BEHIND THE SCREEN

Understanding Online Gender-Based Violence in Cambodia

klahaan brave

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INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

Online gender-based violence (OGBV) is one of the fastest-growing forms of violence against women and girls in the digital age. As technologies evolve and the use of social media platforms expands, so do the spaces where women's bodies, voices and identities are policed, harassed or silenced. The largest international survey to date, conducted by Plan International in 2020, found that 58% of young women and girls have experienced some form of online harassment. [1] These digital forms of violence, ranging from cyberbullying and hate speech to online sexual exploitation and image-based abuse, represent an alarming extension of the gender-based violence that women and girls face offline.

Cambodia is no exception. Technology and social media have become embedded in people's everyday lives. As of early 2025, the country counts more than 25.3 million mobile connections, exceeding its total population and an internet penetration rate of approximately 60.7%. [2] Facebook remains the most widely used platform with around 12.9 million users, followed closely by TikTok with 10.7 million users aged 18 and above, a figure that continues to rise amongst youth, especially from urban areas. [3] A 2021 survey by LICADHO revealed that 97% of respondents use Facebook regularly, against 84% for Messenger, and 83% for Telegram, which highlights just how popular social media is within Cambodian society. [4]

The digital sphere has undoubtedly created new opportunities for women's participation, activism, self-expression and solidarity. Yet, it also mirrors and magnifies the same patriarchal structures that exist offline. Indeed, OGBV is not an isolated phenomenon. It is a digital continuum of the same discriminatory norms, misogynistic beliefs, and power hierarchies that normalise violence against women and marginalised groups in homes, schools, workplaces and communities. [5] As the CEDAW Committee reminds us, gender-based violence in any form, whether online or offline, is rooted in unequal power relations and social norms that tolerate or justify violence. [6]

In Cambodia, where traditional gender roles and social norms continue to limit women's autonomy, the internet has become a new site of control and surveillance. Harmful traditional norms, sexist humour and misogynistic hate speech are amplified by algorithms and protected by anonymity, creating an environment where gendered abuse is not only tolerated but often rewarded through likes, shares and visibility. These digital attacks have serious real-world consequences, from reputational damage and psychological harm to threats of physical violence. [7]

Yet, OGBV remains poorly understood and under-addressed. Survivors often face a culture of victim-blaming and a lack of accountability. Although more discussions on OGBV are taking place, there has been no consensus on its definition, including amongst international actors and institutions. [8] Limited awareness, weak legal frameworks, as well as the transnational nature of online platforms have collectively undermined response efforts and contributed to impunity. As technologies evolve, so do the forms, tools, and tactics of online abuse, creating new challenges for survivors and response mechanisms alike.

It is within this complex landscape that our Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) called "***Behind the Screen: Understanding Online Gender-Based Violence***" seeks to fill a critical gap in understanding the nature, causes, and impacts of OGBV within the Cambodian context.

Rather than focusing on predetermined or exhaustive forms of OGBV, this introductory study adopts an open-ended and participatory approach, allowing research participants to identify the types of online violence they encounter most frequently or are most familiar with. Therefore, while not representative of all forms of OGBV, the findings pinpointed three prominent manifestations: (1) cyberbullying and hate speech, (2) online harassment and sexual exploitation, and (3) online scams.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Our research team developed the following research objectives to set out what we hoped to discover by undertaking this study:

- *To explore how OGBV is currently understood, including its root causes and its variations across gender, age, and geography.*

- *To examine the experiences and impacts of OGBV on individuals both online and offline, particularly among women in all their diversity.*

- *To identify where survivors turn for help, how they experience existing response mechanisms, and what barriers they encounter.*

Behind the Screen: Understanding Online Gender-Based Violence is the first participatory research that focuses on the gendered nature of OGBV through an intersectional lens, highlighting not only the experiences of women and girls, but also LGBTQIA+ individuals, people living with disabilities, ethnic minorities from the Khmer-Vietnam and Cham communities, as well as Indigenous People. It ultimately calls for further research and collective action to reclaim digital spaces as sites of safety, dignity and equality for all.

1.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. OGBV is considered a serious issue, but receives limited attention. Knowledge and understanding of OGBV is scarce; the lack of awareness and low digital literacy contribute to vulnerability to online harm and widespread impunity.

2. Perceived most at-risk populations of OGBV are women, girls, and LGBTQIA+ people, followed by people living with disabilities, Indigenous People (IP), people living in rural/remote areas, and ethnic minorities.

3. The root causes of OGBV and current perceptions on the topic are limited digital literacy, anonymity and social media characteristics, gender norms and expectations, as well as power dynamics.

4. 31.78% of our survey respondents have experienced OGBV, and 55.04% know someone who has. The main forms of OGBV discussed by research participants within the scope of this research were (1) cyberbullying and hate speech, (2) online sexual harassment and exploitation, and (3) online scams.

5. LGBTQIA+ people and Indigenous People tend to face mocking, stereotyping, and discrimination, while People living with Disabilities (PwD) and Indigenous People encounter threats linked to their lack of digital literacy and accessibility to reliable information.

6. Online impacts of OGBV include self-censorship and account deactivation, online discrimination and cycles of violence, while offline impacts comprise a toll on emotional and mental health, isolation, self-harm, and reputational damage.

7. 71.6% of respondents who experienced OGBV sought support, amongst which 75.9% found it 'somewhat helpful'. The support was primarily sought within their informal support system, and to a lesser extent within the formal support system, despite its weaknesses and the challenges encountered, namely the lack of information and access to support services, the financial cost, and recurrent stigmatisation and victim blaming.

8. 28.7% of respondents who experienced OGBV did not look for support, on account of one or several obstacles faced by survivors. Those barriers are uneven informal system, the weaknesses of the formal system, the lack of information to seek support, financial barriers, trust issues, and victim-blaming. People from marginalised groups or with intersecting identities are less likely to receive the support they need.

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METHODOLOGY

2. METHODOLOGY

This research study applied Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) principles in its design and development. According to the APWLD, who has pioneered FPAR research praxis in the region, FPAR is a method of investigating social issues that directly involves the participation of oppressed and ordinary people in problem posing and solving. It is a "way for researchers and participants to join in solidarity to take collective action, both short and long term, for social change". [10] FPAR also thoroughly integrates feminist perspectives and processes, as well as capacity building and knowledge sharing. [11] To this end, a diverse team of 11 Action Researchers (ARs) active on social media with direct or indirect lived experience of issues related to OGBV was engaged to co-design the research.

The action research team comprised volunteers based in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap Province from various backgrounds, including young women and men, LGBTQIA+ individuals and ethnic minorities. The team received a series of training workshops on feminism, OGBV, research design, ethical research principles and data collection techniques, as well as participated in the entire process of the study. Six Action Researchers and four Klahaan team members contributed to the analysis of data and write-up of all sections.

A primarily qualitative approach employed semi-structured interviews with women, men, people with diverse SOGIESC, people living with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and Indigenous People, allowing the research team the opportunity for flexible and in-depth discussions. Finally, six gender advocates and/or CSO staff working on gender-based violence, digital rights, and gender equality were interviewed to provide insights into OGBV in Cambodia and to share their own experiences and learnings. A total of 61 qualitative interviews were conducted with participants from Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Mondulkiri, Ratanakiri, and Kampong Chhnang provinces.

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS	NUMBER
WOMEN	18
MEN	14
ETHNIC MINORITIES	6
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (PWD)	4
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE (IP)	4
LGBTQIA+ IDENTIFIED INDIVIDUALS	9
CSO WORKERS	6
TOTAL	61

2.1 CODING AND ANALYSIS

The Action Researchers were actively involved in all stages, rather than as 'enumerators' who might only be handed interviews to conduct and submit. In coding the qualitative data, a workshop on thematic data analysis as per Braun & Clarke (2013) was conducted in Phnom Penh. [13] The interview data were subsequently engaged with, analysed, and coded by the Action Researchers themselves.

Extracts from participants are labelled with either the letter 'Y' for Gen Y or millennial (for participants aged 25-35, who are considered to be amongst the first generation to widely use the internet), 'Z' for Gen Z who grew up with smartphones and social media (aged 18-24), and 'X' for Gen X who witnessed the rise of personal computers (aged 36-60). 'C' refers to participants who work at CSOs. The suffix 'W', 'M' or 'L' denotes woman, man or identified LGBTQIA+, and 'NA' stands for preferring not to disclose one's gender identity. Other information after the hyphen (-), like 'IP' for Indigenous People, 'I' for Cham or Khmer-Islam community, 'V' for Khmer-Vietnamese, or "PWD" for people with disability, adds further details on the identity of the participant. Participants outside of Phnom Penh are also labelled based on their geography, like 'MDK' for Mondulkiri. For example, XM-IP-MDK3 is a Gen X man participant who is an Indigenous Person from Mondulkiri province, the 3rd interviewed, while YL-SR is a Gen Y LGBTQIA+ participant from Siem Reap province, the 9th interviewed. The six participants working for CSOs are labelled from C1 through to C5.

2.2 ONLINE SURVEY

In addition to interviews, an online survey was conducted to provide more quantitatively-oriented insights, and received **129 responses**, in which more than 50 percent of the respondents are women. The data was analysed by Action Researchers and the Klahaan team using Excel. Findings are included throughout each section of this report. The low response rate of the survey compared to our previous studies marks one of the limitations of this research. The popularity of our surveys is usually linked to the nature of the topic studied, and OGBV seems to be perceived as overtly new and technical, which likely discouraged some people from participating. Another limitation is the low participation of ethnic minorities, despite our efforts to engage with those groups; they represent only 1% of survey responses.

Figure 1: Respondents' Gender Identities

- Transgender 3.1%
- Prefer not to say 2.3%
- Non-binary 3.9%
- Man 31%
- Woman 59.7%
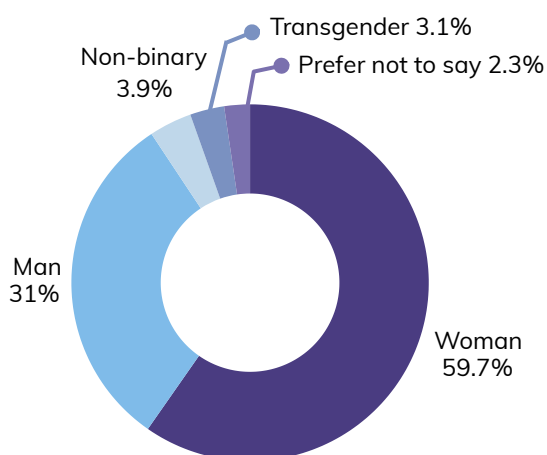
Moreover, because this is a qualitative study that seeks to explore the depth and richness of experiences, rather than a large-scale quantitative survey, it cannot and does not aim to be representative of the Cambodian population as a whole.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

DEFINING TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

There is currently no single, universally agreed-upon definition of OGBV. Various organisations and scholars use overlapping terms such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), cyberviolence, or online violence against women and girls, reflecting the rapidly evolving digital landscape in which this form of violence occurs. [14]

According to the consensus reached by the Expert Group Meeting convened by UN Women in 2022, **technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV)** is defined as:

"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 infringement of rights and freedoms." [15]

Similarly, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women defines **online violence against women** as:

Any act of gender-based violence against women that is committed, assisted, or aggravated in part or fully by the use of information and communication technologies—such as mobile phones, the internet, social media platforms, or email—against a woman because she is a woman, or that disproportionately affects women. [16]

While the term TFGBV encompasses a broader spectrum of technology-assisted harms, OGBV is a more commonly used and accessible term that captures violence perpetrated through digital platforms and social media. In other words, for this study, **TFGBV is understood as the umbrella term that includes all forms of gender-based violence that are enabled or perpetrated through the use of technology (both online and offline), while OGBV is a form of TFGBV that refers to any gender-based violence that specifically occurs on the online sphere (digital platforms and social media).** The rapid development of technology makes it challenging to catalogue all forms of TFGBV since new manifestations continue to emerge alongside technological innovation.

FORMS OF ONLINE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

OGBV encompasses a wide range of acts, including but not limited to: cyberbullying, stalking, image-based sexual abuse (such as non-consensual sharing of intimate images), doxxing (sharing private information), online sexual exploitation, and hate speech targeting women and gender-diverse individuals. These forms often overlap and evolve rapidly as perpetrators adapt to new digital tools.

