Online violence against women
What is online violence against women?

Online violence against women is a global phenomenon which is manifested in many forms of online abuse that specifically and disproportionally affects women and creates serious consequences on their lives. It is a form of gender-based violence which is rooted in the social inequality between men and women and based on stereotypization of women.

Online violence against women is perpetrated in the digital sphere – on digital platforms, forums, private messaging apps etc. and with the use of ICT technologies. Because of the specific nature of the violence, victims can often find it hard to explain and comprehend the abuse. Online violence against women is intertwined: it can start
offline or online, it can continue online and/or offline, perpetrator can be known or unknown to the victim who can be subjected to different forms of violence at once. Although it can often be dismissed as insignificant or ‘virtual’ - the consequences are real and severe.

Online violence results in psychological, physical, sexual, economic harm and suffering with an overall loss of quality of life.

Online violence is also referred to as cyber violence, digital violence or ICT facilitated violence.
Non-consensual Intimate Image abuse

The distribution or the threat of distribution of intimate, private and/or manipulated images/videos of a woman or girl without the consent of the subject. Images/videos can be obtained non-consensually, manipulated non-consensually, or obtained consensually but distributed non-consensually. Common motivations include sexualizing the victim, inflicting harm on the victim, or negatively affecting the life of the victim. Publication of such content can destroy a person’s education or employment opportunities, as well as existing or future intimate relationships. As a result, victims may also face threats and violence from third parties. In some cases abuse can result in committing suicide. Perpetrators are most often ex-partners.
Cyber stalking

Cyber stalking can be described as persistently engaging in threatening or intimidating conduct directed at another person, by means of ICT, which causes that the person fears for own safety or that the person fears for safety of dependants. It can also mean the act of placing another person under continuous surveillance, without that person’s consent or legal authorisation to do so, by means of ICT, to track or monitor that person’s movements and activities. In most cases the perpetrators are ex-partners who want to forcefully control the victim.

Doxing

Making material containing the personal data of another person, without that person’s consent, accessible to a multitude of end-users, by means of information and communication technologies, for the purpose of inciting those end-users to cause physical or significant psychological harm to the person. Perpetrators are most often people who are close to the victim, acquaintances or former partners, but they can also be unknown to the victim.
**Sextortion**

The act of threatening to publish sexual content (images, videos, deepfakes, sexual rumours) to menace, coerce or blackmail someone, either for more sexual content or for money, sometimes both. If the victim is coerced to an act of sexual intercourse or an equal sexual action it can be referred to as online/cyber rape.

Virtual rape, on the other hand, can be considered as an equal act perpetrated in the Metaverse digital sphere and by an avatar (a digital representation of a person) onto another person's avatar. Perpetrators can be unknown persons who targeted one or more victims, but they can also be ex-partners.

**Cyber harassment**

Initiating an attack with third parties directed at another person, by making threatening or insulting material accessible to a multitude of end-users, by means of information and communication technologies, with the effect of causing significant effects to the attacked person; also includes participating with third parties in attacks. The victims are often women in prominent public functions or roles, such as politicians, journalists or activists, and they face sexist insults and specific gender-based threats, such as threats of rape or femicide, which cause anxiety, fear and concern for their own safety.
Online gender-based hate speech

Intentional conduct of inciting to violence or hatred directed against a group of persons or a member of such a group defined by reference to sex or gender, by disseminating to the public material containing such incitement by means of ICT. The victims are also more often women in prominent public positions, while the use of ICT makes the extent of damage to the targeted person or group much greater due to the large reach and spreading. This is precisely why the effect of silencing, i.e. self-censorship and withdrawal of women from digital spaces occurs, which creates negative consequences for the society as a whole.
this behaviour and encourage victims to open up to someone they can trust and seek available support and information how to report violence in order to be safe.

**Important!**

**Secure the evidence**

Save information about the published material, all details that can serve as evidence.

Write down all the important information about the content - how it was misused, the time when it was published or shared without permission, the address of the site where it appeared, the account from which it was published and account link, messages received and the like. If there are multiple sites and accounts, note them all.

Take a screenshot. Most operating systems have a shortcut to record

Victims of online violence often feel shame and guilt, which is inflicted on them due to the widespread stereotypization and social inequality based on gender. Therefore the initial reaction is withdrawal from online and offline spaces and seclusion. It is important to notice
for the victims such as: psychological and legal counselling, IT support, emotional support and accompany of a Person of trust while reporting violence to the authorities – Police or State Attorney’s Office – which are offered by a number of NGOs across the Croatia.

Helpful free tools and services

babe.hr/neon – NO to Online violence – online platform with relevant information and free support services for the victims

stopNCII.org – a free tool designed to support victims of Non-Consensual Intimate Image (NCII) abuse and help them prevent the upload of images when facing threats of sharing – on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Bumble.

the screen, which means that you press several commands on the keyboard at the same time. A photo of the entire screen of your device will be created, which you should save. Also, save the entire web page (Save as/Save Page) and download the content (image, video, audio etc.).

After you have secured the evidence report the violence to the site or platform. Most online platforms have a standard form for reporting illegal content. You can also directly send an email with a request to remove the content and contact Croatian Personal Data Protection Agency.

In the Republic of Croatia there are a number of criminal and misdemeanour offences that can be linked to different forms of online violence. Also, different types of support services are free and available
**SURF& SOUND** is a project aimed at combating violence against women, which persists in digital spaces. The main objective of the project is to actively raise awareness about online violence against women and form mechanisms of its prevention and suppression. Specific objectives include building professional capacities for fighting online violence against women, creating an online platform to provide information and promote reporting, providing legal and psychological support for victims, and raising public awareness through a national campaign.

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