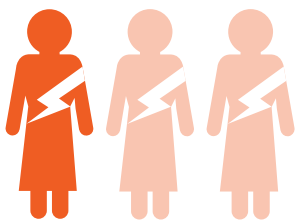




UNGA 79: INTENSIFICATION OF EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS:

TECHNOLOGY FACILITATED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS REPORT OF THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL (2024)

RAPID TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE CONTINUES TO CREATE NEW RISKS AND NEW PLATFORMS FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS



1 in 3 women is subjected to physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime.



VAWG

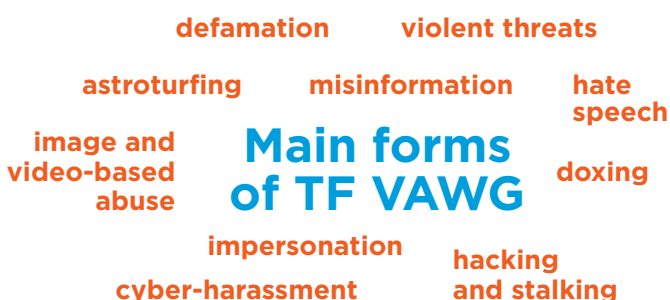
Violence Against Women and Girls is increasingly experienced across the online and offline continuum.

TF VAWG and TF GBV



Technology Facilitated Violence against Women and Girls (TF VAWG) and **Technology Facilitated Gender-based Violence (TF GBV)** is “any act that is committed, assisted, aggravated, or amplified

by the use of information communication technologies or other digital tools that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological, social, political, or economic harm, or other infringements of rights and freedoms.”



While all women and girls are at risk, some groups are disproportionately affected

Women in the public eye and marginalised women and girls continue to be most affected by TF VAWG. These include women in public life, journalists, women human rights defenders, politicians, feminist activists, and young women and girls.



The prevalence of TF VAWG ranges from

16 to 58 per cent



Misinformation and defamation are the most prevalent forms of online violence against women with

67 per cent of women and girls

who have experienced TF VAWG reporting this tactic.



73 per cent

of women journalists reported experiencing online violence.



300 million children

have been affected by online child sexual exploitation and abuse in the last **12 months**.

EMERGING CHALLENGES INTENSIFYING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS



Anti-rights actors

Anti-rights actors are increasingly using online spaces to pushback against women's rights. This is creating a hostile digital environment for women and girls, particularly marked by **cyberbullying, harassment, and threats of violence, targeting women human rights defenders, women's rights activists, and women engaged in public life.**

This phenomenon is serving to silence women's voices and undermine their participation in public discourse.



The growth of Artificial Intelligence

The rapid growth of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has serious implications for VAWG.

AI is intensifying VAWG both by facilitating the spread of targeted disinformation as well as the proliferation of image-based abuse and deepfake pornographic videos.

According to Sensity AI, **90 to 95 per cent of all online deepfakes** are non-consensual pornographic images with around **90 per cent of these depicting women.**

A study across 31 countries found that **younger men are more conservative** than men of older generations and are more likely to consider that promoting women's equality is discriminating against men.¹

A 2022 study found an **increase of 59 per cent in violent rhetoric** over the past year and content that encourages and excuses child sexual exploitation.²



Technology and misogynist norms

Technology is reinforcing misogynist norms. Like all forms of VAWG, TF VAWG is rooted in gender inequality and discriminatory gender norms, which are pervasive and entrenched in societies globally. There is growing evidence of **how online spaces are fueling misogyny and entrenching the normalisation of VAWG.**

For example

The "**manosphere**", which is a decentralised cross-platform collection of online communities of misogynistic men, amplifies sexist stereotypes in popular, shareable formats that gain traction at scale with limited accountability given the perpetrators' anonymity.

TECHNOLOGY CAN ALSO BE HARNESSSED FOR THE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO VAWG



There are **growing examples of AI being used for positive social change** and to prevent or respond to

VAWG. For example, the French technology firm Bodyguard.AI has developed an app that uses AI to filter out online abuse.³



Digital tools are increasingly being used for VAWG prevention and response. For

example, there has been a proliferation of apps that help women connect with others, share location, reach emergency services and access specialist VAWG services.⁴



Collaboration with and investments in women's rights organisations and VAWG

specialist services is critical to inform the development of technology-based tools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Member states, UN agencies and other stakeholders



To accelerate progress in the elimination of TF VAWG, and to respond to emerging impacts of technological advances in AI, **States, United Nations entities and other stakeholders should prioritise working together with technology companies** to develop clear international standards and a framework for responding to TF VAWG, including emerging forms, legal standards, roles and responsibilities and common standards of accountability for content generators, content distributors, international coordination and cooperation.