Online harassment is the most reported and researched form of OGBV in Cambodia. A LICADHO survey (2021) found that 38% of respondents in Cambodia had experienced some forms of online harassment, with LGBTQIA+ individuals, activists and youth reporting the highest rates. [17] Sexual harassment emerged as the most prevalent form of online abuse, followed by hacking, discrimination and humiliation. Among respondents, 20% reported receiving unsolicited sexual messages, photos, or videos, with higher rates among women aged 18-24 and LGBTQIA+ people. Of those who experienced harassment, 65% believed they were targeted by men, while 23% identified women as perpetrators, underscoring the gendered dynamics of online abuse.

Another study by MangoTango (2023) among Cambodian women entrepreneurs found that over 25% of participants had experienced online abuse, and when accounting for non-responses, the rate likely exceeded 30%. [18] Common forms of violence experienced included hate speech, trolling, harassment, and the non-consensual sharing of private information or photographs. Alarmingly, 8% of respondents reported moving their businesses from online to physical spaces due to fear of online abuse, which illustrated the economic cost and "chilling effect" of OGBV on women's digital participation.

THE GENDERED NATURE OF ONLINE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Even though "*all aspects of human interactions online are gendered*" [19], it is important to note that the specificity of OGBV compared to other forms of online violence is its gendered nature. Therefore, there is a gender dimension in the violence committed and experienced.

"(TFGBV) is gendered: women and girls are targeted simply because they are women and girls." [20]

Globally, women and girls are 27 times more likely to be harassed online than men. [21] Like offline gender-based violence, OGBV is rooted in structural inequalities and patriarchal power relations. It is both a reflection and continuation of the harmful gender norms that limit women's agency in society. In Cambodia, where traditional values coming from *Chbab Srey* continue to shape perceptions of women's behaviour, online spaces often reproduce these gender power dynamics.

The digital gender divide in access to and control over technology and the internet [22] also plays a role in how women unequally navigate the online space. Indeed, in Cambodia, men are more likely to own smartphones, have access to consistent internet connections, and dominate ICT-related jobs. [23] Women, particularly those from rural, indigenous, or low-income backgrounds, or those living with disabilities, face greater barriers to digital literacy and access. As of early 2025, 46.7% of social media users in Cambodia were women, compared to 53.3% men. [24] This divide not only shows less women's participation online, but also highlights that lower digital literacy amongst women and girls equals less capacity to navigate risks and report abuse effectively.

RESPONSES AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Legal and policy responses to technology-facilitated violence, including OGBV, are still in their infancy. While Cambodia has enacted an Anti-Trafficking Law, and has developed a Cybercrime Law draft, these frameworks lack clear provisions for addressing all forms of gender-based violence in the digital spaces. Asia Center (2025) found that most cases of online harassment and hate speech are prosecuted as defamation under the Criminal Code, while cases of revenge porn are typically charged under the Anti-Trafficking Law as offences related to the distribution of pornography. The Cybercrime Law draft also includes a clause on the protection of personal data [25]. Aside from the weak laws and legal loopholes surrounding OGBV, survivors frequently face procedural barriers, victim-blaming and a lack of gender sensitivity from law enforcement authorities.

The CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation No. 35 (2017) explicitly recognises TFGBV as a form of gender-based violence falling under CEDAW's purview. [26] It emphasises that violence against women can occur in all settings, including digital environments, and countries must address emerging forms of abuse facilitated by technology. Yet, implementation remains weak, and impunity persists. [27]

> *"Gender-based violence against women, whether committed by States, intergovernmental organisations or non-State actors, including private persons and armed groups, remains pervasive in all countries, with high levels of impunity. It manifests itself on a continuum of multiple, interrelated and recurring forms, in a range of settings, from private to public, including technology-mediated settings and in the contemporary globalised world it transcends national boundaries." [28]*

According to the Asia Centre's 2025 report on TFGBV in Cambodia, women journalists and human rights defenders face particularly severe online attacks that undermine their civic freedoms. [29] The report identifies three common defence mechanisms used by those women and their limitations. First, women can report online abuse through law enforcement although this remains largely ineffective due to legal gaps and the lack of survivor-centred approaches.

Second, women can choose the avenue of reporting through civil society organisations. Yet, many of them lack specific protocols or technical capacity to respond to online cases. Third, women can publicly call out perpetrators via social media, a growing form of feminist resistance that raises awareness, but one that exposes survivors to further harassment.

In the case of online harassment, LICADHO added that most survivors opted to block or unfriend perpetrators, increase privacy settings, or withdraw from online activity. However, those responses often failed to stop ongoing harassment. [30] The LICADHO (2021) study further found that only 16% of respondents who experienced online harassment felt that their cases were fully and fairly resolved. In sum, the lack of public awareness about the seriousness of OGBV from both the victims and law enforcements contribute to insufficient case support and persistent impunity. [31]

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONSEQUENCES OF OGBV

The CEDAW Committee describes OGBV as thriving on a **"Triple A Engine": Accessibility, Affordability and Anonymity**. [32] The accessibility and affordability (as well as the speed and reach) of technology and social media allow violence to spread rapidly, while the anonymity of online platforms makes perpetrators difficult to identify and prosecute.

These characteristics amongst others **(see figure 2, p.16)** make digital spaces especially conducive to abuse. In addition, unlike traditional media, social media platforms lack editorial filters and accountability mechanisms. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) also introduces new risks like deepfakes, realistic images and hate speech generation, which increases the variety and chances of exposure to online harm.

Figure 2. Characteristics of OGBV due to its digital nature

- **Anonymity:** the perpetrator or abuser can remain anonymous
- **Action at a distance:** it can be perpetrated at a distance, from anywhere in the world, and without contact with the survivor.
- **Accessibility and affordability:** Information and communications technology have reduced the cost and difficulty of producing and distributing information at scale.
- **Propagation:** it is constant and easily propagated through the internet, retraumatising survivors.
- **Automation:** it can be automatic and easy to perpetrate, and allows perpetrators to control women's movements, monitor their online activity, and distribute images or information with limited time and effort.
- **Collectivity:** it can be collectively organised and perpetrated by a large number of individuals.
- **Normalisation of violence:** It is likely that this normalisation of violence is exacerbated in the digital space, and that TFGBV is perceived as less serious, harmful, or dangerous to survivors.
- **Perpetuity:** it can be committed in perpetuity, as images and digital materials used to perpetrate abuse are likely to exist indefinitely or for long periods of time.

Source: Extract from Making all spaces safe, UNFPA (2021) [33]

Online violence is rarely a purely virtual phenomenon. In fact, it often spills over into the physical world. Survivors report experiencing harassment that escalates into stalking, physical threats or even violence offline. Conversely, offline violence can also manifest or continue online, [34] and have enduring effects. [35] This "online-offline continuum" reinforces the pervasive nature of gender-based violence and its cyclical impacts on women's lives. [36]

The consequences of OGBV on the health, life and future of women and girls are far-reaching. [37] In Cambodia, LICADHO (2021) found that 80% of survivors of online harassment found their experiences very upsetting, with 71% reporting at least one negative impact.

LICADHO REPORT (2021) FINDINGS

- **27%** feared for their physical safety or that of their loved ones.
- **24%** felt withdrawn or less social.
- **19%** experienced lower self-esteem.
- **13%** faced physical violence offline.
- **11%** encountered barriers to employment, education or housing.
- **4%** reported suicidal thoughts. [38]

Youth, LGBTQIA+ people, and activists reported the highest levels of harm, with activists most likely to fear for their physical safety. [39] For women in public life (journalists, entrepreneurs, human rights defenders etc.), the cumulative impact of online abuse leads to self-censorship, withdrawal or disengagement from digital spaces, which points out that OGBV has a significant impact on gender equality.

> *"Violence against women in digital contexts also impedes women's equal and meaningful participation in public life through humiliation, shame, fear and silencing. Women's voices are often silenced, discredited and censored by online violence. This is the "chilling effect", whereby women are discouraged from actively participating in public life". [40]*

This "chilling effect" achieves the very goal of OGBV: pushing women out of the public sphere and silencing their voices. [41]

4

CURRENT UNDERSTANDING & PERCEPTIONS OF OGBV

4.1 UNDERSTANDING OF OBV

The majority of respondents expressed awareness of the existence of OGBV and identified it as a critical issue affecting society today. Indeed, to the question "*how serious do you think OGBV is in Cambodia?*", 94.6% of survey participants responded '*serious*' or '*very serious*' (see figure 3). However, our research found that there is limited knowledge of OGBV-related issues and digital literacy, which contributes to vulnerability to online harms.

Figure 3: Perception of survey respondents on the seriousness of the issue of OGBV in Cambodia

Less serious 4.7%
Not serious 0.8%
Very serious 44.2%
Serious 50.4%
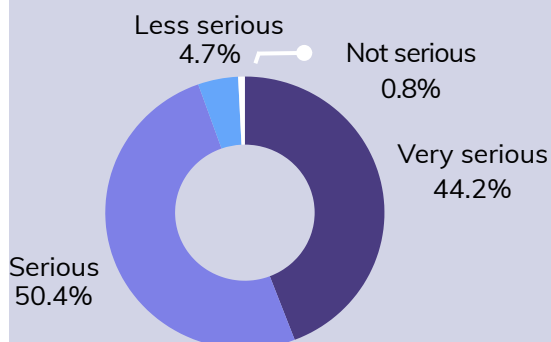
4.1.1 KNOWLEDGE OF ONLINE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

While most respondents had not previously encountered the specific term 'OGBV', many described experiences or examples that align with its definition. A Gen Y woman shared: *"I have never heard of that (term) before. But I did see posts on social media harassing and insulting other people."* (YW-SR17). Likewise, 14% of survey respondents had heard about forms of OGBV given as examples by our Action Researchers, but did not know they were considered as OGBV (see figure 4, p.20).

Only 7% of survey participants think Cambodian people have a clear understanding of OGBV. Slightly more than half of survey participants believe to have a somewhat clear understanding of OGBV, but around the same proportion of respondents acknowledge that, in general, Cambodian people do not have a clear understanding of this topic at all (see figure 5, p.20).

Figure 4: Percentage of survey respondents who have heard of OGBV (e.g. cyberbullying, hate comments, leaking of non-consensual intimate images, etc.)
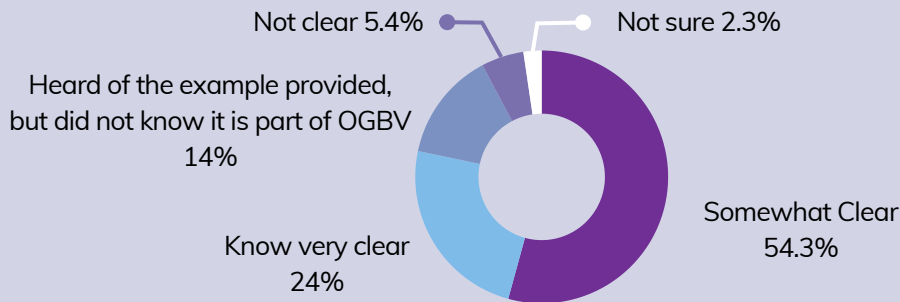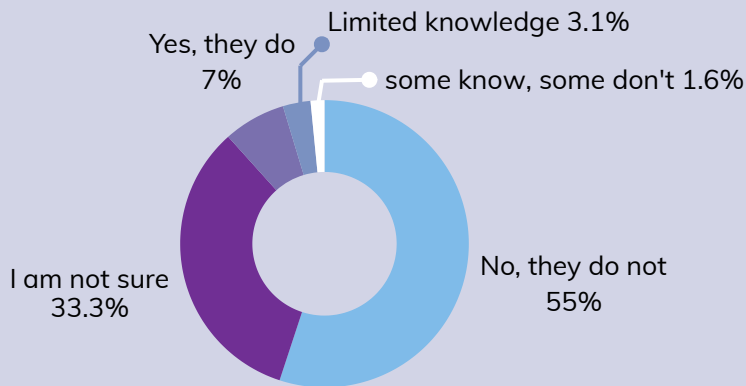
Not clear 5.4%

Not sure 2.3%

Heard of the example provided, but did not know it is part of OGBV 14%

Somewhat Clear 54.3%

Know very clear 24%

Figure 5: Do you feel like Cambodian (in general) have a good understanding of OGBV?

