

# Mainstreaming VAWG Prevention into the Technology Sector



Digital technology is creating opportunities for women and girls but can also expose them to new and evolving forms of violence, both online and offline. As online safety and AI governance frameworks are being developed, it is crucial that prevention is embedded as a core part of digital infrastructure to reduce harm, increase public trust and support an inclusive digital economy.



Across 51 countries, **38%** of women with internet access report experiencing online violence, with younger women more likely to experience online violence (45% of young women aged 18-30). (Source: [EIU, 2020](#))

## Why mainstream VAWG prevention?

- **Safer, cost-effective commercial choice:** Responding to incidents of violence can be more costly than building prevention into product and platform design from the outset, with recent US court rulings finding Meta and Google liable for design-related harms.<sup>1</sup> In the EU, breaches of the Digital Services Act carry penalties of up to 6% of a company's global annual turnover.<sup>2</sup>
- **Makes economic sense:** Online violence against women is estimated to cost the European Union €49–89 billion annually through reduced labour force participation and wider health, wellbeing, and legal costs.<sup>3</sup>
- **Creates a multiplier effect, with benefits for different sectors:** Technology shapes how people, learn, work and participate in society. When violence pushes around 60% of women and girls out of digital spaces,<sup>4</sup> the impacts extend far beyond the tech sector. Mainstreaming prevention can create a multiplier effect that expands opportunities and reduces violence.
- **Protects democracy and institutions:** 73% of women journalists have faced online violence, with 1 in 4 receiving threats of physical violence. If this abuse goes unchecked, it creates a 'chilling' effect that silences women and undermines democracy and press freedom.<sup>5</sup> Violence can create a 'participation tax,' shaping who can safely participate in public life.

<sup>1</sup> Taylor L (2026) '[Meta and Google are found liable for harm to child's mental health in landmark ruling](#)', BMJ, 392.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission (2026) '[The enforcement framework under the Digital Services Act](#)

<sup>3</sup> European Parliamentary Research Service (2021) '[Combating gender-based violence: Cyber violence](#)

<sup>4</sup> World Bank (2025) '[Awful but lawful: Confronting technology-facilitated gender-based violence](#)

<sup>5</sup> Posetti J, Shabbir N, Maynard D, Bontcheva K and Aboulez N (2021) '[The Chilling: Global trends in online violence against women journalists](#)

## Key actions to mainstream effectively

- 1. Invest in evidence-based prevention.** Promising strategies that promote responsible digital behaviour and challenge harmful gender norms include digital citizenship and digital literacy programmes, advocacy, movement-building, and awareness-raising.<sup>6</sup> These initiatives are still at a relatively early stage, so investing in research and evaluation allows effective innovations to be identified, adapted and scaled responsibly, while strengthening healthy participation.
- 2. Embed safety-by-design in product development.** Safety-by-design prioritises building safety, security and privacy into technologies from the start,<sup>7</sup> alongside governance structures, accountability standards and duty-of-care approaches that anticipate foreseeable harms before they scale. Examples include verified users, profile visibility options, proactive image blurring, and built-in safety centres with trauma-informed resources and local helplines.<sup>8</sup>
- 3. Centre the voices of survivors, digital rights advocates and women's rights organisations.** Women and girls face unequal risks in digital spaces, particularly women in political and public life, those who are LGBTQIA+, have disabilities, or come from marginalised communities. Prevention requires deliberate efforts to make online environments safer and more inclusive, so that those who are most affected by violence can participate in design and regulation.<sup>9</sup>
- 4. Strengthen national, regional and multilateral policies and procedures.** There are significant gaps in legal protections,<sup>10</sup> particularly when it comes to prevention of online VAWG. Promising examples of laws that build preventative measures into legislation include Argentina's Olimpia Law and Galicia's Law 15/2021 in Spain.<sup>11</sup>
- 5. Leverage partnerships to mainstream prevention.** Prevention is a growing global priority and one of the five key action areas for the [Global Call to Action to Address TFGBV](#). The importance of early intervention and stopping violence before it starts is also recognised by the [Global Partnership for Action on Gender-based Online Harassment and Abuse](#), which has called on states to do more to prevent intergenerational cycles of violence. Other key partnerships include the [Global Online Safety Regulators Network](#) and the Action Coalitions on [Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality](#) and on [Gender-based Violence](#) under the Generation Equality. These partnerships between governments, civil society and the tech industry are essential for supporting practical, evidence-based solutions to prevent VAWG.

## Further resources

- UNFPA (2024) [UNFPA: A Framework for TFGBV Programming](#)
- UNFPA (2025) [UNFPA Resource Compendium on TFGBV](#)
- UN Women (2025) [Global Trends to Prevent and Respond to Technology-Facilitated Violence against Women and Girls: A Compendium of Emerging Practices](#)

<sup>6</sup> UN Women (2025) [Global Trends to Prevent and Respond to Technology-Facilitated Violence against Women and Girls: A Compendium of Emerging Practices](#); Prevention Collaborative (2025) [Technology-facilitated Gender-based Violence](#)

<sup>7</sup> UNFPA (2024) [A Framework for TFGBV Programming](#).

<sup>8</sup> UN Women (2025) [Global Trends to Prevent and Respond to Technology-Facilitated Violence against Women and Girls: A Compendium of Emerging Practices](#)

<sup>9</sup> Womankind (2024) *Disrupting the Continuum of Violence: Combatting Technology Facilitated Gender-based Violence*

<sup>10</sup> UNFPA (2024) [A Framework for TFGBV Programming](#).

<sup>11</sup> UN Women (2025) [Global Trends to Prevent and Respond to Technology-Facilitated Violence against Women and Girls: A Compendium of Emerging Practices](#)