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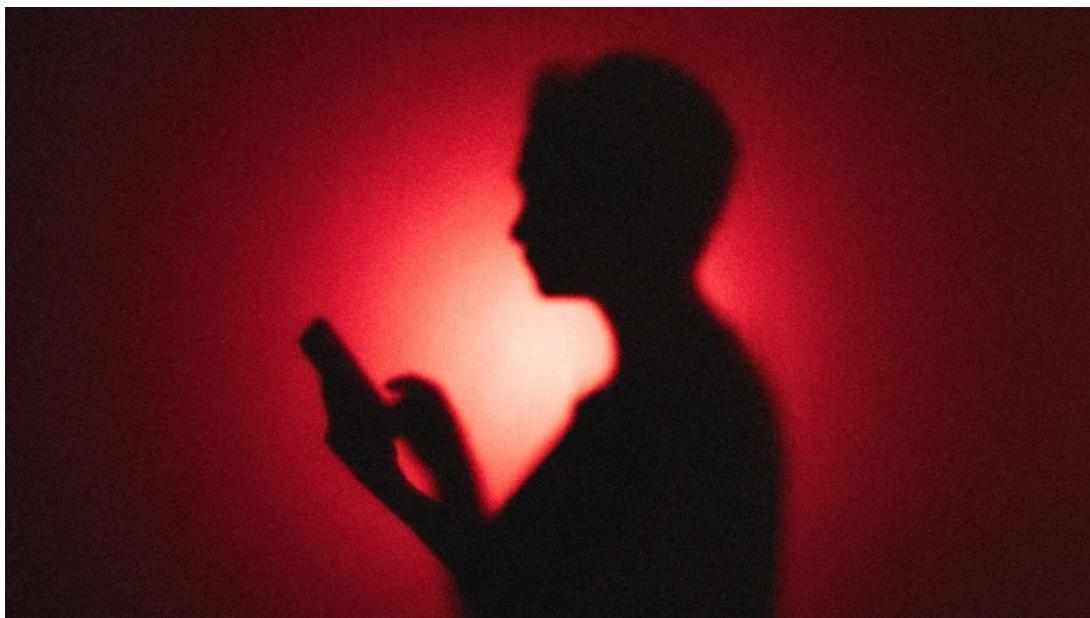
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## Online violence against women is soaring, a new report finds

New research from the Dutch NGO Rutgers found that 38% of women worldwide reported personal experiences with online violence.



[Photo: solidcolours/Getty Images]



BY CHRIS STOKEL-WALKER 3 MINUTE READ



Globally, one in three women—or [736 million people](#)—have experienced violence of some sort, whether from an intimate partner, sexual assault, or both. Much of that  offline violence is linked to online habits, according to a [new report](#) from Dutch NGO Rutgers, which was launched today at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland.



The study highlights the extent to which abusers are utilizing new tech in order to perpetuate their control and violence against women and girls. The research was

carried out in collaboration with a number of support services helping women in countries including Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Rwanda, South Africa, and Uganda.

Yet, the report authors warn, “technology-facilitated gender-based violence” (TFGBV) is often not seen as a serious form of gender-based violence. That lack of recognition of the gravity of tech-enabled abuse can result in insufficient reporting and inadequate legal protection for survivors. In Uganda, for instance, 49% of women reported experiencing online harassment, yet awareness and reporting mechanisms remain woefully inadequate—meaning that only 53% of women were aware they could report it to authorities.

“This is something we have been closely observing for the past decade as technology evolves and as we start seeing more and more people signing on to platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp,” says Kinda Majari, program coordinator at ABAAD in Lebanon, a gender-focused nonprofit that worked with Rutgers on the report.

Violence against women and girls has always been an issue, says Majari, but has been “booming” in the past few years. Yet despite that, many people don’t believe it’s a real issue, she says—meaning complaints when they arise are not dealt with seriously. “Unfortunately, it is quite underreported at this stage,” she says. “A lot of people that have to come to experience TFGBV online don’t necessarily know that they have been victimized by this phenomenon.”

One of the motivating factors for publishing the report was indeed to raise awareness around TFGBV, says Loes Loning, a researcher at Rutgers. Loning, for her part, wasn’t surprised by the prevalence of TFGBV, nor was she surprised that online and offline abuse often intermingled or bled from one area to another. That’s simply the nature of abuse in a digital world, she says. But Loning *was* surprised that there were so many commonalities of how the abuse was encountered across the seven countries studied. “Some patterns that emerge that kind of apply across countries,” she says. “Of course, we know technology knows no borders. And this type of violence is also, I guess, across borders.”

While those experts in the field are aware of the severity of the abuse that can be suffered, some authorities have still been slow to take digital abuse seriously. “It’s ~~still very much brushed off by different actors~~,” says Loning.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chris Stokel-Walker is a contributing writer at *Fast Company* who focuses on the tech sector and its impact on our daily lives—online and offline. He has explored how the [WordPress drama has implications for the wider web](#), how AI web crawlers are [pushing sites offline](#), as well as stories about ordinary people doing incredible things, such as the German teen who [set up a MySpace clone](#) with more than a million users. [More](#)

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