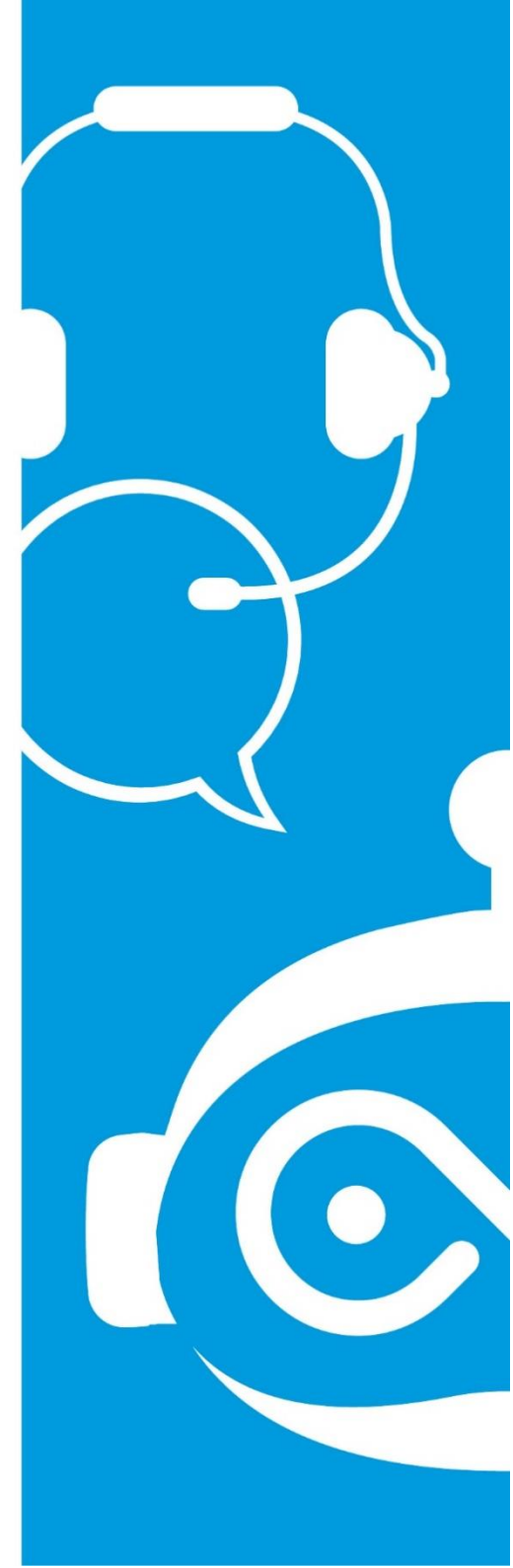
How can it impact the sexual and reproductive health of youth?

Coercive control of technology can have serious implications for the SRH of youth. It manifests in various ways, with potentially devastating effects on their well-being.

When youth engage in digital interactions within their romantic relationships, they may face pressure or coercion to share intimate content. Victims may feel trapped, isolated, and coerced into engaging in unwanted sexual activities or coercive control can involve the non-consensual sharing of explicit images or videos. This not only violates their privacy but can also lead to the dissemination of such content without consent, jeopardizing their sexual autonomy and consent boundaries.

In some cases, technology can be used to exert reproductive control. Abusers might tamper with their partner's contraception methods, sabotage their efforts to use birth control, or even coerce them into unwanted pregnancies. This can have profound consequences for a young person's reproductive choices and life plans.

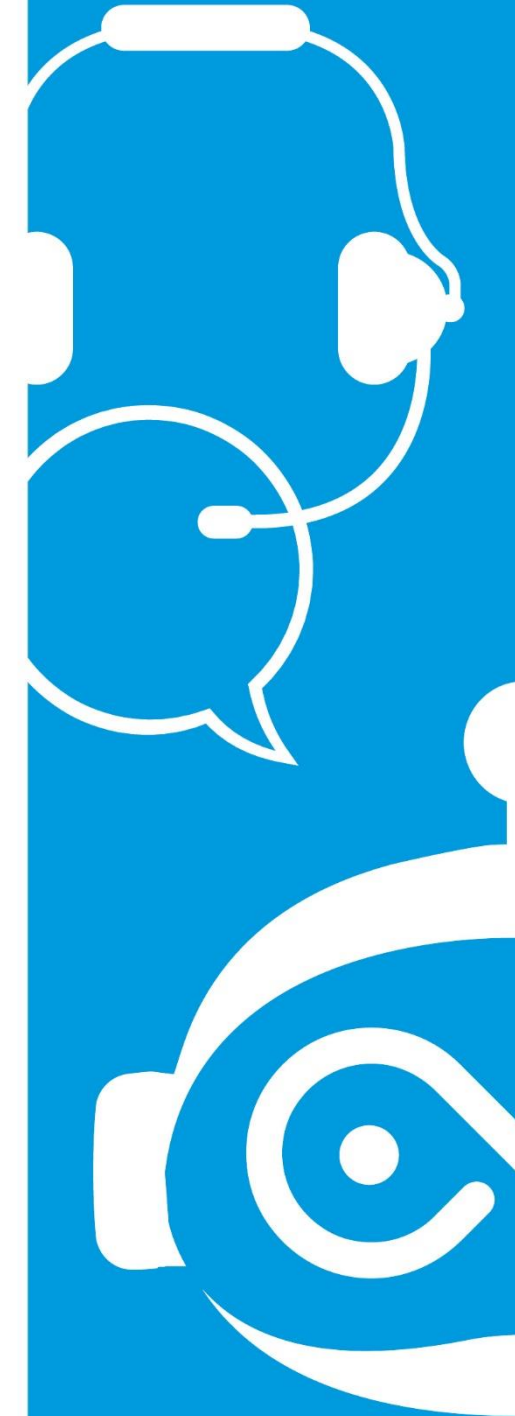
Youth are particularly vulnerable to isolation due to their often limited life experiences and reliance on technology for social connections. When coercive control tactics are employed, such as isolating the victim from friends and family online, it can disrupt their access to support networks that might otherwise help them make informed decisions about their SRH.



