

Social media self-defence

Women in the political sphere



Content warning and support

This session deals with the way technology can be used to abuse women online

If the content in this session causes you distress, please seek support



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Session outline

01 THE ATTACKS AND THE WEAPONS

WHAT is technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV)?

02 THE SHIELD

HOW do we set up our defences?

03 THE FIGHT BACK

WHY build the defences, not withdraw and advocate for systemic change?

THE ATTACKS AND THE WEAPONS

WHAT is tech-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV)?

Tech-facilitated gender-based violence

Women in politics are **27x more likely** to face online abuse than their male counterparts

"any act that is committed, assisted, aggravated, or amplified by the use of information communication technologies or other digital tools, that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological, social, political, or economic harm, or other infringements of rights and freedoms."

Source: UN Women and WHO Joint Programme on VAW Data

Gender based violence and women in leadership



These are not new behaviours

This is a new environment for these behaviours to be perpetrated



Women have always experienced barriers and push back to political participation



Women from sexual and gender diverse backgrounds



Women of colour



Those disproportionately affected by tech-facilitated gender-based violence



Women from culturally and racially marginalised backgrounds



Young women, particularly those in the early stages of their political career



Anyone in politics can experience abuse online

harassing behaviours

sexually explicit comments

sexual and image-based abuse

tech-based abuse across multiple platforms



repeated inappropriate sexual advances

gendered disinformation

abuse based on appearance

misogynistic language and narratives

Women experience repeated harassment and abuse more than men



Types of attacks

Targeted and persistent gendered trolling

“Social media just doesn’t simply mirror the structures of the offline world.

There is a degree of aggression and toxicity that you don’t see in real world encounters.”

Arti Raghavan
Indian journalist



- + Sharing intimate images
- + Creating deepfakes
- + Tagging nude images

Types of attacks

Gendered disinformation



IMPACTS!

Silences women’s voices, reduces participation, erodes democracy, lowers mental wellbeing, normalises misogynistic language and narratives, deters future leaders

 Undermines human rights defender’s advocacy

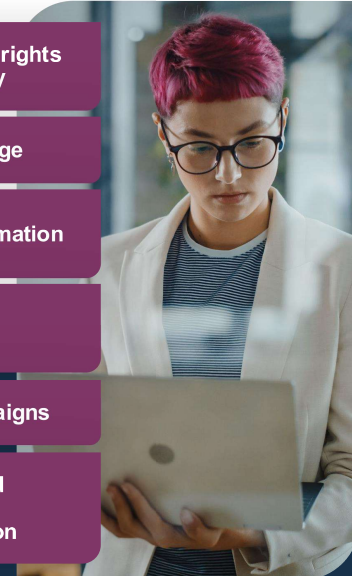
 Misogynistic language

 Reframes true information

 False narratives and histories

 Targeted hate campaigns

 Politically organised trolling through widespread repetition



GEN AI and gendered disinformation

Gen AI tools and technologies can be used to...

Misrepresent events, appearance and actions

Normalise extreme beliefs

Disseminate disinformation at scale

Simulate artificial topic momentum

Share and amplify content

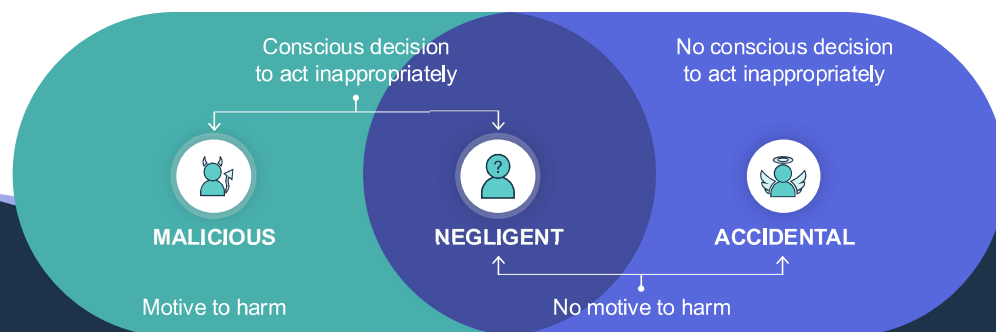
Identify keywords and hashtags and hijack conversations

Recommend increasingly extreme content



The perpetrators

No matter their intention, the same harmful outcome could result



“Consciously deciding to act inappropriately or not, motivated by harm or not, is irrelevant once privacy is breached and personal information is forever on the dark web”

Source: unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_SafeEthicalGBVTechGuide_Summary_2023.pdf

Who are the perpetrators?



