

# ONLINE, GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

## HOW TO STAY SAFE ONLINE

### Platforms that don't allow screenshots

Use apps that have in-built features of blocking screenshots



imo



Signal



Confide

### How to Block Messages from Unknown Users

Go to Your Profile



Open Security & Privacy



Block Request from Unknown Users



## WHAT IS GENDER - BASED ONLINE VIOLENCE?

Gender Based Online Violence happens when people use digital tools or online spaces to harm others based on their gender – especially women, queer and other marginalized persons. It means using technology like mobile phones, social media, messaging applications or the internet to harm, silence or control. In simple terms, it is a modern form of abuse.

## WHY DOES ONLINE VIOLENCE TARGET WOMEN & QUEER PEOPLE MORE?

The digital space reflects the same social expectations, patriarchal beliefs, power imbalances, gender norms, and hierarchies that exist in our society, leading to marginalized women and Queer individuals being discriminated or abused because of their gender. Women are often pressurized to conform to heteronormative expectations in order to maintain the social order that benefits the dominant group. When women or Queer individuals attempt to empower themselves, think outside the box, or express themselves freely within the digital spaces, they often face the same harassment, control and oppression that exist in the larger society.

## HOW IS GENDER-BASED ONLINE VIOLENCE INFLUENCING/ AFFECTING EXISTING FORMS OF VIOLENCE AND

## ALSO CREATING NEWER FORMS OF VIOLENCE?



### Intimate Partner Violence or Domestic Violence:

- Abusers use smartphones, smartwatches, or car GPS devices to monitor a partner's location.
- Secretly installed software can track calls, messages, social media activity, or emails.
- Abusers can monitor movement, access security cameras, or control devices remotely to intimidate or observe victims.
- Non-consensual sharing of intimate images, also known as "revenge porn," used to shame, manipulate, control and even extort survivors.
- Forcing or threatening survivors to send sexual images or engage in sexual acts online or offline.
- Sending contradictory messages, deleting evidence, or gaslighting to confuse or manipulate the partner.
- Harassment or threats via technology that interfere with work or professional life.
- Constant texts, emails, or calls to monitor or threaten.
- Public shaming, posting private photos, or spreading rumours.
- Forcing to record intimate personal images.
- Forcing to watch and enact pornographic content.

### Natal Family Violence:

- Online harassment or chatting with boys online is often used as an excuse to stop a girl from studying, curbing their access to technology and affecting their digital literacy. It is also used as an excuse for an early marriage.
- Young girls are often under strict family surveillance in the name of protection. Families may use GPS, phones, or smart devices to monitor a child or adolescent's movements.
- Parents or family members may read messages, emails, or social media accounts to enforce control or prevent "undesired" interaction with others.



### Sexual Violence:

- Unwanted sexual messages, comments, or advances on social media, chat app
- Stalking or threatening messages with sexual content.
- Pressuring or manipulating someone to send sexual images or performing sexual acts online.
- Sharing or threatening to share intimate photos or videos without consent to humiliate, blackmail, or control the victim (Revenge porn).
- Editing or manipulating images to harass or intimidate victims (Image-based abuse/Deepfake).
- Demanding money, favours, or compliance in exchange for not sharing sexual content. (Online blackmail or extortion)
- Abusers building trust with minors or vulnerable individuals to sexually exploit them. (Online grooming)
- Coercing victims to perform sexual acts on camera (Live-streamed abuse).

### Human Trafficking:

- Traffickers use social media, dating apps, or online job portals to lure victims.
- Fake job offers or modelling opportunities are commonly used to deceive an individual
- Messaging apps, encrypted platforms, and online forums help traffickers plan movements, transfers, and sales of victims.
- Technology allows traffickers to operate across borders and even use online platforms to sell sexual services, while avoiding detection.



## ONLINE GENDER - BASED VIOLENCE AFFECTS ALL AGES:

Digital-facilitated violence affects people at every stage of life, though the form it takes changes as individuals grow. Young children may face privacy risks when their images are shared online without consent and can be exposed to harassment or predatory contact through games and apps. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to cyberbullying, grooming, coercion, and the non-consensual sharing of personal content. As people move into adulthood, technology becomes a powerful tool for intimate partners or family members to monitor, control, or harass through surveillance, tracking apps, or manipulation of digital accounts. Across all ages, these harms can deeply impact emotional wellbeing, safety, and autonomy, showing how technology can amplify traditional forms of abuse while creating new pathways.

