

**TFGBV**

**DIGITAL OR PHYSICAL  
EVERY WORKPLACE  
SHOULD BE SAFE**

**UNIONS AGAINST  
TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED  
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

**#16DAYS #TFGBV**



## VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT ARE A DAILY REALITY FOR MANY WOMEN WORKERS. TECHNOLOGY IS MAKING THIS REALITY WORSE.

UNI Global Union's Equal Opportunities Department, through the Breaking the Circle campaign and ongoing advocacy for ILO Convention 190, works to eliminate harmful social and gender norms that perpetuate inequality and violence and to prevent gender-based violence in the world of work through effective policies and strategies.

Technology and digital platforms should be leveraged to advance gender equality and empower women in the workplace, but a **recent study conducted by UNI Global Union indicates that new technologies have the potential to significantly exacerbate gender-based violence, both in the workplace and beyond.**

**Trade unions are essential to addressing online violence and harassment that women face in the workplace.**

# WHAT IS TFGBV?

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence is an act of violence perpetrated by one or more individuals that is committed, assisted, aggravated and amplified in part or fully by the use of information and communication technologies or digital media, against a person on the basis of their gender.<sup>1</sup>

While technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) is a recent phenomenon, **its origins lie in longstanding gender and social norms**. TFGBV can take many forms and is committed on a continuum. That is, is committed as part of a pattern of violence perpetrated both online and offline.

**This requires us to defend and ensure the rights of women workers in ALL SPACES.**

<sup>1</sup> UNFPA, 2021 “Technology-facilitated Gender-based Violence: Making All Spaces Safe” This also means that women, girls, and LGBTQ communities can be targeted as groups.

## Technology-facilitated gender-based violence is particularly difficult to address because of its nature:

- It may be conducted anonymously.
- It can occur remotely.
- Perpetrators often find it accessible and affordable.
- The process can be automated.
- Its effects may be continuous and widely disseminated.
- It is possible for such actions to be collectively organized.
- These acts are frequently committed without consequence due to the absence of legal frameworks for accountability.
- TFGBV-related content is challenging to delete or remove, resulting in its persistence and revictimization.
- This phenomenon can contribute to the normalization of violence against women and girls, as it is perceived as less serious compared to other forms of violence.
- It occurs anywhere people use phones, email, social media, smart homes, GPS tracking devices, recording devices not connected to the internet, and others.

## AS NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND DIGITAL SPACES BECOME AVAILABLE, NEW FORMS OF TFGBV EMERGE.

At the same time, older technologies are being used to perpetrate new forms of violence.

For example, in the context of domestic violence, perpetrators use online bank transfers to send harassing messages to survivors.

This means that domestic violence, already understood as a workplace issue, is now ubiquitous, affecting all areas of women's lives.

# FORMS OF TFGBV

As we said, the forms that technology-facilitated gender-based violence can take are countless and continue to grow. In many cases, multiple forms are experienced simultaneously.

## The most common forms of TFGBV are:

- Online gender and sexual harassment.
- Cyberstalking.
- Image-based abuse, including non-consensual sharing of intimate images, deep fakes or sending unsolicited images of genitals to another person.
- Technology-facilitated sexual abuse, such as sextortion (blackmail by threatening to publish sexual information, photos or videos).
- Doxing (publishing private personal information allowing physical targeting or attempts to undermine someone's reputation or credibility).

- Hacking (Use of technology to gain illegal or unauthorized access to systems or resources to acquire personal information, alter or modify information, slander and denigrate the survivor, and/or exert violence against women's organizations.)
- Impersonation.
- Searching for targets and using technology to locate survivors in order to perpetrate violence.
- Hate speech.
- Defamation.
- Limiting or controlling survivors' use of technology (In domestic violence particularly, perpetrators may use technology to exert abuse and control over the survivor, by tracking, monitoring or restricting survivor's movements, communications and activities - for example by forcing the person to give their passwords, obtaining unauthorized access to their online accounts, limiting their use of technology devices by digitally or physically controlling access to devices or accounts and inspecting survivor's devices).

# HOW TFGBV AFFECTS WORKERS

**Often perceived as a less severe and less harmful form of gender-based violence, technology-facilitated gender-based violence can have equally serious consequences for the health and lives of working women.**

The impacts of TFGBV include physical health consequences (stress-related illnesses), mental health consequences (experiences of shame, stress and fear, loss of dignity, damage to social standing), and financial consequences (legal support, online protection services, loss of wages, professional repercussions).

## UNI GLOBAL UNION CONDUCTED A GLOBAL SURVEY WITH 430 RESPONDENTS. THE FINDINGS SHOW THAT:

- 16.3% experienced TFGBV outside the workplace.
- 10.2% experienced TFGBV at work.
- The main sources of harassment were supervisors, colleagues, clients and users.

Workers report INTIMIDATION, REPUTATIONAL DAMAGE, STRESS AND BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATING FULLY AND SAFELY IN THEIR WORKPLACES AND UNIONS.

The data confirms that TFGBV is a real and growing workplace concern — and even when the violence begins outside of work, it follows workers into the workplace with real consequences.

