

Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse on the interlinkages between technology-facilitated violence against children and TFGBV

The undersigned country members of the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse (Global Partnership) call attention to the critical need to protect children from technology-facilitated violence, exploitation and abuse. We also call attention to the need to recognise that early experience and exposure to violence may increase the likelihood of victimization in adults or violent behaviours, perpetuating a cycle of abuse that spans generations and discouraging young people from engaging fully in public life¹. We must take an intersectional, life-cycle approach to address all forms of online violence against children (VAC) and technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV).

Today, children at increasingly younger ages are growing up immersed in the digital world. There are many benefits of digital technologies and online platforms and services. However, their design, management and misuse can enable frequent exposure to harmful content and behaviours. It is crucial that the technology sector prioritise a Safety-by-Design approach and combat technology-facilitated violence, exploitation and abuse as a matter of urgency.

The sexual abuse and exploitation of children continues to rise year on year, with perpetrators harnessing new ways to use technology to harm children. Each year an estimated 300 million children are victims of online sexual abuse and exploitation, with men being the primary offenders², and with girls appearing in more sexual abuse material than boys³. The use of new technologies to create child sexual abuse material, such as generative artificial intelligence, demonstrates how rapidly the threat landscape is evolving.

Exposure to violence is greater for children from marginalised populations, including children with disabilities, LGBTQI+ children, Indigenous children, and unaccompanied children⁴. The specific types of violence these children face may differ from their peers as a result of the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination they experience.

Further, whilst all children can experience violence, there are distinct gendered differences in the nature, frequency, severity and drivers of such violence. It is important to recognise that boys and girls face different and unique vulnerabilities to sexual exploitation and abuse online. Data show recent rises in distinct gendered

¹ UNICEF, The State of the World's Children, 2023 <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-worlds-children-2023>

² Childlight Global Index of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Prevalence, 2024 childlight.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/executive-summary.pdf

³ Internet Watch Foundation, Sexual abuse imagery of girls online at record high following pandemic lockdowns, 2022 <https://www.iwf.org.uk/news-media/news/sexual-abuse-imagery-of-girls-online-at-record-high-following-pandemic-lockdowns/>

⁴ UNICEF, The State of the World's Children, 2023 <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-worlds-children-2023>

forms of abuse, including an increase in boys' experience of financial sextortion involving demands for money to prevent the sharing of sexual images, as opposed to sextortion that involves demands for additional sexual images, engaging in sexual acts or returning or staying in a romantic relationship, with girls historically more likely than boys to be impacted⁵. Boys are at a greater risk of being radicalized to violence through exposure to gender-based hate online and gendered disinformation campaigns that contribute to normalising dehumanizing beliefs and behaviours related to violent misogyny.

Technology-facilitated VAC and TFGBV share some common risk factors, including a lack of responsive institutions and ineffective legal actions against violence. Harmful social norms contribute to an ecosystem that condones violence. These are amplified in digital spaces that promote violent discipline, amplify harmful forms of masculinity, prioritize family reputation and privacy over victims' safety and wellbeing and blame victims and survivors.

This is a crisis that transcends borders and generations, which demands a collective global and multistakeholder effort to address. At the Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children, we welcome the recognition of the need to make the Internet and technology safer for children.

We call upon states to take action and support evidence-based solutions that protect children and prevent and mitigate the pathways to adult victimization and violence, including through integrating online and technology-facilitated risks into broader violence prevention strategies. We urge the technology sector and other private companies to take appropriate action to respond to these risks, including a commitment to a Safety-by-Design approach to the development and deployment of platforms and technologies and greater investment in Trust and Safety capacities. We ask states and all stakeholders to respect human rights and put in place additional, gender-responsive safety and privacy protections for children, women, girls, and LGBTQI+ persons.

Co-signatories of this Global Partnership joint statement:

Australia, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Iceland, New Zealand, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States.

⁵ Thorn, Trends in Financial Sextortion: An investigation of sextortion reports in NCMEC CyberTipline data, 2024 <https://www.thorn.org/research/library/financial-sextortion/>



For Action on
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