## DO YOU KNOW SOME TERMS AND INFORMATION?

### Doxing

Publishing personal information online without the consent of the concerned person.

### Catfishing

Catfishing is a term used to describe when someone creates a fake identity online to deceive, manipulate, or exploit another person.

### Sextortion:

Blackmail by threatening to publish sexual information, photos or videos online

### Grooming in Gaming Rooms:

Grooming in gaming rooms refers to the process by which perpetrators build trust and manipulate children or adolescents in online gaming environments with the intent to exploit or abuse them sexually.

### Paedophiles in Gaming Rooms:

Paedophiles in gaming rooms are adults or older adolescents who have a sexual attraction to young children and use online gaming platforms to contact, manipulate, or exploit them.

YOU CAN TAKE LEGAL ACTION IF YOU FACE ANY FORM OF ONLINE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.

## THERE ARE LAWS TO PROTECT YOUR RIGHTS:

The Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act)

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO Act)

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2003 (BNS)

– if the offence is committed on a child

The Justice Verma Committee (formed after the 2012 Delhi gang rape/ "Nirbhaya" case) did observe that women are unsafe not just in physical spaces but also in digital spaces and has strengthened the available options.

For more information on the legal know-how, please click on this link.

## STAY SAFE ONLINE! STOP VIOLENCE!

- Learn ways to **turn on privacy settings** on personal devices
- Use **platforms that restrict screenshots** during video calls, such as **IMO, Confide, and Signal.**
- Take unedited screenshots of texts, photos, videos and **save links of the abuse as evidence.**
- **Store and save** the above evidence safely. Take a **back-up of the evidence** as well.
- Do not communicate with the perpetrator.
- **Report the content directly** on the platform / Grievance Officer of the platform. As per the law, social media sites are required to acknowledge your complaint and take appropriate action **within 24 hours** of receiving it.
- **Request trusted friends and family** to report the content as well, if possible.
- If not happy with the decision of the Grievance Officer, **you can apply to the Grievance Appellate Committee.**
- Call the National Cybercrime Helpline - **1930.**

# ONLINE, GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

## HOW TO TAKE LEGAL ACTION AGAINST ONLINE, GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?

If you face any form of gender-based violence that has been facilitated by technology, you can invoke the law to protect your rights.

The Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act)

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2003 (BNS)

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO Act) – if the offence is committed on a child

