



Online Misogyny and Abuse

A Note on Language



In this toolkit, we will sometimes use the word woman/women and feminine pronouns for simplicity and to recognize the significant impact technology-facilitated violence has on women and girls. We recognize that TFGVB also impacts trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirit people. We hope that all people impacted by TFGVB will find these documents useful.

What Are Online Misogyny and Abuse?

Online misogyny is when the internet and related technologies are used as tools to target, harm, and express hatred toward women.

Online misogyny can start with:

- Sharing sexist attitudes, jokes, and memes
- Treating women like objects
- Stereotyping women
- Sending unsolicited porn or "dick picks"
- Harassment
- Catfishing (i.e. using a false identity to trick someone into a relationship)

And lead to more serious abuse like:

- Doxxing (i.e. posting your personal info online and/or encouraging others to target you)
- Hacking or impersonation
- Image-based abuse (e.g. posting intimate photos)
- Stalking, electronic surveillance, monitoring
- Trafficking and exploitation
- Threatening or inciting rape and murder
- Committing crimes against you or your family

What Are the Impacts of Online Misogyny And Abuse?

Online misogyny can have a range of psychological and emotional effects and may impact the way a woman views the world. It can lead to feelings of:

- Fear, for self or loved ones
- Anxiety, stress, and panic
- Sleeplessness
- Lowered self-esteem or confidence
- Isolation and loneliness
- Powerlessness and loss
- Anger, cynicism, suspicion, mistrust
- Depression, suicide

Experiencing online misogyny may cause a woman to disengage from online spaces or censor herself. This impacts her basic human rights protections including the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to privacy.

Over time, a woman who disengages from online spaces to feel safe or to protect herself and her children may lose technical knowledge, employment opportunities, social contacts, access to services, and other benefits provided by technology.

How Common Are Online Misogyny and Abuse?

The [United Nations reports](#) that 73% of women online have been exposed to online abuse and that women are 27 times more likely to experience online harassment than men. The online abuse that younger women (ages 18-24) experience often includes more dangerous forms of stalking and violence.

What Causes Online Misogyny and Abuse?

Online misogyny and abuse start with harmful attitudes and beliefs about women. The internet can make it easier to abuse someone anonymously and without the repercussions that exist in real life.

Some misogynists work together to target women they disagree with, generally with the motivation to silence, control, and cause fear. Women are often targeted simply for being women.

Online misogyny is not the fault of the woman being abused. We all have the right to access technology without fear or abuse.

How Do I Know if Online Misogyny Is Happening to Me?

Sometimes it can be hard to tell what someone actually means online or what their intention is. For example, when a guy you really like posts a comment about how sexy you are using a pic where he's down-bloused you (i.e. taken a pic of your breasts/cleavage) without your knowledge or consent, it might be confusing. Is it a compliment or a form of online misogyny and abuse, or both?

To figure out how you feel about a scenario, there are a few questions you might ask yourself:

- While he might be sharing his appreciation of your body, do his actions communicate respect, boundaries, consent, trustworthiness, and care?
- What other images may have been taken or shared? How do you want to be portrayed online and who has power over this?
- What other behaviours or patterns might give you clues about his values, empathy, and character?

Tips for Women Experiencing Online Misogyny and Abuse

There are actions everyone can take to protect women from online misogyny and abuse. We can act individually or as a group, in a multitude of ways, to address the harmful attitudes and beliefs that lead to violence against women.

1. **Secure your tech (accounts, devices, games, and social media)** using WSC's [Online Privacy and Safety Tips](#) found within our [Technology Safety and Privacy Toolkit](#).
2. **Ignore, block, and/or report the trolls and abusers if safe to do so.** This may help you regain your voice. Most social media platforms have settings for ignoring, blocking or reporting abuse. Check out our [resources](#) for more information.
3. **Connect with others who will support and guide you.** You can find local resources on www.sheltersafe.ca.
4. **Prepare to take care.** Pause and prepare yourself before you read online comments or check messages from someone who has abused you. Consider going offline for a time to nurture yourself and regain balance, but don't be silenced. Sharing what you are going through with someone supportive may help.

*Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) is part of a continuum of violence that can be both online and in-person. If you or someone you know is experiencing TFGBV, you are not alone. If you are experiencing online misogyny, see the YWCA Canada's [Project Shift](#) or Hack*Blossom's [DIY Guide to Feminist Cybersecurity](#) for more helpful resources. You can also use sheltersafe.ca to find a shelter/transition house near you to discuss options and create a [safety plan](#). You don't need to stay in a shelter to access free, confidential services and support.*

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