Source: unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_SafeEthicalGBVTechGuide_Summary_2023.pdf

Professional and personal impacts

Women can take a backwards step professionally

"The only thing that has limited online stalking has been to limit interaction with the public, including not advertising for my business."

"On Facebook, I just drop out of the conversation and delete my comments."

"The only option to stop the abuse is to stop being a public figure – they'll pick on someone else who's more visible or more successful."

Women experience distress and personal impacts

"At one stage I was required to remove my name and address from the electoral roll."

"Causing sleeplessness, illness, and a family holding on daily."

Source: eSafety Commissioner (2022), Women in the Spotlight: Women's experiences with online abuse in their working lives, Melbourne

This is not your fault and it's not a fair fight



Big tech accountability?

THE SHIELD

HOW do we set up our defences?

REPORTABLE ATTACKS

Responding through reporting

DE-ESCALATING THE THREAT

Minimising the harms

THE FOUNDATIONS

Proactive and universal

03. Tertiary

02. Secondary

01. Primary



Setting up the shield

THE FOUNDATIONS

eSafety guides and how-tos

- ✓ eSafety's video library on security and privacy

High privacy settings

- ✓ Two-factor authentication
- ✓ Contact details hidden
- ✓ Vigilant to impersonation attempts
- ✓ Camera covers

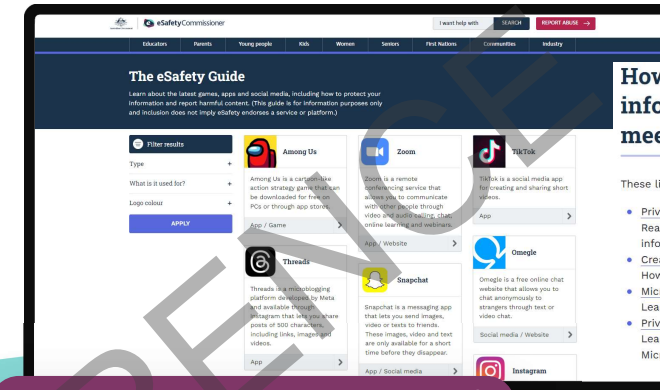
Public vs private profiles

- ✓ Separate personal account
- ✓ Public photos can't be linked to you

01.
Primary



The eSafety guide



esafety.gov.au/key-issues/esafety-guide

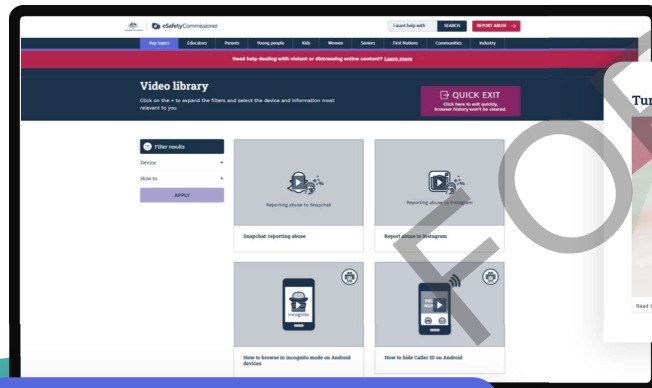
How can you protect personal information and keep meetings secure?