Limited knowledge 3.1%

Yes, they do 7%

some know, some don't 1.6%

No, they do not 55%

I am not sure 33.3%

Amongst respondents familiar with OGBV, some explained that they learnt about it mainly through NGO campaigns, social media or online discussions.
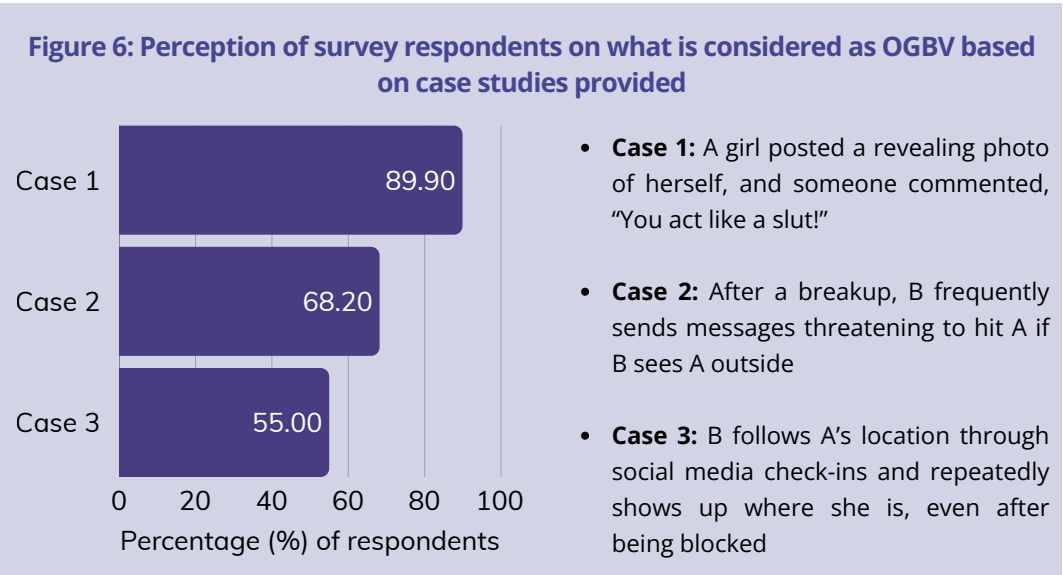
"I learnt about OGBV through Facebook posts from NGOs and institutions, and also from researching on Google." (ZW8).

This is also the case of Indigenous respondents who reported having learnt about OGBV through NGO campaigns and social media, even if some were uncertain about the terminology: *"I'm not sure about the concept of OGBV. I've only heard of online feuds [argument]."* (YNA-V1). In addition, several participants shared that they had personally experienced OGBV without recognising it as such at the time. As one woman reflected: *"I myself used to experience OGBV without knowing it was OGBV."* (ZW8).

Moreover, some participants expressed confusion between "GBV" and "OGBV," and found it challenging to imagine how the common representation of GBV could look like in the online space. A young woman explained:

"I think that's quite new… Gender-based violence usually refers to domestic violence, like a husband beating his wife. I assume OGBV is more about stereotypes or words used against someone's gender identity or expression. This can look like if someone identifies themselves as gay, then they would be told online things like "Why are you gay?" (YW1).

Reactions to the three scenarios provided to survey participants (see figure 6) similarly showed that fewer people were aware that OGBV could have offline manifestations and effects. Indeed, online harassment and threats sent by an ex-intimate partner through social media can lead to actual in-person physical violence (case 2). Likewise, stalking and physically following someone based on information found on social media is a form of OGBV that has real-world consequences (case 3).

Figure 6: Perception of survey respondents on what is considered as OGBV based on case studies provided

- **Case 1:** A girl posted a revealing photo of herself, and someone commented, "You act like a slut!"

- **Case 2:** After a breakup, B frequently sends messages threatening to hit A if B sees A outside

- **Case 3:** B follows A's location through social media check-ins and repeatedly shows up where she is, even after being blocked

Among different groups, the level of understanding of OGBV varied. Most LGBTQIA+ respondents were aware of the phenomenon and, in some cases, had experienced it directly even if the terminology felt new or unfamiliar. Some people with disabilities demonstrated a nuanced understanding of OGBV, linking it more to situations of exploitation and online fraud. Others, however, reported limited familiarity with the concept despite recognising similar experiences.

4.1.2 MOST AT RISK GROUP OF OGBV

"Mostly women and LGBTQIA+ people are vulnerable to OGBV" (YW-SR17).

Across interviews and the survey, respondents agreed that everyone can experience OGBV, but women and LGBTQIA+ individuals are perceived as facing the most risks. A woman further observed that non-binary and gender-diverse individuals tend to be frequently targeted: *"People who don't identify specifically as male or female can also be subject to OGBV." (ZW2).*

People with disabilities (PwD) were considered by survey participants as the third most at-risk group for OGBV (see figure 7, p.23); nevertheless, when interviewees living with disabilities were asked whether they believed to be part of the most at-risk groups, they all disagreed, stating that it mainly depended on the type of disability. Urban residents were perceived to face greater exposure to online risks and threats due to higher internet usage.

"People living in cities like Phnom Penh, Battambang or Siem Reap have more access to online platforms, so they face OGBV more than those in rural areas" (YW-C4).

However, others considered that lower levels of digital literacy in rural areas could make rural residents easier targets of OGBV. Worryingly, for LGBTQIA+ communities, OGBV is often normalised or dismissed, which reflects broader socially accepted stereotypes and prejudices. A Gen Y man shared:

"They [LGBTQIA+ people] encounter it so many times that it becomes a normal thing. When they speak up, people say, 'That's normal, your group is like that.' Because society sees LGBTQIA+ people as overly sexual, their concerns about online harassment are often ignored." (YM7)

This normalisation of harm reveals how structural discrimination and social stigma shape the digital experiences of marginalised groups, which underscores the need for intersectional feminist approaches to digital safety.

Figure 7: Perception of survey respondents on the groups they identify as being the most vulnerable to OGBV in Cambodia
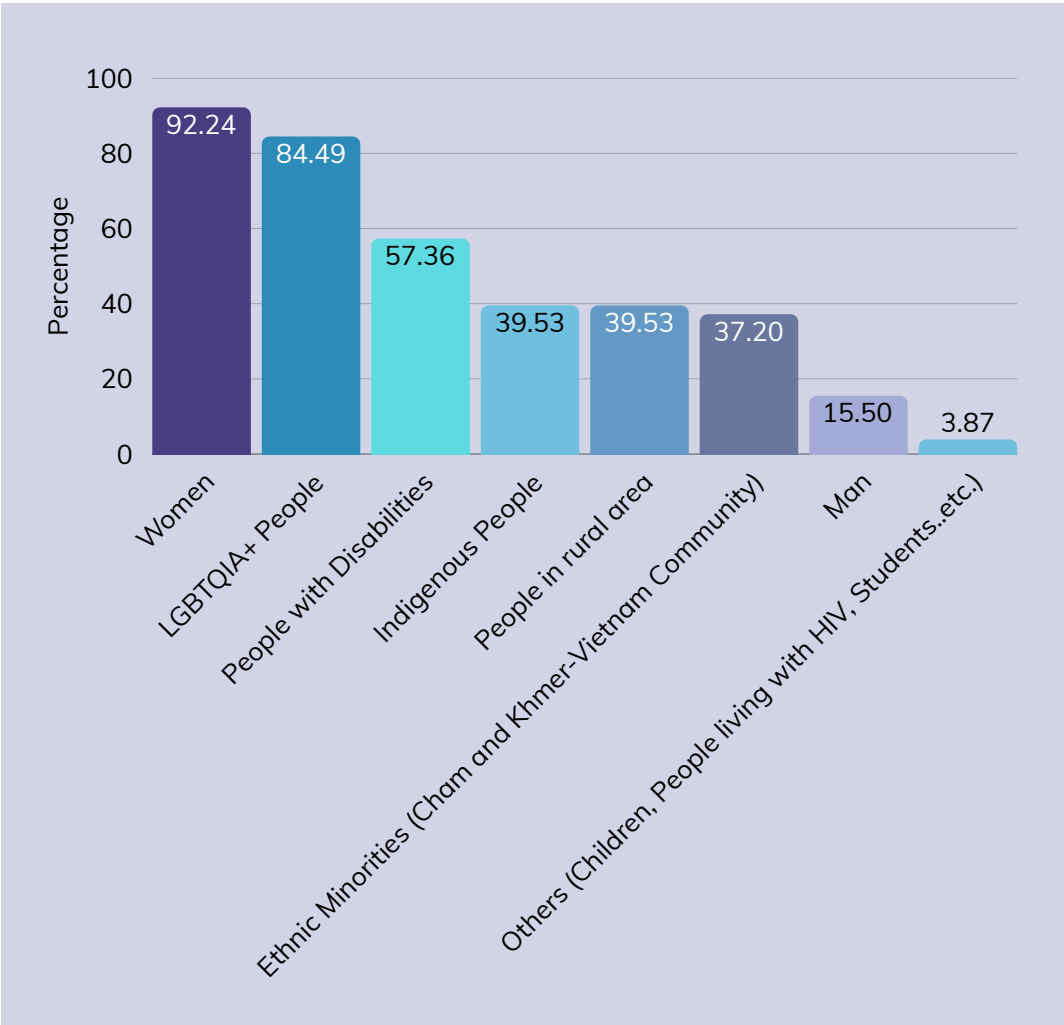
4.2 PERCEIVED ROOT CAUSES OF OGBV

Research participants were asked to identify root causes to explain both the existence of OGBV and the low level of understanding of OGBV mentioned in section 4.1.1. Their responses can be summed up in four main root causes: (1) limited digital literacy, (2) power dynamics, (3) social gender norms and expectations, and (4) anonymity and social media characteristics.

4.2.1 LIMITED DIGITAL LITERACY

Figure 8: Perception of survey respondents on the main factors explaining why people don't have a good understanding of OGBV
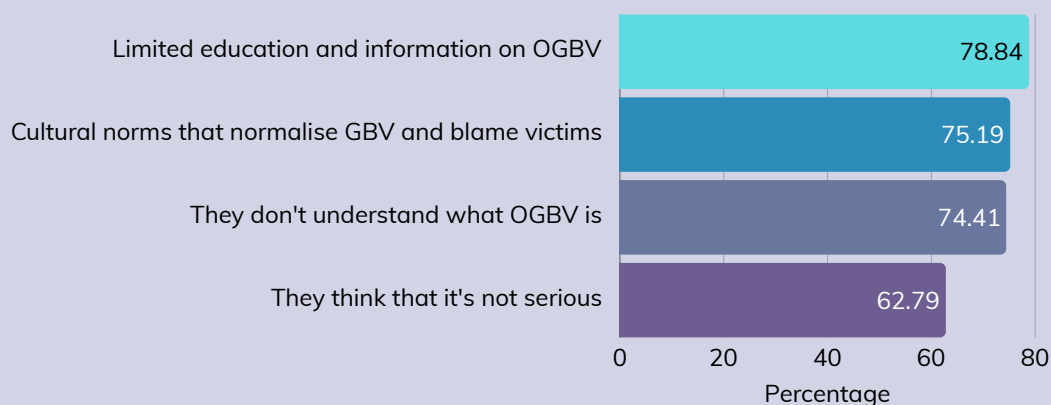
The majority of survey participants (79.8%) considered that limited access to information and a lack of education on OGBV are the main reasons why people do not have a clear understanding of the forms of gender violence encountered online (see figure 8). Additionally, interview participants across all groups identified limited media literacy as a major driver of OGBV. They mentioned that many users lack a basic understanding of online ethics, privacy and digital security. As a Gen Z man explained:

"I think it might come from a lack of knowledge on how to use it (social media), and maybe from managing our Facebook accounts without a code of ethics. When we navigate social media and we lack certain knowledge or ethics, it can have real consequences" (ZM11)

Low media literacy leads to the inability to identify violence and misinformation, such as fake accounts and harmful manipulated images, which are exacerbated by the rapid evolution of technology and the increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI). As one Gen Y CSO staff warned:

> "Sometimes they can't identify fake news or false information, and they just express their opinions without thinking."
> (YL-C5)

This lack of critical awareness enables the spread of harmful behaviours, from cyberbullying and non-consensual image sharing to the sexual exploitation of young people. Many participants noted that people often normalise these acts as "acceptable" online behaviour or jokes. In fact, 62.8% of survey participants admitted that people do not take online violence seriously (see figure 8, p.24), either because it occurs online (and appears as less real), or they don't grasp the full meaning of it or the extent of its impacts on someone else's life. Additionally, participants stressed that limited digital education and open discussions make it difficult for individuals to learn to differentiate between freedom of expression and acts of violence. This blurred line plays a role in the normalisation of OGBV.