Offence / Type of abuse	Explanation	IT Act	POCSO	BNS
Child sexual abuse & exploitative material (CSAEM)	Visual depiction of a child engaged in real or simulated sexual acts, including images, videos or digitally altered content.	S. 66E S. 67 S. 67A S. 67B*	S. 11 S. 12 S. 13 S. 14 S. 15	S. 74 S. 75 S. 77
Online Sexual Harassment	Involves sending sexually explicit messages, images, or comments, making sexual advances or targeting a person with unwanted sexual content through digital platforms. It can also include stalking, threats, or blackmail intended to intimidate or humiliate.	S. 67 S. 67A S. 67B*	S. 11 S. 12	S. 74 S. 75
Online Grooming	When an adult builds trust with a child online with the intention of sexually exploiting or abusing the child. It often begins with friendly conversations and gradually progresses to manipulation, isolation or coercion.	S. 67B*	S. 11 S. 12	S. 74 S. 75
Sextortion	Threats to share / leak a person's private or sexually explicit images, videos or messages unless they comply with certain demands, often for money, more sexual content or sexual favours.	S. 66E	S. 11 S. 12	S. 74 S. 75 S. 351 (2) S. 351 (3) S. 351 (4)
Sexting	The creation, sharing or exchange of sexually explicit messages, photos or videos without consent.	S. 67 S. 67A S. 67B*	S. 11 S. 12	S. 74 S. 75 S. 351 (2) S. 351 (3) S. 351 (4)
Cyberstalking	Persistently monitoring, following, tracking or harassing online, using emails, messages or social media.		S. 11 S. 12	S. 78
Cyber-flashing	Sending unsolicited sexual images or videos, such as nude photos or genital pictures, through digital platforms, messages or proximity-sharing tools. It is also a form of sexual harassment.	S. 67 S. 67A	S. 11 S. 12	
Non-consensual dissemination of intimate content	This is the sharing, posting or forwarding of private or sexually explicit images or videos of a person without their consent, often to shame or control them. In case the perpetrator is a romantic partner, it is often referred to as "revenge porn"	S. 66E S. 67A	S. 11 S. 12	
Doxing	The act of publicly revealing someone's personal and identifying information online, such as address, phone number, workplace etc., without their consent. It is often done to harass, threaten, or endanger the person.	S. 67A S. 66E	S. 11 S. 12	S. 356 (1) & (2)
Morphing	Morphing involves digitally altering someone's image, specially to place their face on another body or in a sexually explicit context, without consent. It could also be a deep fake or artificially generated sexually explicit content. It is a form of image-based abuse.	S. 66E S. 67A S. 66D	S. 11 S. 12	
Voyeurism	Voyeurism is the act of watching, recording or sharing images or videos of a person engaged in a private act, such as undressing or using a bathroom, without their consent. It violates the person's expectation of privacy.	S. 67	S. 11 S. 12	S. 77
Gender - based hate speech	This refers to online attacks that demean or incite hatred or violence against individuals based on their gender, especially women and LGBTQI+ persons. It reinforces discrimination, silences voices and contributes to a hostile digital environment.			S. 356 S. 351 (2) S. 351 (3) S. 351 (4) S. 79

\*when the offence is committed on a child

## SUMMARY OF RELEVANT SECTIONS:

YOU CAN TAKE LEGAL ACTION IF YOU FACE ANY FORM OF ONLINE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.

### Section 66C:

Deals with the punishment for identity theft by using someone's identity dishonestly with the intent to cause harm or commit fraud.

### Section 67:

Punishes publishing or transmitting obscene material in electronic form.

### Section 66D:

Deals with punishment for anyone who cheats by impersonating another individual through a communication device or a computer.

### Section 67A:

Punishes publishing or transmission of material containing sexually explicit content in electronic form.

### Section 66E:

Deal with anyone who shares images of a private area of any person online without their consent. This causes a breach of bodily privacy.

### Section 67B:

Punishes publishing or transmitting material depicting children in sexually explicit acts.

### Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2003 (BNS):

- Section 356 (1) to (4):** Deals with criminal defamation, punishes individuals who, by speaking or writing, intend to cause harm to the reputation of another person or knows their actions will cause harm to the reputation of another person.
- Section 74:** The exploitation and extortion of women. It punishes anyone who assaults or forces a woman to act in a manner that would outrage her modesty.
- Section 75:** Defines and penalises behaviours that amount to sexual harassment.
- Section 77:** Punishes any man who secretly or intrusively captures the image of a woman engaging in a private act. It also punishes any man for sharing or distributing such captured images without the woman's consent.
- Section 78:** Deals with the offence of stalking including online activity.
- Section 351(1):** Deals with criminal intimidation such as threatening to cause harm to another person, their reputation or their property.
- Section 351(4):** Deals with criminal intimidation such as threatening to cause harm to another person, their reputation or their property by an anonymous communication.
- Section 79:** Punishes insults to the modesty of a woman or which breaches the privacy of a woman.

### The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO Act):

- Section 11:** Defines sexual harassment of a child to include actions such as making sexual gestures, remarks or sounds, showing pornography or making a child exhibit their body with sexual intent. It criminalises any behaviour verbal, non-verbal, or physical, done with sexual intent that affects a child's dignity or safety.
- Section 12:** Provides punishment to anyone found guilty of sexual harassment as mentioned above.
- Section 13:** Criminalises the use of a child in any form of media, such as photography, video, or digital format for creating, distributing or advertising pornographic material. It applies to anyone who involves a child for sexual advertisement through such depiction.
- Section 14:** Deals with punishment for using a child for pornographic purposes.
- Section 15:** Deals with punishment for anyone who stores pornographic material involving a child for commercial or transmission purposes.