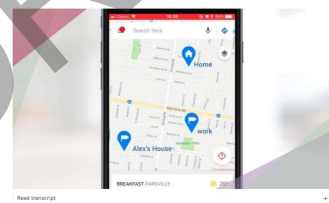
These links are provided by Microsoft:

- [Privacy Statement](#) - Read Microsoft's statement about how it handles your personal information and how to keep your accounts secure.
- [Create meeting policies](#) - How to adjust settings for meetings in Teams.
- [Microsoft Trust Centre](#) - Learn how to secure your data and protect your privacy.
- [Privacy and Microsoft Teams](#) - Learn about the different types of personal data collected by Microsoft Teams and how it is used.

The eSafety video library



Turn off frequent locations on iPhones and iPads



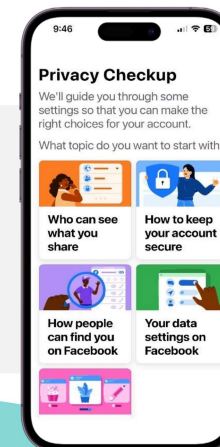
esafety.gov.au/key-topics/domestic-family-violence/video-library

Privacy settings



Example

Limit phone number and email address search options to "Only Me" - ensuring your account cannot be found with this information



Don't sync your phone contacts and calendar

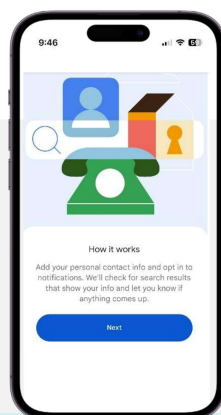
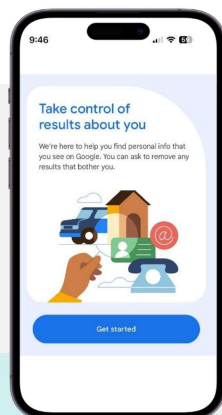
Consider reducing the public visibility of your profile to 1st degree connections and your network

'Results About You' alert



Results About You

allows you to manage and control the information about yourself that appears in Google search



You can delete from Google searches

- ☐ Home address
- ☐ Phone number
- ☐ Email address

THE FOUNDATIONS

What can self-care look like in primary defence?