The standards should be based on existing international legal and policy frameworks on violence against women. They should also be **context and culturally specific to reflect the different harms and manifestations of TF VAWG in different regions and countries** and should clarify the relationship between freedom of expression and privacy, and the right to freedom from discrimination and violence.

States are urged to



- **Explicitly criminalise the production and sharing of explicit images or videos** that have been digitally manipulated.
- **Criminalise and prohibit all forms of TF VAWG** and **strengthen capacities of law enforcement** agencies to investigate and prosecute crimes effectively.
- Ensure risk assessment frameworks are in place for detecting the activity of extremist groups– both online and offline – with explicit reference to Incels and gender-based violence, the continuum of online and offline harm, and the use of technology to perpetuate harmful misogynistic ideology as risk factors.
- **Strengthen accountability** through implementing positive obligations for technology intermediaries to proactively detect, assess and address TF VAWG and provide a safe and respectful environment online, free from misogyny, with penalties for non-compliance.
- **Establish an independent oversight body** to hold technology intermediaries to account, raise awareness of TF VAWG and provide avenues for survivors to seek redress and remedies. States should develop **early warning indicators and systems** to identify online violence that can escalate to offline violence.
- Integrate strategies utilising technology and online platforms in actions to prevent and respond to all forms of VAWG (online and offline), including through **creating safe spaces for women's rights activism and digital advocacy to thrive**, by transforming social norms, fostering positive masculinities and countering harmful and misogynistic narratives.

- Support women’s rights organisations to **monitor and hold technology companies to account** on digital safety and develop specific strategies to ensure the safety and protection for women in public life, including women human rights defenders and activists.
- **Strengthen partnerships with the technology sector** to create safe online spaces, ensure rapid responses and access to specialised support, legal aid justice and reparations for survivors and the accountability of perpetrators.
- Strengthen cooperation with technology intermediaries, women’s rights organisations, civil society and national human rights institutions to develop more effective measures to prevent and respond to TF VAWG.
- Strengthen data collection efforts to better **understand the different manifestations, impacts and drivers of TF VAWG** as well as the linkages with offline violence.
- Invest in **data collection and research** to better understand the profiles and motivations of perpetrators of online violence as well as the connections between online and offline VAWG to better detect risks of online abuse escalating to offline violence including lethal violence and femicide.

Technology Intermediaries are urged to



- **Develop strong policies and standards** to guide responses to TF VAWG, including strengthening content moderation policies, codes of conduct and responses to reports of TF VAWG.
- **Ensure gender-responsive design of technology**, including through increasing the participation of women in the technology sector.
- Develop **robust methods of identifying AI generated media**; openly share their terms of service, safeguards, and approaches for monitoring use for inappropriate content; and respond swiftly to reports of harmful content.
- Ensure that **codes of conduct and policies which address hate speech and extremist content**, also explicitly address misogyny and content that normalises VAWG.
- Ensure **all new technology and AI products are tested thoroughly** and through consultation and partnership with women’s rights and women’s safety experts to ensure that any new products do not cause harm to women and girls or perpetuate VAWG.

Endnotes

- 1 “IPSOS (2024), International Women’s Day 2024: Global Attitudes Towards Women’s Leadership” and the hyperlink should be: <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2024-06/International-Womens-day-2024-report.pdf>
- 2 Center for Countering Digital Hate (2022) The Incelosphere: Exposing pathways into incel communities and the harms they pose to women and children, <https://counterhate.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/CCDH-The-Incelosphere-FINAL.pdf>
- 3 <https://ethicalsource.dev/blog/ai-and-gender-based-violence/>;
<https://www.npr.org/2023/06/08/1180772665/tennis-social-media-ai-french-open-swiatek-stephens>
- 4 Marganski, A. J., & Melander, L. A. (2021). Technology-facilitated violence against women and girls in public and private spheres: Moving from enemy to ally. In The Emerald International Handbook of Technology-Facilitated Violence and Abuse (pp. 623-641). Emerald Publishing Limited