> "People find it hard to differentiate which action is violence and which is not. They just think it's a way of expressing themselves online." (YM-PwD1)

Over time, such normalisation makes violence more invisible yet more entrenched, especially for most marginalised groups whose experiences tend to be overlooked. A CSO worker explained the reasons behind it, through the example of Indigenous people:

> "Indigenous communities tend to have lower levels of digital literacy and smaller populations, which limits their online presence. As a result, media coverage and public attention rarely reach them, and their experiences with OGBV are often overlooked or ignored." (YW-C2)

Participants also noted that the lack of understanding of online safety can be instrumentalised and targeted. As a Gen Z man stated:

"People don't really understand cybersecurity. Sometimes, they act carelessly, and others use that to threaten them." (ZM3)

Finally, limited awareness of reporting avenues and mechanisms is identified as the main root cause of OGBV by the majority of survey respondents (see figure 9). Thus, limited knowledge on pathways for accountability and support makes the issue difficult to be stopped. On the contrary, impunity and a general low comprehension of OGBV encourage perpetrators to commit violence without fearing the consequences of their actions.

Figure 9: Perception of survey respondents on the root causes of OGBV in Cambodia

Root cause	Percentage
Weak legal enforcement and limited awareness of reporting mechanism	83.70
Victim blaming and cultural stigma	78.29
Lack of digital literacy	72.10
Patriarchal social norms	66.70
Peer pressure	52.70
Others (beauty standard, culture and tradition, etc.)	3.10

4.2.2 POWER DYNAMICS

Power imbalances, rooted in gender, age, and authority, are another key driver of OGBV. Participants emphasised that those in positions of power, such as teachers, managers or husbands, may exploit their position of power to harass or intimidate those they perceive as weaker or less able to respond. One Gen Y woman shared her personal experience of such a situation with someone older than her: *"He was [someone connected to my family]. He texted me, and I do not remember what we talked about at first, but it led to messages about my body as I had a selfie photo of myself in my profile. [..] He kept on talking about sex, and I told him that I am not comfortable with such conversation, and then he said that it is just normal talk, that everyone needs to know, and it is a part of sex education." (YW16).*

In turn, gender stereotypes can get in the way of those who usually share its privilege. This is the case when men experience abuse. *"When victims are men, who society considers strong, people don't believe them when they report violence." (YW16)*

Participants also pointed to age-based power dynamics, where children and young people are particularly vulnerable. When parents or caregivers are absent due to work or other reasons, children can easily fall prey to online grooming or exploitation. Fear of blame or punishment often prevents them from seeking help.

"When she was in high school, one of her teachers often sent her flirtatious messages and pictures. At the time, she didn't think much of it because he was her teacher. But later she realised how much it had affected her emotionally." (YL-C5)

These stories reveal how power is gendered and relational, and how online spaces can reproduce offline hierarchies of dominance and control.

One Gen Y CSO staff recounted the story of a classmate:

4.2.3 SOCIAL GENDER NORMS AND EXPECTATIONS

Participants highlighted deeply entrenched gender norms and patriarchal attitudes as fundamental drivers of OGBV. Harmful expectations and beliefs about gender and sexuality continue to dictate what is considered "acceptable" behaviour, particularly for women and LGBTQIA+ individuals. One Gen Y woman mentioned that:

"Some people think that those born different from them are bad people. These conservative ideas harm others and lead to OGBV." (YW1)

Patriarchal norms that value male dominance and view women as submissive or inferior continue to influence and normalise online abuse. As one Gen Y woman argued:

"I think that gender norms and stereotypes still influence the persistence of OGBV." (YW-C3)

Indeed, women are often judged for how they dress or express themselves online, while LGBTQIA+ individuals face rejection and stereotyping. This leads to victim-blaming and stigma when violence occurs, which was also identified as a main root cause of OGBV by survey participants (see figure 9, p.26). Moreover, respondents reflected on how toxic masculinity reinforces violence and can encourage men to show aggression.

"They teach men that they have to be strong, patient, and aggressive. That's toxic masculinity." (ZL6)

Many participants observed that because patriarchal beliefs are transmitted through generations and rarely challenged in schools or communities, they shape online behaviours as much as offline ones. As long as such norms persist, OGBV will continue to be dismissed or normalised rather than recognised as a serious violation of rights.

4.2.4 ANONYMITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA CHARACTERISTICS

The expansion of digital platforms has created unprecedented opportunities for anonymity. Perpetrators can easily create fake or multiple accounts, enabling harassment, stalking, and sexual exploitation without accountability. The absence of face-to-face interactions allows people to say and do things they might never attempt in person.

Participants described how anonymity emboldens violence, while weak regulation and platform accountability in relation to anonymity make reporting mechanisms ineffective. As a woman living with disability and a Gen Y queer person observed:

"social media create a layer of anonymity where people with bad intentions can use fake profiles, names, and pictures to pretend to be someone they are not." (YW-PwD3)

"another point is the digital platforms, online platforms, and so on, which also have their limitations. For example, with bullying or the use of discriminatory language, some apps or social media haven't been able to catch it all. Because of that, these issues exist, and reporting mechanisms are still limited and not comprehensive." (YL1)

Participants also mentioned the rapid evolution of technology and the country's difficulty in regulating OGBV effectively. Without adequate regulation or oversight from authorities and social media companies, online spaces have become fertile ground for OGBV.

5

EXPERIENCES OF OGBV

"In one case, my friend, a university student, had a teacher who liked to joke around a lot. This teacher asked her to go to the movies, which she declined, thinking that the teacher had bad intentions. Later, she posted an edited picture of herself that appeared "sexy". The teacher messaged her, saying "The picture is really pretty, I can't imagine how much prettier you'd be without your clothes". She took screenshots of the conversation and posted them on Facebook. She even went to the police station to report the issue. At the station, to her shock, the officers sided with the teacher, saying things such as 'it was because you were doing something like this that it invites such a response.' I was appalled because this girl had done everything right. She knew what to do. She was outspoken, kept evidence, and reported it, yet she was still left disappointed." (YW-I-KC2)

This section details the experiences or perceived experiences of OGBV amongst people in Cambodia. 31.78% of our survey respondents have experienced OGBV, and 55.04% know someone who has experienced OGBV (see figures 10 and 11, p.32). Our data revealed that cyberbullying/hate speech, online sexual harassment and exploitation, and online scams are the three forms of OGBV that are most experienced or perceived to be experienced on social media. According to our survey, 59.5% experienced or know someone who has experienced hate speech, 16.7% experienced or know someone who has experienced cyberstalking and/or harassment, and 9.6% experienced or know someone who has experienced image-based abuse (see figure 13, p.32).

In terms of tactics used by perpetrators, interview participants shared that OGBV happens through comments, sharing, and direct messaging/calls on social media, mostly by strangers, except for online sexual harassment and image-based abuse, which are widely perpetrated by former intimate partners. Facebook is observed to be the main platform where OGBV occurs in Cambodia, especially when it comes to anonymous commenting.

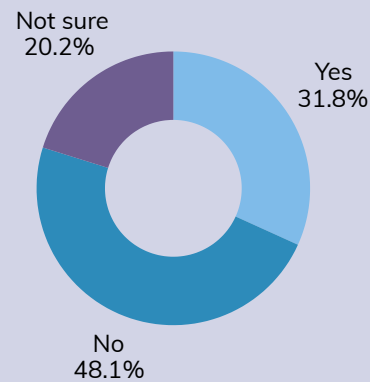## Figure 10: Percentage of survey respondents who have experienced OGBV

Not sure
20.2%

Yes
31.8%

No
48.1%

Figure 11: Percentage of survey respondents who know someone who has experienced OGBV

No
45%

Yes
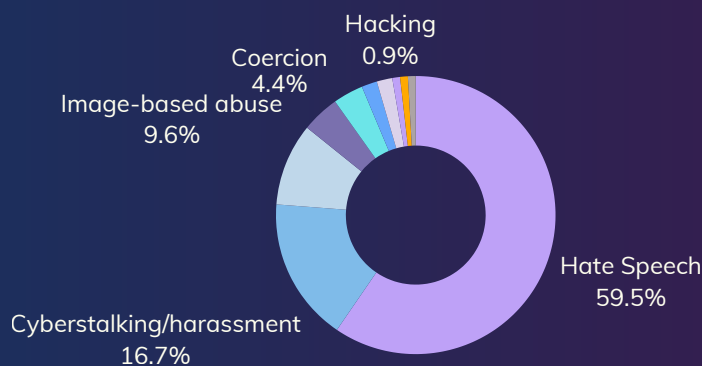55%
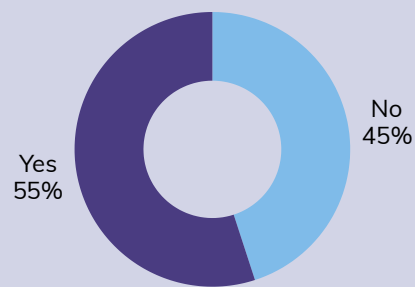
Figure 12: Repartition by gender of survey respondents who have experienced OGBV [*]

Legend: No | Not sure | Yes

	Women (n=77)	Men (n=40)	Transgender (n=4)	Non-binary (n=5)	Prefer not to say (n=3)
No	55.8	47.5			33.3
Not sure	19.5	20.0		40.0	
Yes	24.7	32.5	100.0	60.0	66.7

Percentage (y-axis: 0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100)
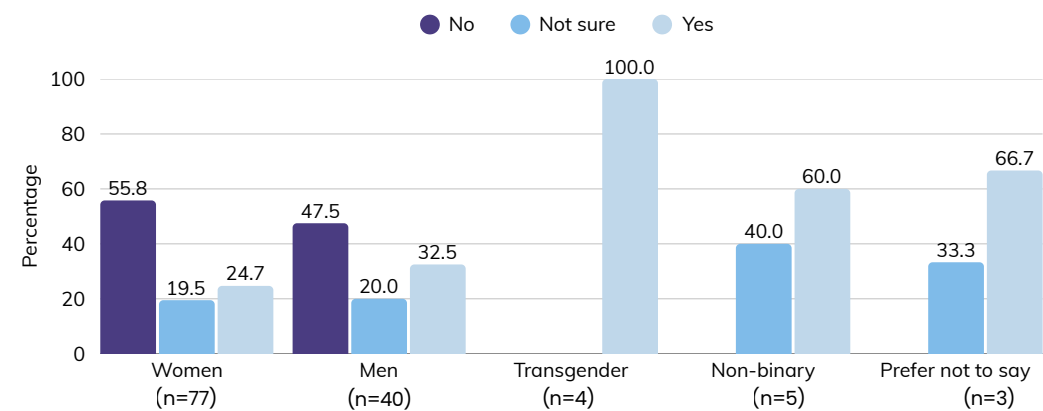
[*] Note: responses from each gender groups differ greatly in sample size; therefore, the result shows distribution WITHIN each gender group only. They should NOT be used to compare prevalence between gender.

Figure 13: Forms of OGBV experienced by survey respondents or someone they know (n=114)

Hacking
0.9%

Coercion
4.4%

Image-based abuse
9.6%

Hate Speech
59.5%

Cyberstalking/harassment
16.7%

📇 5.1 CYBERBULLYING AND HATE SPEECH

Cyberbullying, and especially hate speech, is the form of OGBV that is mostly observed online, as acknowledged by the large proportion of our survey participants who went through such violence (or know someone who did) (see figure 13, p.32). Hate speech was described by a Gen Z woman to come in the form of written content like **"hateful comments"** with **"words of stigmatisation and discrimination that devalue people."** (ZW6) Thus, those hateful comments tend to be gendered and reflect harmful gender norms, stereotypes and traditional social expectations.

Hate speech that targets women often criticises their bodies, appearance and clothing choices. A Gen Y woman from Siem Reap province shared that she was shamed and criticised for having acne and dark skin, while another woman participant mentioned she had seen comments like **"if you were slimmer, you would be so beautiful"** on women's posts (YW-SR17; YW1). This shows that the societal beauty standards have followed women in the online space, and on social media, where they are pressured to conform to unreachable standards. In addition, several interview participants witnessed women being shamed and compared to sex workers (as an insult) for posting pictures of themselves wearing shorts or other revealing clothes. Such acts go against women's rights to bodily autonomy and take a toll on women's confidence and sense of self-worth (YW1).

> *"when I see a woman wearing clothes she likes, but they're a bit short, most men will go and comment, 'Oh, this girl is like a prostitute, wearing sexy clothes showing this and that.' They blame the woman, even though they are the ones thinking that way." (ZM-SR14)*

Hateful comments about women's clothes reveal a pervasive culture of victim-blaming, where survivors are held responsible for the violence committed against them, both online and offline, based on how they dress or the type of photos they share (W9).

