Understanding and Responding to Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV)

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Prepared for: Platform

Time Estimate: 55 Minutes.

- Introduction and First Prompt: 5 Minutes
- What is TFGBV: 10 Minutes
- Examples of TFGBV: 10 Minutes
- Intersectional TFGBV: 10 Minutes
- Resources and Reflections: 10 Minutes
- Q&A: 10 Minutes

Introduction

- Land Acknowledgement
- Facilitator Introduction
- Content warning and voluntary participation reminder

Learning Objectives

By the end of the training, participants will be able to:

- Define TFGBV and the ways it manifests online

- Provide examples of TFGBV from real-world scenarios

- Understand how it is connected to racism, sexism, ableism and other forms of discrimination

- Explore how power and privilege shape our online experiences

- Access resources and identify strategies for support, advocacy, and prevention

Prompt: *"What would a safe digital space feel like for you?"*

What is TFGBV?

Definitions of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) vary across disciplines and sectors – technology-facilitated gender-based violence is also called different things like cyberviolence, online, or digital violence. However, it is generally understood as the use of technology to harm, harass or abuse people based on gender, gender expression, gender identity or perceived gender.

- TFGBV is prominent: "Almost 2 in 3 women globally have been subjected to TFGBV. Globally, 85% of women have witnessed online violence being committed against another woman" (United Nations Population Fund, 2025).
- "61% of women and gender-diverse people in Canada have experienced gendered digital harm." (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2025).
- "Across Canada, more than 1 in 4 young women and gender diverse youth have been personally targeted by online hate." (YWCA, 2022).

TFGBV is complex, with many forms of harm frequently overlapping and reinforcing each other. Some examples include:

Online Harassment: Harming someone by sending threats, insults, or abusive messages online.

Doxxing: Revealing or publishing private or identifying information without consent to intimidate, harass or cause harm (including to one's credibility or reputation).

Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images (NCDII): Sharing or threatening to share sexual or intimate photos/videos without someone's consent, including 'revenge porn'.

Deepfakes: Digitally manipulated media that uses artificial intelligence to replicate someone's likeness. Deepfakes can be used to spread misinformation and create fake sexual content. It is often sexual or defamatory.

- Deepfakes are hyper-realistic 'fakes' using artificial intelligence.
- Shallowfakes use simpler edit strategies like cropping, falsely labeling, and dubbing over the original audios.

Online Stalking and Surveillance: Using digital tools to monitor or track someone (online or offline) without their consent.

Impersonation: Impersonating someone online — such as by creating fake profiles — to harass, exploit, damage reputations, or deceive others for financial gain.

Platforms where TFGBV takes place:

TFGBV can occur across many types of digital platforms, including:

Social Media Platforms: Twitter/X, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube

- Used for mass harassment (dogpiling), impersonation, deepfake distribution, and trolling.

Messaging Apps: WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal, Discord, Snapchat

- Private or semi-private spaces for harassment, harmful messages, deceiving others

Dating Apps: Tinder, Bumble, Grindr, Hinge

- Can facilitate stalking, doxxing, and gendered/racialized harassment.

Gaming Platforms: Twitch, Xbox Live, Discord, Steam

- Spaces where harassment, hate speech, and sexist/racist slurs are often normalized.

AI Tools: Deepfake generators

- Used to create sexually explicit or violent content targeting women, trans folks, and others.

Surveillance/Tracking Technologies: Apple AirTags, spyware

- Used for digital stalking, controlling movements, or monitoring survivors.

Examples of High-Profile Experiences of TFGBV:

- Taylor Swift
- Megan Thee Stallion
- Rachel Gilmore
- Reflection on these cases: Gaps in Platform Accountability, Inadequate platform responses, gendered abuse intersecting with race and politics.

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence is not experienced equally.

- TFGBV disproportionately affects cis and trans women, trans men, non-binary, Two-Spirit, and other gender-diverse people — particularly those who are Black, Indigenous, people of colour, and/or people with disabilities.
- Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality is a framework that looks at how multiple systems of oppression intersect to shape people's experiences. While TFGBV is rooted in gender-based oppression, it often intersects with other forms of oppression like racism, sexism, ableism, transphobia and colonialism, which can compound one another, especially online.
- In the context of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV), this means that people experience harm differently. Differential vulnerabilities remind us that some are more frequently targeted, more harshly impacted, and less likely to be protected, supported and believed due to their intersecting identities and social positions.

- Technology-facilitated gender-based violence can also be used as an "oppressive tool" that not only causes harm, but also reinforces, perpetuates and amplifies systemic oppression and discrimination (Dunn, Vaillancourt, & Brittain, 2023).
  - Sexism: Women, especially trans and non-binary people, are disproportionately targeted with sexualized violence, threats and attempts to silence them.
  - Racism: racialized people, especially Black women and gender-diverse people experience misogynoir (racism + misogyny).
  - Ableism: Disabled people may be surveilled, infantilized, or dismissed online—and often lack accessible reporting or support options.
  - Transphobia: Trans people are targets of misgendering, outing, and hate speech; platforms often fail to protect them.
  - Colonialism: Indigenous women and two-spirit people face erasure, hate speech and data exploitation in ways tied to settler colonial histories.
  - *Example: Policing of Black Users.*

TFGBV is not personal or individual – it's a systemic tactic of silencing.

- TFGBV is Structural: It isn't just about individual bad actors—it's rooted in larger systems of power like sexism, racism, ableism, and platform design that make some people more vulnerable to harm.
- Not Everyone Experiences TFGBV the Same Way: People face different levels of risk and harm online depending on their race, gender identity, disability, class, and more. It shows how power and inequality shape who is most exposed and least protected from digital forms of harm.
- "Logging Off" Isn't a Solution: This ignores how essential digital spaces are for expression, connection, and activism. Logging off can mean losing access to community, visibility, information, and democratic participation.
- Online Harm IS Real Harm: Even if it happens through a screen, TFGBV can lead to serious mental, emotional, and even physical consequences. It affects people's sense of safety, dignity, and well-being, online and offline.
- Solutions Must Be Flexible and Context-Aware: Solutions like identity verification may seem helpful, but they can create new risks, especially for trans people, undocumented folks, sex workers or survivors who rely on anonymity for safety.

Responding to TFGBV

Practical steps to protect your online safety and well-being.

- Identify the online risks you face and which accounts feel unsafe.

- Secure your accounts by using strong passwords and enabling two-factor authentication.

- Limit what personal information you share publicly and adjust your privacy settings.

- Save evidence of any abuse, like screenshots and messages, in a safe place.

- Report harmful behavior on the platforms you use.

- Build a support network and reach out to trusted people when you need help like family, friends and allies.

- Know your rights and seek legal advice if harassment escalates.

Community Resources