**TFGBV can negatively affect a person's ability to exercise their freedom of expression, disrupt their sense of safety, violate their human rights and privacy, and impact their ability to participate fully in economic, social, and democratic life.**

# HOW TO ADDRESS TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AT WORK

Trade unions are key allies for employers to take action against TFGBV. Their role includes negotiation, monitoring, support, training and the promotion of equality.

**Without union involvement, many measures may remain merely on paper or fail to effectively protect workers.**

Employers must adopt a comprehensive approach that combines internal policies, secure technology, training, and support and reporting mechanisms.

## → EMPLOYERS

### 1. Implement clear and specific policies

- Trade unions should engage with employers to underline the importance of a zero-tolerance policy towards violence and harassment in general, and gender-based violence in particular.
- Include in the policies a clear definition and explicit prohibition of technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
- Create detailed protocols for reporting, investigating and sanctioning technology-facilitated violence.
- Establish clear and proportionate disciplinary consequences.

## 2. Design and maintain safe digital environments

**Ensure that corporate tools (email, chats, internal platforms) have:**

- Secure authentication and access controls.
- Monitoring of misuse while respecting privacy.
- Filters against offensive content.
- Implement privacy-by-default settings and security-by-design.

## 3. Training and awareness

**Provide regular training to staff on:**

- An explanation of technology-facilitated gender-based violence. How to identify and prevent it.
- Responsible use of technology.
- Gender equality and non-discriminatory conduct.
- Train middle management to handle complaints empathetically, confidentially, and free from retaliation.

## 4. Accessible and confidential reporting mechanisms

### Establish secure channels to report cases.

- Guarantee protection against retaliation for those who report or testify.
- Allow victims and witnesses to be accompanied by union representatives if they so wish.
- Offer options for reporting internally or externally (confidential meeting space, the option to meet off-site during working hours).
- Guarantee systematic reporting and sanctions in case of inappropriate conduct.

## 5. Protect survivors

- Secure the right of employees to contact the union during paid working time on related issues and to receive advice and support.
- Allow temporary work adjustments (changes in schedule, teleworking, relocation within the company if necessary).
- Sickness or other absence related to violence to be outside normal sickness absence limits and associated disciplinary and performance targets.

- Real wages to be protected where associated violence/harassment affects achievement of performance targets.
- Provide support for preserving digital evidence and guidance on online security.
- Support victims of domestic violence in the workplace to ensure their safety and well-being and to help them overcome economic dependence.

## 6. Control the use of corporate devices and networks

**Make clear policies on:**

- Appropriate use of work devices.
- Prohibition of spyware, unauthorized monitoring, or dissemination of private content.

## 7. Continuous evaluation

- Trade unions are encouraged to advocate for gender-sensitive risk assessments from employers. These assessments should address how violence and harassment uniquely impact workers based on gender, including technology-enabled forms of abuse.
- Conduct periodic assessments of gender violence risks.
- Update protocols as technologies and new forms of aggression evolve.

## UNIONS

### 1. Negotiate and enforce protection

- Negotiate comprehensive workplace policies and address technology-facilitated gender-based violence through collective agreements.
- Advocate for full implementation of ILO Convention 190 and Recommendation 206.
- Establish zero tolerance policies for all forms of gender-based violence.
- Ensure that the gender dimension is mainstreamed in all collective negotiations. Having women in negotiating teams is vital for this.
- Include domestic violence as a workplace issue, that can be worsened through technology.

### 2. Representation and defence of workers

- Support, advise and represent workers who suffer gender-based violence or harassment, cyberstalking, sextortion, non-consensual sharing, etc.
- Ensure that internal procedures are fair, transparent and respect labour rights (in workplaces and within the union).
- Ensure that there is no pressure, retaliation or revictimization during the process of reporting.

### 3. Build capacity and awareness

- Deliver training and workshops to help workers and representatives recognize and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
- Train shop stewards and union representatives in trauma-informed approaches and safe digital communication.
- Run digital campaigns to raise awareness of online and offline forms of gender-based violence.

### 4. Provide support systems

- Establish confidential advice lines, referral networks and mental health support for survivors.
- Ensure protection without fear of retaliation, with particular attention to women, young workers, LGBTQ+ workers and digitally connected workers.
- Campaign for systemic change.
- Campaign to include digital spaces in workplace safety standards.
- Advocate for stronger digital accountability, legal protections and regulations to address online abuse.
- Promote responsible use of digital platforms and protection of personal data.

## 5. Monitor the implementation of policies

- Ensure that policies are not only formal but also effective and respectful of labour and digital rights.
- Generate gender-sensitive risk assessments, identifying specific work situations more prone to GBV and new forms of TFGBV.
- Identify and rectify potential biases when employers implement AI and digital surveillance systems.
- Report violations to labour inspectors or specialized authorities.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## for preventing and eliminating gender-based violence:

**Zero tolerance** for any form of gender-based violence.

**Confidentiality**, protection of personal data and privacy.

**No revictimization** during the reporting and response process.

A **gender perspective** at all stages.

**Collaboration** and shared responsibility between employers and unions.

The right to **full reparation** for the victim.