> *"She rode a motorcycle at night, and a man followed her, saying she looked great from behind. She was not happy about that incident, and shared a post online describing the harassment. Afterwards, a minority of people commented and told her she did not dress well and that is why the stranger followed her, while the other people commented to offer messages of support." (W9)*

LGBTQIA+ participants shared that discriminatory and derogatory comments targeting their gender identities, expressions and sexual orientations were widespread. These attacks often stem from rigid gender norms that recognise only cisgender and heterosexual men and women as "normal," while those who live differently are policed, shamed and ridiculed. The traditional expectation that men need to be tough and emotionless evolves to the online sphere, suppressing men's expression of their femininity.

"I've never known what OGBV is, but I've heard about gay people. Mostly about gay people, they mostly get attacked by others, like "you are a man, why are you acting like that? You act like a woman." (ZM-SR13)

A Gen Y queer person observed:

"I've observed the use of discriminatory or derogatory language, which is very rampant. For example, if they want to insult an LGBTQIA+ person or a woman, they will comment, curse, look down on them and use bad words. It seems like they have so much freedom, with nothing to stop them from acting this way." (YL1)

Mockery of same-sex relationships is also common. In Khmer, '*oil*' is slang for intimate lubricant and is referred to in comments implying that gay couples are the reasons behind the rise of cooking oil prices because they "use" it during sex. Such remarks dehumanise queer love, illustrating how stigma can be normalised through bad taste humour. A Gen Y queer person shared:

"When LGBTQIA+ people [traditionally] marry each other, almost 50–60% of comments (especially from older men) say things like the oil price has increased because of them." (YL-C5)

Testimonies show that OGBV is not isolated from broader patriarchal and heteronormative structures. Online hate speech simply extends the offline policing of gender and sexuality into digital spaces, creating shame-filled environments for LGBTQIA+ people to express themselves.

PEOPLE WITH DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

Indigenous participants described facing cyberbullying and hate speech rooted in ethnic discrimination and cultural stereotyping. They are often insulted or portrayed as "uneducated" or "backward" compared to Khmer people.

"Yes, I've heard about it... there are also insults and bullying online. As someone from an Indigenous group, I often face discrimination. People think we're uneducated or make jokes about us, like saying we eat our skin and our children. But that's just not true; many of us are studying in Phnom Penh and trying to improve our lives." (ZM-IP2)

Harmful stereotypes, such as associating certain groups (like the Bunong) with violence, continue to circulate online. A Bunong participant expressed himself on those attitudes against his community:

"Yes, we've been insulted online just because we're Bunong. People say hurtful things about us even though we haven't done anything wrong. For example, someone once made fun of our community by comparing their husband's bad behaviour to us Bunong people. That kind of comment really hurts. We're just trying to live our lives like everyone else, and it's painful to be treated with such disrespect." (ZM-IP2)

People with disabilities experience body-shaming, ridicule and mockery online, often targeting at their appearance or perceived "difference." A Gen Y woman living with disability shared:

"I have seen bullying on social media based on my disability. When people disagree with a personality online, they mock or insult their appearance instead of discussing the issue." (YW-PwD3)

These experiences reveal ableism as a dimension of online harm, where the visibility of disability in digital spaces can lead to cyberbullying and hateful comments. Yet according to interview participants, experiences vary greatly depending on the types of disability.

🖐 5.2 ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND/OR HARASSMENT

Online sexual harassment involves survivors being persistently subjected to **"unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion." [42]** Most interview participants reported having experienced, or witnessed someone experiencing, unsolicited sexual messages, images or calls from strangers, particularly on Facebook and Telegram. One participant recounted that she had received (sexually) explicit images when she first began using Facebook (ZW8). While all interviewees offered their understanding of what constitutes online sexual harassment, it appears such violence tends to disproportionately affect women and LGBTQIA+ individuals. They were the ones who most often shared personal experiences or stories of people they personally knew, rather than general observations. Only one male participant recalled a time when he received a message threatening him to send (sexually) explicit pictures (YM7).

It is important to note that online sexual harassment is not initiated just by strangers; it can also come from acquaintances or former intimate partners. One participant (YW-I-KC2) described a case in which a university student received messages from her teacher asking for sexually explicit or revealing photos. In other instances, harassment from ex-partners often takes the form of image-based abuse (IBA), including revenge porn, the non-consensual sharing or threat of sharing intimate images, photo manipulation into nude images and repeated stalking or contact after a breakup. Our online survey revealed that 9.6% of respondents had experienced or knew someone who experienced IBA (see figure 13, p.32). These experiences show how online spaces can amplify intimate partner violence and reinforce power imbalance between perpetrators and survivors. Even though survivors might block their abusers, the ease of creating multiple accounts across different platforms can leave them unable to escape their toxic partners (ZW10). IBA, especially revenge porn and the non-consensual sharing of intimate photos, appears to disproportionately affect women and LGBTQIA+ individuals.

"Yes, I have. I had one experience with someone I used to live with. After we stopped living together, he shared our explicit intimate photos online and even used them on his social media profiles. I mean, I think that is an act among many others related to online violence" (YL-SR9)*.

*This quote has been slightly edited for safeguarding; identifying details and explicit wording were modified without changing the participant's meaning.

In addition to survivors' accounts, the interviews revealed that bystanders play a role in perpetuating and amplifying online sexual harassment through anonymous commenting and sharing. One participant shared:

"It's not in my circle, but sometimes I would go to TikTok, and then I would see many comments on a particular account. I don't remember the account names, but those comments would be about sexual shaming, saying that this girl's nude pictures were leaked before and so on. Some people even comment, 'just chat to me, I will send you her nudes.' These kinds of things. I see it very often" (ZM2).

Another participant described seeing supportive comments on a Facebook post showing *"a man using violence against a sex worker who is a transwoman" (YW16).*

Such acts of commenting, sharing, and engagement illustrate how victim-blaming is normalised and perpetuated in online spaces, often intensifying the harm. The accessibility and anonymity of digital platforms also enable bystanders to become active participants, amplifying the violence by spreading abusive contents and reinforcing perpetrators' actions.

Indigenous participants noted that limited awareness of online risks increases vulnerability to online sexual exploitation, particularly sextortion. A Gen Z Indigenous man raised that:

"Many young people, like me, [...] don't know that certain online behaviour can harm others. They use Facebook for chatting or posting without realising the consequences. Sometimes, they get involved in things like sextortion without even knowing. A lot of this comes from society and what we see online, for example, posts with inappropriate images. I think it's not just about women; often men play a role too, because of their sexual desires." (ZM-IP2)

The lack of digital literacy, combined with a limited understanding of what constitutes violence and limited access to justice mechanisms, leaves Indigenous youth at greater risk.

The experiences of **ethnic minority women** reflect a dual form of discrimination, based on both gender and ethnicity. A Gen Z woman shared: *"Relating to my ethnicity, because our clothing changes through time, some people would take photos of what I wear to post negatively and shame me by saying that I am violating the religious and cultural norms [of my ethnic community]. Also, because I am a woman, in my community, women tend to be frequently discriminated against. Most of it happens on social media." (ZW-I6)*

Similarly, **women with disabilities** face heightened vulnerability to online sexual harassment due to the intersection of gender and disability, also depending on the type of disability. A man living with disability explained:

"For women with disabilities, it affects them more. For example, a visually impaired woman might receive a video call from a stranger without knowing who it is. If she picks up, the perpetrator could take her picture or screenshot without her knowing." (YM-PwD1)

🕵️ 5.3 ONLINE SCAMS

"[..] The gender aspect was there from the beginning. A group of people would try to scam women, men in relationships, or anyone with a partner. During online interactions, they would gradually deceive their targets. The purpose of the scam is to demand money, asking them to send money. First, the victims would be defrauded financially, and then the scammers would keep threatening them to expose their private communications (particularly targeting those still in relationships or who hadn't divorced yet). They would attempt to publicise or send information to the victim's partner or family to create conflict. This left victims under immense pressure and psychological distress. I see this as a serious form of Online Gender-Based Violence." (ZM3)

Although the online space is intended to foster connection and provide access to information, for many of our interview participants, it has also become a site of exploitation, where individuals are deceived and financially manipulated. While online scams can affect anyone, within the context of OGBV, women appear to be disproportionately targeted. For instance, women are often targeted through the misuse of their photos in fraudulent accounts or by being lured into fake online courses (ZW13; ZW10).

In addition, romance scams emerged as a recurring form of online violence described by participants. In these cases, women are often targeted through online interactions that gradually develop into emotional manipulation, grooming and coercion to send money to the perpetrator (ZW10; ZM3; YW-PwD-K2). These scams have become increasingly common as more people turn to online platforms to seek romantic relationships. One Gen Y woman explained that online daters are often targeted because they are perceived as "desperate" or "seeking attention," which makes them appear more vulnerable to manipulation and deceit (YW1).

Online scams can also take gendered and identity-specific forms. LGBTQIA+ people shared stories of romance scams, where the perpetrators build emotional intimacy before demanding money or gifts.

> *"There's an online scammer who sweet-talked my friend, saying he wanted to send money and gifts. In reality, he just wanted to gain money. In the end, the items got stuck at the airport, and my friend had to send money to release them."*
> *(YL-SR9)*

People with disabilities often encounter scams disguised as "acts of kindness" or "love offers", which later turn coercive. A woman living with disability shared:

> *"From what I've heard from friends, someone asked for love or 'acts of kindness' and then told my friend to do whatever he said, after she fell in love with him. If she refused, he threatened her." (YW-PwD-K2)*
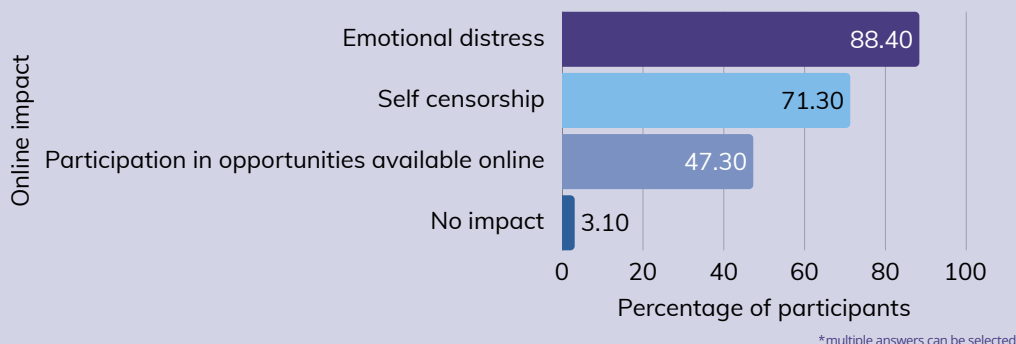
6

IMPACTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF OGBV

6.1 ONLINE IMPACTS OF OGBV

Figure 14: Perception of survey respondents on how OGBV impacted them or the person they knew (who experienced OGBV) online

Our survey participants across all identities described OGBV as a violence that constrains how they express and perceive themselves, interact with others and navigate the online space, with effects both online and offline.

In the online space, participants identified two main online impacts: (1) self-censorship and account deactivation and (2) online discrimination and cycles of violence. Both reflect how survivors are compelled to manage harm by withdrawing or responding.

6.1.1 SELF-CENSORSHIP AND ACCOUNT DEACTIVATION

For many survivors, self-censorship is the most immediate coping mechanism after experiencing OGBV. 71.30% of survey respondents consider it a main effect of OGBV (see figure 14). In practice, some deactivate their social media accounts entirely to avoid ongoing harassment and exposure to hateful comments, a function that exists on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.

"I posted a picture of myself and got comments about my size, acne, and sometimes, comments saying that I look "gay". I did not think too much about it since it happened in high school and did not know whether it was a form of OGBV or not. It felt negative since everyone is talking about you, making me feel that I no longer want to post pictures." (ZM-I5)

"When faced with OGBV, the only solution, for me personally, is to completely shut down my online presence. I deleted my Facebook account, deleted everything. I didn't want to see any of that again." (ZM6)

This digital withdrawal can also extend offline. Some participants described survivors going further and isolating themselves not only from social media but also from social life. As a woman CSO worker shared:

"Because of their experience of harassment online, they stay low profile, don't want to go outside or join activities. It's a loss of freedom in daily life." (YW-C3)

Such forms of 'chilling effect' and 'self-erasure' are a testimony of how OGBV can silence voices. Instead of perpetrators being held accountable, survivors carry the burden of retreating and self-protecting, which can reinforce the social invisibility of already marginalised groups.

