

What makes

TFGBV different from other forms of violence?

TFGBV is particularly difficult to address because of its nature:

1. It is anonymous
2. It can be perpetrated at a distance
3. It is accessible and affordable for perpetrators
4. It can be automated
5. It can be constant and easily propagated
6. It can be collectively organized
7. It is often perpetrated with impunity, as there are currently no legal frameworks for accountability
8. It can be difficult to erase or remove TFGBV content, so it remains in perpetuity
9. It contributes to the normalization of violence against women and girls, since it is seen as less severe than other forms

What is technology-facilitated gender-based violence?

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence, or TFGBV, is an act of violence perpetrated by one or more individuals that is committed, assisted, aggravated and amplified in part or fully by the use of information and communication technologies or digital media, against a person on the basis of their gender.

When it comes to TFGBV, there are two key facts to remember:

- ❖ It is gendered – women and girls are targeted simply because they are women and girls.
- ❖ It is broader than online violence, and while it does take place online and in digital spaces, it can also come about through any type of technology – old and new – such as phones, GPS tracking devices, drones or recording devices that are not connected to the Internet.

What does TFGBV look like in real life?

TFGBV can be perpetrated using new technologies, or by using old technologies in new ways. It evolves constantly, and we must remain vigilant. There are many forms of TFGBV, including:

- ❖ Online gender and sexual harassment
- ❖ Cyberstalking
- ❖ Image-based abuse, including non-consensual sharing of intimate images, deep fakes or sending unsolicited images of genitals to another person
- ❖ Technology-facilitated sexual abuse, such as sextortion (blackmail by threatening to publish sexual information, photos or videos), online grooming for sexual assault, etc.
- ❖ Doxing (publishing private personal information)
- ❖ Hacking
- ❖ Impersonation
- ❖ Searching for targets and using technology to locate survivors in order to perpetrate violence
- ❖ Hate speech
- ❖ Defamation
- ❖ Limiting or controlling survivors' use of technology

What are the impacts of TFGBV?

Digital life is real life. TFGBV is often perceived as less severe or less harmful than offline forms of violence, but research shows it has serious consequences on the health, lives and futures of women and girls. TFGBV also often leads to offline violence, posing a very dangerous threat to women and girls' safety and physical integrity.

The impacts of TFGBV on mental health are severe: stress, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation and even suicide attempts have been reported by survivors. Survivors of sexualized forms of TFGBV are often stigmatized and blamed, and suffer damage to their reputation, affecting many aspects of their social lives. When women rely on online spaces for their professional lives, TFGBV also has serious impacts on their economic opportunities and access to resources.

In addition, TFGBV silences women online and reduces their participation in public and political life, in democratic processes and in leadership roles. As a result, TFGBV reinforces patriarchal roles, norms and structures, and is a major barrier to gender equality and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Given the new and constantly evolving forms and the specific characteristics of TFGBV, prevention and responses require the collective efforts of national Governments, technology companies, digital rights and feminist movements, GBV service providers, academics and, finally and most importantly, survivors of TFGBV.

All reform and regulation to prevent and respond to TFGBV must be guided by human-rights based approaches, taking account of the experiences of women and girls in all their diversity to ensure their needs are met.

National Governments must:

1. Recognize and integrate TFGBV into national laws, regulations and policies, and develop a common international legislative framework to fight cross-border TFGBV. Enforce laws through adequate budgeting and resourcing, including establishing independent statutory boards to ensure compliance, address TFGBV and promote safety and accountability of technology platforms.
2. Invest in prevention through digital literacy programmes for women and girls and communities; integrate modules on healthy behaviour online into comprehensive sex education or life skills education; and support community action, advocacy and activism against TFGBV.
3. Strengthen response mechanisms by building capacity of service providers across sectors and providing financial, human and technical resources to respond to TFGBV. This should also be enhanced by ensuring participatory and feminist approaches are included in service design; and by integrating tech companies as respondents into existing referral mechanisms.
4. Invest in generating data and evidence on the prevalence and impacts of TFGBV, but also what works to prevent and respond to it, including through in-depth, empirical and interdisciplinary law and policy research.

What can we do about it?

Technology companies must:*

1. Incorporate Safety by Design approaches into the development of all their products. This means using participatory approaches to develop and apply technologies and digital platforms, in partnership with women, organizations and advocates. It also means including prevention, mitigation and response to TFGBV in all stages of product development and in Standard Operating Procedures, ensuring compliance through company-wide training.
2. Be transparent in their algorithms, content moderation policies and complaint mechanisms. Policies, algorithms and mechanisms need to be made available and enforced in a clear and transparent manner.

3. Be accountable to democratic bodies and users, including survivors of TFGBV. This involves establishing effective complaint mechanisms that ensure immediate response and removal of harmful material. Local and national focal points should be appointed to support such complaints and remove harmful material.
4. Be responsible for the harm caused by a failure to act on harmful material and bad use of technology. This means taking economic responsibility for the harm caused to survivors, as well as ensuring enforcement of effective prevention and response mechanisms.

* Based on the STAR (Safety Transparency Accountability Responsibility) framework developed by the Center of Countering Digital Hate.