Supporting youth's sexual & reproductive health in the digital age: BEST PRACTICES

Youth may not readily recognize coercive control behaviours, especially if they are not aware of its existence. When they do identify such behaviours, they may be hesitant to seek help due to fear, shame, or the belief that this is just a normal part of romantic relationships.

Coercive control in digital interactions can hinder the development of healthy relationships. Youth who experience this type of abuse may struggle to understand what constitutes a respectful and consensual relationship, potentially affecting their choices regarding sexual and reproductive health.



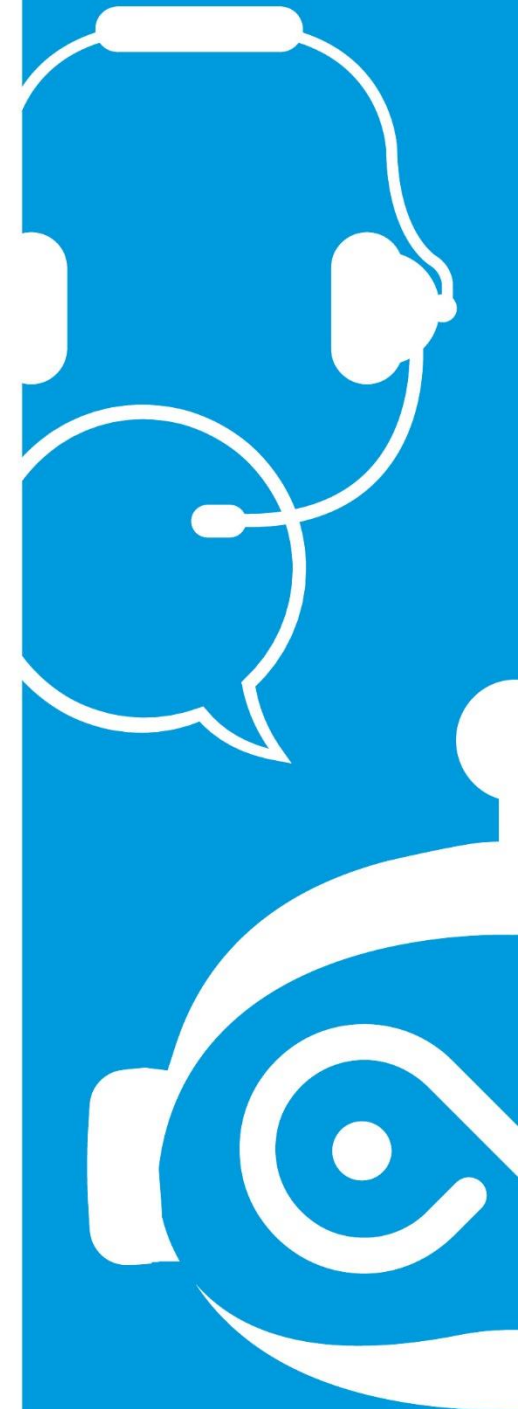
What are some ways in which youth can be supported?

- Teach youth about consent, boundaries, and the importance of mutual respect in both physical and digital contexts.
- Help youth identify signs of coercive control, such as constant surveillance of personal belongings, isolation from others in-person and online, or manipulative behaviour in terms of determining the nature and extent to which they can use their digital tools and with whom they can communicate.
- Provide resources on building self-confidence, setting boundaries, and seeking support if they suspect coercive control.
- Teach youth how to secure their online presence, detect spyware, and protect their personal information from abusive partners.

Related digital phenomena/tools:

See sheets:

- Online crisis hotlines
- Gender-based violence: Intimate image abuse
- Online social movements: Women's march



Further reading:

- Banks, James & Andersson, Catrin. (2023). The Role of Technology in Stalking and Coercive Control Among Young People.
- Bhanbhro, Sadiq. (2023). Stalking and Coercive Control: Commonly Used Strategies in Honour-Based Abuse Against Young People.
- Dragiewicz, Molly. (2023). Best-practice principles for measurement of technology-facilitated coercive control.
- Cuomo, Dana & Dolci, Natalie. (2021). New tools, old abuse: Technology-Enabled Coercive Control (TECC). *Geoforum*. 126. 224-232.
- Havard, Tirion & Lefevre, Michelle. (2020). Beyond the Power and Control Wheel: how abusive men manipulate mobile phone technologies to facilitate coercive control. *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*. 4.
- Woodlock, Delanie & McKenzie, Mandy & Western, Deborah & Harris, Bridget. (2019). Technology as a Weapon in Domestic Violence: Responding to Digital Coercive Control. *Australian Social Work*. 73. 1-13.