Deactivate your account?
Your account will be deactivated.

Yes, deactivate

Cancel
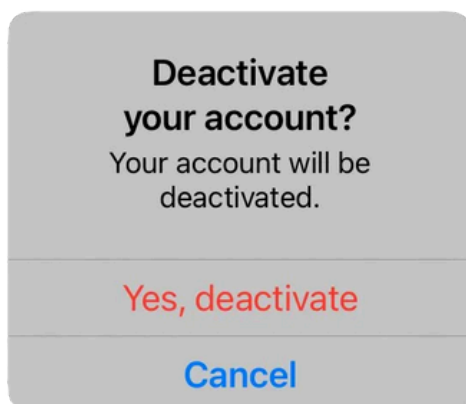
6.1.2 ONLINE DISCRIMINATION AND CYCLES OF VIOLENCE
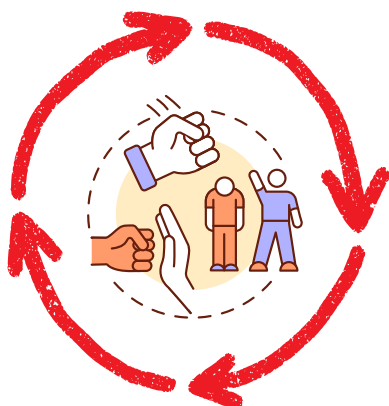
Another major reported impact is the experience of discrimination and secondary victimisation, where speaking out or defending others online triggers more attacks. In this sense, OGBV reproduces itself in a cycle of violence, where victims become targets again for trying to challenge abuse. A Gen Y woman recalled being cyberbullied after asking a page administrator to remove an inappropriate post involving children:

> *"I commented because I saw a picture that was inappropriate for children. I asked the admin to remove it, but instead, many people commented blaming me. There were so many bad comments against me." (YW-C1)*

Rather than systematically fostering empathy or collective accountability, online spaces often allow and normalise hate. A Gen Z woman observed:
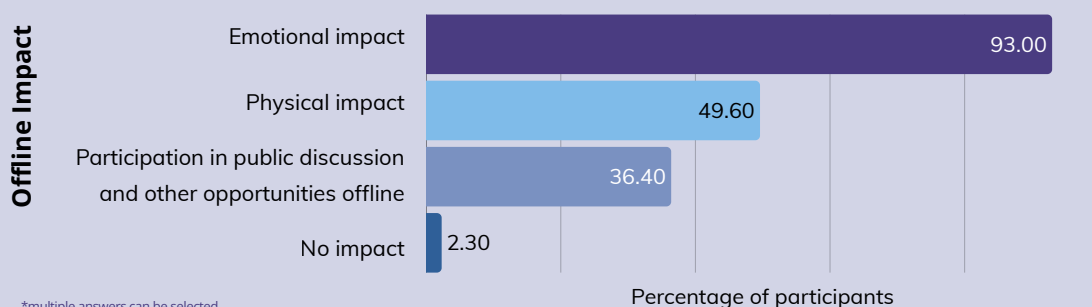
> *"Hateful comments in the comment section happen a lot. There are words of stigmatisation and discrimination that devalue people. It's even worse when perpetrators send private messages to victims in their chatbox for them to see, those messages are full of hate and blame." (ZW6)*
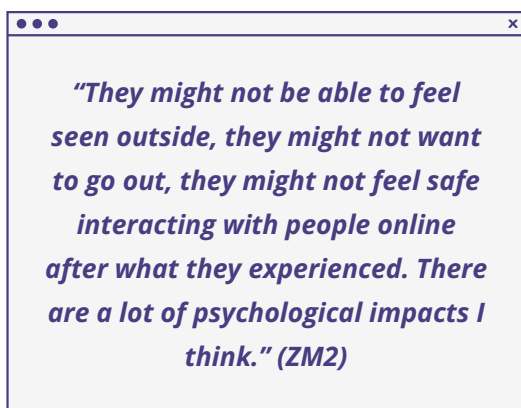
🤜 6.2 OFFLINE IMPACTS OF OGBV

Although OGBV occurs online, its impacts spill over into the physical world, affecting survivors' mental health, relationships, education and livelihoods.

Figure 15: Perception of survey respondents on how OGBV impacted them or the person they knew (who experienced OGBV) offline

*multiple answers can be selected

6.2.1 EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS

"They might not be able to feel seen outside, they might not want to go out, they might not feel safe interacting with people online after what they experienced. There are a lot of psychological impacts I think." (ZM2)

Almost all interview participants mentioned emotional distress and mental health impacts as a direct consequence of OGBV.

93% of survey respondents also recognised the emotional impacts offline, making it the biggest perceived impact of OGBV both offline and online (see figures 14 and 15). Common reactions mentioned include depression, anxiety, fear, stress and self-blame.

Fear of judgment or retribution accentuates the harm. A Gen Y woman explained:

> *"They are not able to tell people, or maybe only a small group of people they know. But not online because not many people are willing to pay attention to LGBTQIA+ people, and they are also afraid of getting blamed by the public." (YW1).*

Some described how online stalking triggers constant anxiety, as perpetrators can track their movements and potentially harm them offline.

> *"Even if people don't meet directly, what they say online can affect them emotionally. The hate speech makes them feel about themselves in a certain way. (...) For example, when you allow people to know where you live or if you share your location when you post something, perpetrators can find where you are living and threaten or extort you. It can become dangerous and turn into physical violence." (YW-C4)*

An Indigenous participant expressed the emotional toll of online humiliation:

> *"It affects my emotions. It makes me feel insulted and looked down on, even when I've done nothing wrong. It makes me question why people judge us when we're just trying to learn and work like anyone else. I've seen people fall into depression. Personally, I didn't respond to the insults. I felt it was their right to speak, even if it was wrong. Sometimes, I'm afraid that replying will just make things worse. When someone insulted our ethnic group badly online, I didn't argue." (ZM-IP2).*

Yet, despite those severe impacts, access to mental health support remains limited. A Gen Z man explained: "*Cambodia doesn't have many mental health consultants. So, if someone has mental health problems that arise from hate speech, from all these problems, and they have difficulty accessing mental health consultation, it can affect them (...)People think mental health is less important than physical health. (...) It can affect them (survivors), or they might get discouraged and stop their projects or something they love because when they do it, people hate them.*" (ZM5)

Several participants mentioned developing trust issues, anxiety or suicidal thoughts, showing how online harm can develop into trauma with lasting psychological consequences.

6.2.2 OTHER OFFLINE IMPACTS

> *"It affects my self-confidence and creates safety concerns because I don't know how people on social media will respond. I've been shamed before. It feels very restricting." (ZW-I6)*

Beyond emotional harm, participants reported violence, self-isolation, self-harm and discrimination as continuing impacts. Self-isolation was common, as survivors avoided contact to escape shame and scrutiny.

Economic exclusion was another recurring theme. Survivors reported losing access to jobs or education due to reputational damage. A man participant explained how OGBV can impact someone's dignity and full potential, especially in spaces that are not supportive:

> *"For example, my friends [who are in the LGBTQIA+ community] receive online criticism from the public regarding their appearance, regarding their voice, that kind of thing. So, I always follow up with them, and they told me it had an influence on them, that they don't dare to go out and meet people in the outside society. And especially, some workplaces don't give them much value either. This means they don't give them many job opportunities, which makes it difficult for them to find work to support their lives because of the discrimination against their gender." (M4)*

Offline threats were also reported, including stalking and physical harassment. A queer woman said she was threatened online and feared someone might harm her physically.

Sadly, exposure to OGBV can strongly discourage LGBTQIA+ people from being authentically themselves and engaging in digital spaces, when it starts eroding their mental health, confidence and potential.

"It affects their full potential, meaning that when they are blamed, looked down on for their gender identity. They no longer dare to be themselves." (YM10).

"OGBV affected my life-long dream. I let go of my dreams and goals, especially at night when I'm overthinking. I've seen that some people try to change themselves just to fit in. In some cases, they've even tried to commit suicide and are hard on themselves. For people with bigger body shape, they try to starve themselves [to get skinny] just to fit in." (ZL8).

A Gen Y queer person also shared that some LGBTQIA+ individuals can internalise the violence they were subjected to, interpreting it as personal karma rather than injustice.

"When some LGBTQIA+ groups face discrimination, they don't think it's wrong. They think it's their karma, so they go to do good deeds or listen to Buddhist teachings." (YL-C5)
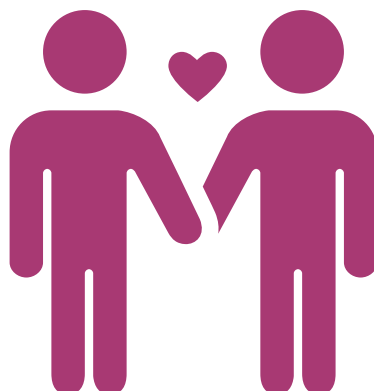
7

SUPPORTING SYSTEMS & CHALLENGES IN SEEKING SUPPORT

Figure 16: Percentage of survey respondents who experienced or knew someone who experienced OGBV and sought help (n=79)
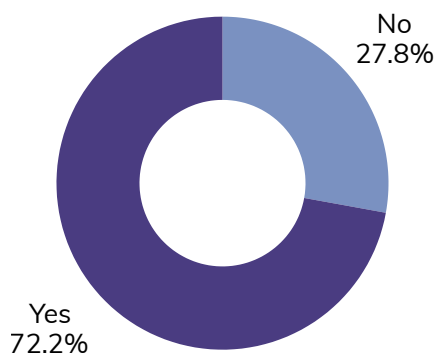
No
27.8%

Yes
72.2%

Figure 17: Perceived helpfulness of the support received among those who sought help (n=57)

Not helpful
3.5%

Not applicable
1.8%

Very helpful
17.5%

Somewhat helpful
77.2%
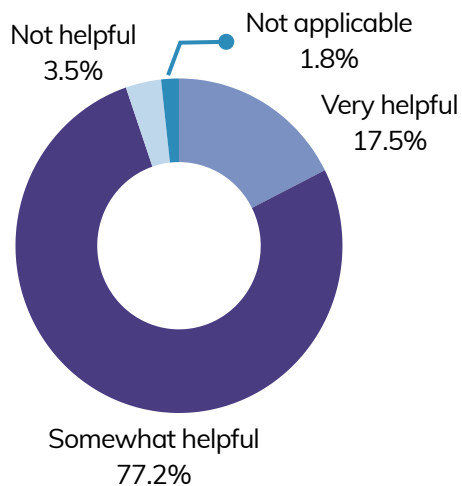
Figure 18: Support systems respondents who experienced OGBV (or someone they know) sought help from (n=65)

Category	Value
Friends	78.46
Family	53.84
Tech platform	40.00
Authorities	38.46
Intimate partner	33.84
Court/Legal System	32.30
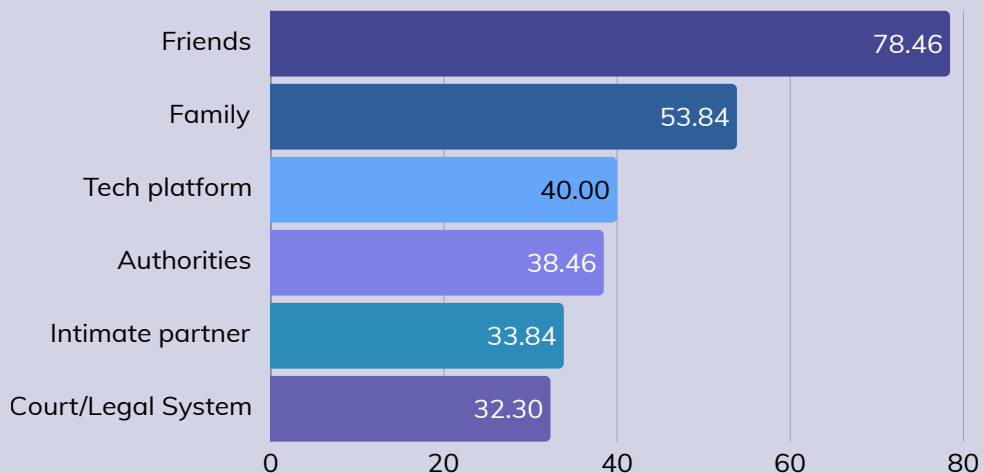
7.1 CURRENT SUPPORTING SYSTEMS

This section examines the existing supporting systems **known or used by our research participants,** with the aim of understanding the general experiences of Cambodian people in seeking help when confronted with OGBV. It does not, however, represent the full landscape of available support.

It is important to note that, whether supporting systems exist or not, not all survivors of OGBV feel comfortable sharing their experience or seeking external help. It is also likely that stronger support systems build trust and encourage people to engage with them. Our survey revealed that 27.84% of the 79 respondents who experienced OGBV or knew someone who had, admitted that no help was sought (see figure 16, p.50). The reason behind such choices can be explained by the numerous obstacles survivors can face (see part 7.2). For the 72.2% that sought help, the vast majority went to their family or friends for support. As a result, only 17.5% of those who sought help found the help 'very helpful', while 77.2% found the help 'somewhat helpful' (see figure 17, p.50), which shows a strong need for more efficient support systems.

7.1.1 SEEKING FORMAL SUPPORT

Seeking formal support is a crucial step for victims of OGBV who are looking for safety, justice, and accountability from institutions and organisations that are meant to protect them. Formal support in this context refers to actions taken through recognised systems of authority such as the police, ministries, NGOs, hotlines, and organisational safeguarding policies. From the interviews, it is evident that the formal support system is lacking and experiences of seeking such support vary across gender, sexual orientation and ethnic identity.

AUTHORITIES AND POLICE

Less than half of survey respondents who experienced OGBV or who know someone who has, described turning to authorities when facing OGBV (see figure 18, p.50). A Gen Y woman interviewee explained that after her Telegram account was hacked, she sought immediate help from the police through a personal connection:

"My telegram account got hacked, and I contacted police officers, because I had a friend who was a police officer at that time" (YW-SR17)

This example illustrates that survivors often rely on personal networks to navigate the formal system, suggesting that individual relationships may influence whether victims approach authorities or not. For one of our LGBTQIA+ interviewees, police involvement was also a pathway, particularly in cases where the perpetrator was identifiable. The Gen-Z queer person recalled:

"If the commenter is someone we know, we can take their information to the police because, like, that's the law. They are defaming our image or our name. But if you don't know the commenter, we can only report that person on social media like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok." (ZL6).

32.30% of survey respondents who experienced or know someone who has experienced OGBV sought redress through the legal system (see figure 18, p.50).

Another survivor, however, highlighted the geographic challenges of seeking justice, explaining that her case involved a perpetrator abroad, making enforcement difficult:

"When it comes to my case, the person who did this was far from where I was. So to be able to file a complaint, to find help, we had to travel. So travelling and other things are also difficult" (YL-SR9).

These testimonies show that while authorities and the justice system are recognised as legitimate avenues of formal support, accessibility remains uneven and outcomes are uncertain.

NGOS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) emerged as a critical source of formal support. A CSO worker emphasised the importance of NGOs in providing multiple layers of assistance to survivors. She explained that NGOs can play a role in giving legal consultations, offering emotional support, and accompanying victims during the reporting process.

"We can support them in the legal process by accompanying them to the police, and try to collect all the evidence. (...) After the police accept their case (...), we still keep following up and making sure the victims feel that an NGO is behind them. (...) Most of them need more support because they feel everything is unclear, they need emotional support because some feel scared cause the threat/offender is anonymous, and they don't know where they are" (YW-C6).

Thus, such involvement by the NGOs not only helps survivors navigate the procedural challenges of reporting but also responds to their emotional needs, including in cases where perpetrators operate anonymously. For example, a CSO mentioned that survivors have shared how an NGO positively impacted their case and mental health: *"The people tell us that they feel supported, they feel stronger, they have more knowledge and can pursue [..] justice [....]. I think helping people feel supported and feel heard, and making them understand that it is not their fault. [....] And then we do have some positive outcomes in terms of satisfaction because they get to immediate safety, the perpetrator is imprisoned thanks to our services. We do help to improve the rate of prosecution and get a chance of an arrest." (YW-C6).* This reflects the dual impact some NGOs can have, which is enhancing prosecution outcomes while reinforcing victims' sense of empowerment.

While NGOs can play a vital role in supporting victims of OGBV, some victims may not know where to find them or lack awareness of the available support and services. As a Gen Z woman admitted:

"I don't know where to seek support besides seeking help from friends because I do not know what NGOs or institutions can help with that." (ZW7)

In Indigenous communities, networks created through civil society also played a vital role. A Gen Z Indigenous woman shared that when she experienced problems, she consistently sought help from an NGO that not only offers counselling but also creates a supportive network.

"Because I was a part of a project hosted by the NGO, whenever I have a problem, I would always turn to them for help. They also provided me with counselling and advice that guided me throughout the process. This would make me feel so much better" (ZW-I6).

INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS AND SAFEGUARDING POLICIES

Beyond NGOs and state mechanisms, formal support systems also exist within certain institutions. One participant explained how her workplace enforces safeguarding and reporting policies covering both physical and online harassment.

"In case that happens (OGBV), we can complain to our focal person of safeguarding and code of conduct. It is required by the organisation that the staff need to be trained and encouraged to report" (YW-C1).

This demonstrates that formalised internal reporting systems can create safer environments where survivors feel empowered to come forward without fear of stigma or dismissal. Yet, those policies and good practices remain rare.

Some participants also recognised positive developments in the availability of institutional support compared to the past.

Reflecting on changes over time, one woman remarked:

> *"Before, because not many people knew about this; therefore, not many supporting systems were available. But now, there are supporting systems from the Ministry of Women Affairs, other institutions, and people's own community are aware of this" (ZW6).*

This perspective points to some gradual improvements in a few (scattered) formal support structures, though not all mechanisms are equally effective or widely accessed.

Yet, it is important to note that 36% of survey respondents and only one interview participant who experienced OGBV (or know someone who had) described reporting the abuse to the tech companies and social media, which represents one of the least used avenues for support alongside the legal system (see figure 18, p.50). This finding is concerning, as these two institutions represent the primary stakeholders responsible for both the spaces where violence occurs and the systems where individuals should seek safety and justice.

🔊 7.2 BARRIERS IN SEEKING SUPPORT

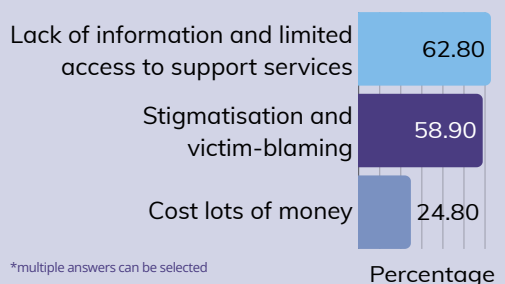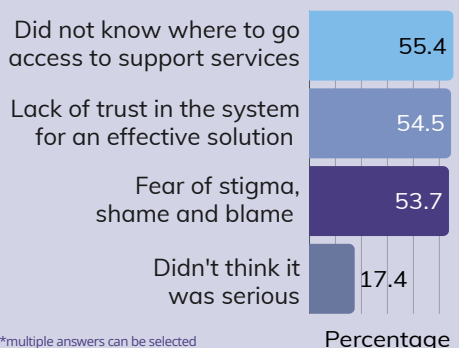**Figure 19 Main challenges faced by respondents or someone they know who experienced OGBV when seeking help**

Lack of information and limited access to support services: 62.80

Stigmatisation and victim-blaming: 58.90

Cost lots of money: 24.80

*multiple answers can be selected

Percentage

Figure 20: Reasons cited by survey respondents for not seeking help

Did not know where to go access to support services: 55.4

Lack of trust in the system for an effective solution: 54.5

Fear of stigma, shame and blame: 53.7

Didn't think it was serious: 17.4

*multiple answers can be selected

Percentage

7.2.1 UNEVEN INFORMAL SUPPORTING SYSTEMS

For many survivors, the first and most trusted source of support comes from informal networks: family, friends and community members. In fact, 83% of participants who experienced OGBV or know someone who has, recognised that friends were their primary source of help, followed by family (60%) and, to a lesser extent, intimate partners (38%) (see figure 18, p.50).

"The people who we can reach out to are our family members, close friends, those who truly understand us. If we bring this issue to strangers, even if we are right, they are not willing to listen." (ZL5)

However, considering that the understanding of OGBV and the means to respond to it remains limited, such support tends to be primarily psychological. Nonetheless, it is not always safe or available. Thus, conservative family environments were reported to reinforce social norms and stigma, which can contribute to victim-blaming, silencing survivors, and further emotional distress. As a Gen Y queer woman argued:

"If they are in a very conservative family or environment, they are not only a victim of the perpetrator, but they also become a victim again when their family mistreats or doesn't support them." (YL1)

In fact, our research found that LGBTQIA+ individuals are more likely to fear judgement from close ones, which considerably restricts their access to informal support. As a result, survivors without any informal support system carry the risks of internalising shame and self-doubt, and go through the abuse and its impacts alone.

"Sometimes, their family blames them. Even if they want to report, they don't know who to go to or whether people will believe them." (YL-C5)

7.2.2 WEAKNESSES OF FORMAL SYSTEMS

Despite efforts from both the government and NGOs, many participants expressed scepticism toward formal systems. Some respondents do not think that there exists available formal support, in particular in rural areas, while some have faced challenges when seeking formal support.

'I think it is difficult because I do not think there are authorities helping with that, especially when it is in a rural area. In the province, we do not know where to turn to. (...) In the province, no authorities or police would be able to help with (...) OGBV. I think there is no law governing OGBV, and there is no case that authorities deal with this issue in the province. What's more, because no one talks about OGBV, and if we tried to report on OGBV cases, people would look at us, saying that we are weird. And this is also a sensitive issue' (ZW14).

Others who approached public institutions were met with apathy or bureaucratic hurdles. For example, a Gen Y woman living with disability shared:

"For my case, I could not deal with it. I contacted the Ministry that is relevant to deal with the case. They asked me to fill in my information. But I heard from my friends' experience that the complaint is just them telling us to fill in the information, they do not help us with anything."' (YW-PwD-K2).

Furthermore, experiences of discriminatory attitudes among authorities exacerbate survivors' distrust.

"Some LGBTQIA+ individuals who went to the police not only didn't get help, but were bullied or harassed again by officers." (YL1)

7.2.3 LACK OF INFORMATION TO SEEK SUPPORT

Amongst the survivors of OGBV who sought help, the primary challenge faced by 62.8% of survey participants was the lack of information and limited access to support services (see figure 19, p.55). Likewise, the first obstacle that prevented survivors from reporting the online abuse and seeking support was that they 'didn't know where to go' (see figure 20, p.55).

Therefore, a recurring theme is the absence of clear, accessible information on where to seek help. A Gen Y man emphasised the challenge of not getting information on available support, saying: "*I think there are not many promotional or awareness campaigns that spread widely about this issue; so, no one knows where to go*" (YM9). A Gen Y woman added that it is even more challenging when those services are limited.

"You cannot seek for services if these services are scarce or cannot be found." (YW-I4)

Even when services do exist, survivors often lack understanding of complaint procedures or doubt the competence of service providers to respond sensitively with inclusiveness, especially for marginalised identities.

'The biggest challenge is our limited knowledge. We don't know how to file complaints or whether we can win a case' (ZM-IP2).

"

"The supporting system is still very limited and not inclusive enough, for instance, the group of LGBTQIA+ they get pressure from society, they want to seeking mental health services, but they don't know where to go, and if they go to public hospitals, it is hard to tell if an hospital has those kind of service and whether hospital service providers will welcome them and understand the LGBTQIA+ situation or not.. So, I think that the first obstacle is information, and the second is that the knowledge of service providers is still limited on these issues" (YL-C5).

7.2.4 FINANCIAL BARRIERS

Economic insecurity significantly limits access to justice. Nearly one in four respondents (24.8%) identified financial cost as a major obstacle they faced when they sought support (see figure 19, p.55).

"We're sometimes afraid of spending money, so we think, "Where do they charge money?" (...) Sometimes, the cost (...) of a small amount of money can feel like a large amount of money. But we often hear that it would cost a lot of money to file various complaints. (L3)

The potential financial cost discourages some people from taking the first step towards seeking support and justice. A CSO worker pointed out that some do not even have money to top up their phone, so they cannot report the abuse (YW-C3).

Thus, for many young women, especially from rural areas and poor backgrounds, legal recourse is perceived as unaffordable and unjust, which also shows a distrust in formal support systems from the less privileged (see next section).

A Gen Y Indigenous woman argued:

"Another reason, youths tend to not seek the services if they know it costs money. When it comes to money and a lawsuit, usually it is unfair [as the lawsuit requires money], especially for young girls from rural areas." (YW-I4)

Moreover, when hoping to seek a formal psychiatrist, the financial cost is also regularly a deterrent. (YW9)
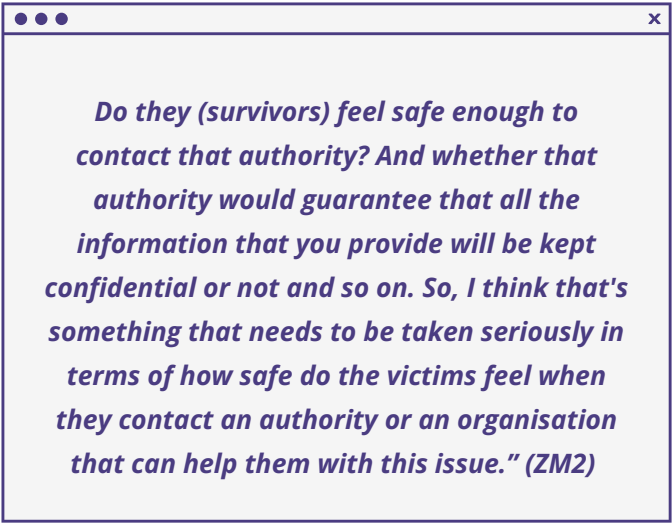
7.2.5 TRUST

"I think they want to seek help, but they don't trust anyone; they don't trust that there's anyone who can really help them. And when they don't trust, it makes them more afraid that if they talk, it will get worse." (ZM-SR13)

The lack of trust in a support system emerges as one of the strongest barriers to seeking help. It is the second main reason why survey participants (54.5%) did not look for support (see figure 20, p.55). While the survey revealed that most respondents do reach out for help (71.3%), challenges for survivors remain in terms of navigating who they can trust within formal and informal support systems.

Distrust in authorities and fear of breaches in confidentiality discourage survivors from reporting. As a CSO worker explained: ***"The challenge when seeking support is that they don't want to disclose their identity and sometimes don't believe in a system that can address it."*** *(YW-C1)*

In this regard, a Gen Z man added concerns for safety and respect for their privacy:

Do they (survivors) feel safe enough to contact that authority? And whether that authority would guarantee that all the information that you provide will be kept confidential or not and so on. So, I think that's something that needs to be taken seriously in terms of how safe do the victims feel when they contact an authority or an organisation that can help them with this issue." (ZM2)

The lack of trust stems from negative lived experiences. Some respondents shared that they were met with disbelief or were not taken seriously about the issues they had the courage to share.

> *"it requires trust, agreement from other people, because victims of such things don't speak up much, why is that? They think, if they tell someone, no one will believe them, they think, "you are making it up," or they won't stand by our side, they'll stand by the other person's side. They have this fear, that's why if we need to provide them a platform, for them to speak, and when other victims hear about it, it will give them motivation as well." (ZL6)*

The lack of trust also comes from common assumptions that their case will not be supported because of their identity and social class, which is at the basis of unequal treatment.

For example, LGBTQIA+ individuals find it harder to trust local authorities, as they could face ridicule and discrimination from the police. A Gen Z queer person shared the experience of one of his friends: *"What he has experienced is that the police authority, first of all, they aren't even friendly with the gay community. So, he thinks that he doesn't feel trusted by the authorities because, first of all, he's gay, so if he brings up such matters, they will only laugh at him more. They don't provide a solution that he can trust, that he can rely on." (ZL6)*

> *"This is just my assumption; some people assume that the police or the service only handle the case of the influencers. They do it because she is famous, she has money, so the case is effective and so on. But what if we are poor, living in the province? We go to file a report at the police station, just because someone bullied our child. How will the police react? Will they be proactive and work on the case, or will they reply that they have many other cases to solve?" (ZM3).*

This is problematic as people who are most at risk and in need of support are the ones facing the most discrimination and unfair treatment. In addition, our data shows that even when the survivors do tell their stories or seek support, many think that other people will not be able to effectively or meaningfully help their case (YW-C1; ZM-SR12; ZM-SR13; ZW-SR18; YW-C3).

7.2.6 VICTIM-BLAMING

Victim blaming and shaming remain powerful deterrents to reporting and healing (ZW2; ZM11). 29.7% of survey participants who experienced OGBV or who know someone who has, explained the decision not to seek help on the basis of avoiding stigma and blame (see figure 19, p.55). Amongst those who sought help, 58.9% of the total survey participants reported that stigmatisation and victim blaming were one of the main challenges they faced (see figure 19, p.55).

Instead of blaming the perpetrator, survivors of GBV are significantly more likely to receive blame when talking about their experience (YL2). As a Gen Y queer woman noted:

"I observed recently that when a young girl was raped by three or four of her friends at school, a large number of people wrote in the comments that the rape was justified. Because why would a girl, knowing she's a girl, go out at night with several boys? So, it becomes a culture of blaming the victim, and not only that, it emotionally affects the parents who are already suffering and have lost a family member." (YL1).

Those attitudes and unwelcome comments not only fail to hold the perpetrator accountable but also disproportionately impact victims who are already dealing with the consequences of the harm committed against them.

This victim-blaming culture extends to LGBTQIA+ individuals and communities, whose experiences are trivialised and invalidated (ZW6; YM7). A Gen Y man explained that whenever someone from the LGBTQIA+ community shared about their experience of OGBV, it would invite more blame and shaming to their community, perceived as "*liking sex*", so *"they're looking for it"* (YM7)

Some participants even reported experiencing victim-blaming from the police. *"At the station, she was shocked that the officers would side with the teacher [perpetrator], saying things such as, "it was because you were doing something like this that invites such a response."* (YW-I-KC2).

Victim blaming reinforces perpetrators' impunity, isolates survivors, and sustains a cycle of silence and violence. As one participant noted, it *"makes perpetrators feel emboldened because society is not placing the blame on them."* (M4)

8

CONCLUSION

8. CONCLUSION

Online gender-based violence (OGBV) is not an isolated or purely digital phenomenon. It is a continuation of the same patriarchal norms, gender inequalities and unequal power structures that sustain violence against women, girls and gender-diverse people offline. This study revealed that while OGBV is increasingly recognised as a serious issue in Cambodia, it continues to receive limited attention at the societal level. Thus, knowledge and understanding of OGBV remain scarce, and low digital literacy, coupled with the anonymity and characteristics of social media platforms, contribute to both vulnerability and impunity. The persistence of harmful gender norms, social expectations and unequal power dynamics further perpetuates this violence online.

The study also stressed that the impacts of OGBV extend beyond the online sphere, affecting survivors' emotional well-being, social life and sense of safety. Online impacts include self-censorship, account deactivation and online discrimination that can reinforce cycles of violence. Offline impacts comprise emotional distress, anxiety, depression, isolation, self-harm, reputational damage and loss of opportunities in education and employment. While 71.6% of respondents who experienced OGBV (or know someone who had) sought support, the majority turned to informal networks of family or friends. Among them, 78.6% found this support only "somewhat helpful", citing limited effectiveness and accessibility of formal services. 28.7% did not seek help at all, often due to lack of information, financial barriers, social stigma, fear of victim blaming or mistrust in reporting systems.

Overall, this participatory research highlights that Cambodia's response to OGBV remains fragmented and underdeveloped. Survivors navigate a digital environment where accountability mechanisms are weak, awareness is low and social stigma silences victims. Addressing OGBV, therefore, requires urgent collective actions: strengthening public understanding of digital risks and rights, building inclusive and survivor-centred support systems and transforming the harmful gender norms that perpetuate online violence.

That is why we call for further research and more collective actions to address OGBV for Cambodian women and girls in all their diversity, so they can express themselves freely and fully participate in online spaces without fear or risk of harm.

9

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

🏛️ To Government

- **Develop and enforce a comprehensive legal framework on OGBV:** Establish clear definitions of online gender-based violence in national laws and policies, in line with CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35, and ensure alignment with international human rights commitments.
- **Strengthen reporting and response mechanisms:** Create safe, accessible and confidential online and offline channels for reporting OGBV. A safe space should be created so that survivors can report their cases. Authorities should be trained on OGBV, gender sensitivity, disability inclusion, and survivor-centred approaches. The involvement and presence of female authorities as part of the response mechanism are essential to build safety and trust.
- **Integrate digital safety into national education programs:** Include modules on gender equality, online consent, and respectful online behaviour within school curricula and public awareness campaigns.
- **Collaborate with civil society and technology actors:** Institutionalise multi-stakeholder platforms to coordinate prevention, response and monitoring of OGBV cases, and ensure the participation of women's rights and LGBTQIA+ organisations.

🌐 To Civil Society

- **Raise awareness and disseminate information:** Many participants emphasised that they did not seek help because they "didn't know where to go." Awareness campaigns are therefore essential. NGOs should lead nationwide efforts to disseminate information on OGBV, survivor rights, and available support services through accessible formats and digital platforms. As a Gen Y man recommended: *"organisations working on this issue should promote campaigns on social media. That would have a real impact."* (YM7)

- **Strengthen solidarity and coordinated response among NGOs:** Civil society actors should work collectively to establish focal points or referral pathways for OGBV survivors, ensuring rapid and coordinated responses. As a CSO worker recommended: "C*SOs should work in solidarity to support and address this issue. There should be a focal person responsible for responding to OGBV." (YW-C1)* Another CSO worker also added, *"We (CSOs) also should work with the private sector and all stakeholders, including government, NGOs, development partners across sectors."* (YL-C5)

- **Target high-risk and marginalised groups:** Focus interventions on rural women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, youth, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and Indigenous communities using an intersectional approach. As a Gen Y queer person recommended: "*NGOs or development partners should reach out to the most vulnerable target audiences... by using an intersectionality lens."* (YL-C5)

- **Build capacity within organisations:** Before conducting campaigns, NGOs should strengthen their own capacity to develop survivor-centred protection mechanisms and ensure that their internal digital practices are safe and feminist-informed.

To the private sector and digital platforms

- **Ensure accountability and transparency in content moderation:** Social media companies operating in Cambodia must improve the moderation of harmful content in Khmer and local languages, including misogynistic hate speech, threats, and non-consensual image sharing.

- **Establish partnerships with feminist organisations:** Collaborate with local NGOs and women's rights groups to co-create policies, tools, and campaigns promoting digital safety and online respect.

- **Invest in digital literacy and awareness campaigns:** The private sector should allocate resources to promote positive online behaviour, combat misinformation, and support public education on consent, safety, and gender equality online.

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Glossary of common forms OGBV[43][44]

- **Cyberbullying:** an umbrella term that refers to a "wilful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones and other electronic devices", usually using textual or graphical content and with the aim of frightening and undermining someone's self-esteem or reputation. This term is mainly used in relation to children and young people.
- **Cyberstalking:** the use of technology to repeatedly stalk and monitor someone's activities and behaviours in real-time or historically, even after the survivor/victim has asked the stalker to stop. It causes the survivor/victim to feel anxious, upset, or fear for their safety, upset.
- **Deepfakes:** digital images and audio that are artificially altered or manipulated by AI and/or deep learning to make someone appear to do or say something he or she did not actually do or say. Pictures or videos can be edited to put someone in a compromising position or to have someone make a controversial statement, even though the person did not actually do or say what is shown.
- **Doxxing or doxing:** non-consensual disclosure of personal information involving the public release of an individual's private, personal, sensitive information, such as home and email addresses, phone numbers, employer and family members' contact information, or photos of their children and the school they attend with the purpose of locating and causing physical harm.
- **Online hate speech:** any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in this case, based on their sex, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **Image-based abuse:** using images to coerce, threaten, harass, objectify or abuse a survivor. Includes a wide range of behaviours that involve taking, sharing or threatening to share intimate images without consent. These images may be sexual in nature, in which case we talk about "image-based sexual abuse."
- **Online harassment:** a course of conduct that involves the use of technology to repeatedly contact, annoy, threaten or scare another person through unwelcome, offensive, degrading or insulting verbal comments and often images, and that is committed by single individuals or mobs of perpetrators with the intention to make the receiver feel uncomfortable, which can lead to feelings of shame and depression.
- **Online sexual harassment:** unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature conducted online, creating a hostile or offensive digital environment.
- **Sextortion:** when an individual has, or claims to have, a sexual image of another person and uses it to coerce a person into doing something they do not want to do or to extort money or sexual favours from someone.

The definitions in this glossary are taken in full from:

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