Turning off notifications at a set time



Sleeping with phone in a different room



Setting phone to black/white mode between set hours



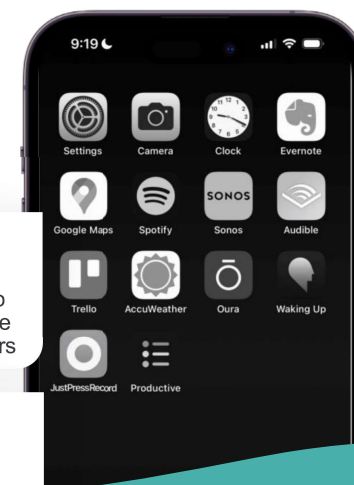
Structuring in social media breaks



Turning off 'like' count on Instagram and Facebook



Avoid checking messages first thing in the morning



01.
Primary

Setting up the shield

DE-ESCALATING THE THREAT

Conversation controls

- ☒ Block or mute
- ☒ Filter content

Securing your accounts

- ☒ Check iPhone and Android settings
- ☒ Review location sharing

Self-care

- ☒ Consider how / when to respond
- ☒ Rely on people you trust

02.
Secondary



Conversation controls



Discord



Facebook



TikTok



LinkedIn



Snapchat



Threads



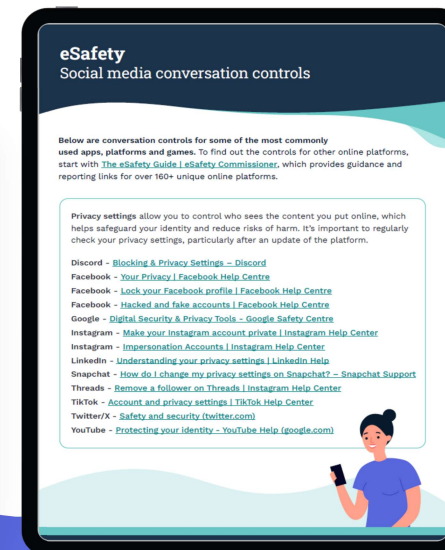
Instagram



Twitter/X



YouTube



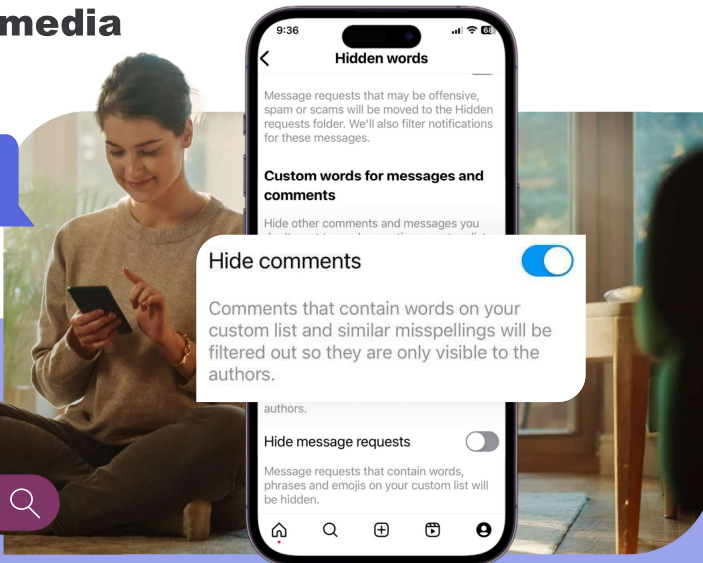
02.
Secondary

Applying social media filters

Hiding words and accounts



help.instagram.com



Applying email filters



Use filters to label emails and automatically archive

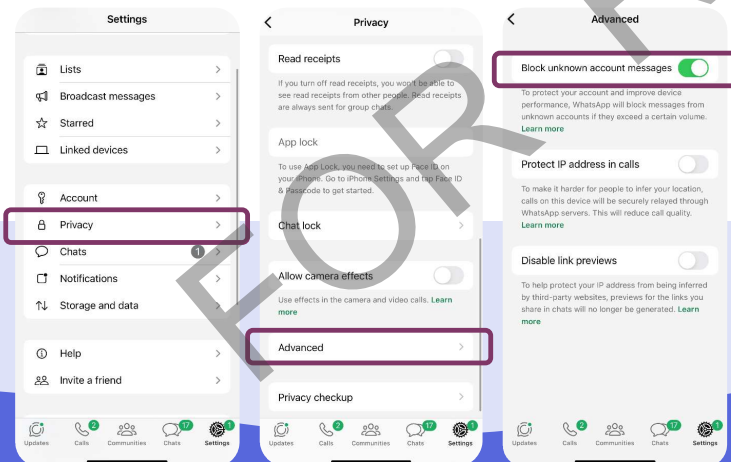


Use rules to send emails to separate folders and mark as read

Remember
to use secure passwords and to be wary of unsolicited emails

02.
Secondary

Filtering messages on WhatsApp



02.
Secondary

Location sharing

What devices are sharing my location?

Wearables



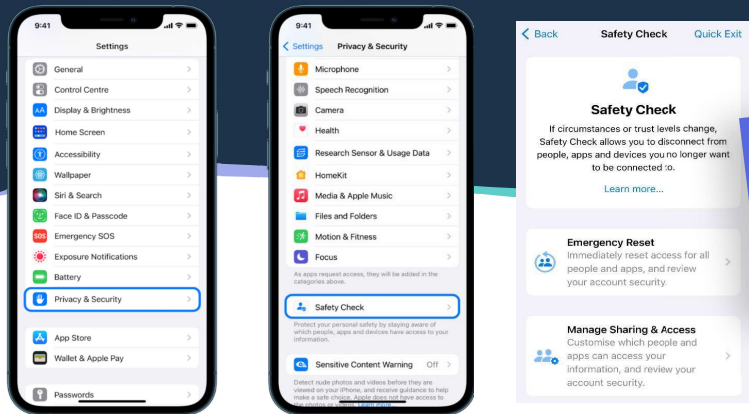
AirTag

Tracking devices



02.
Secondary

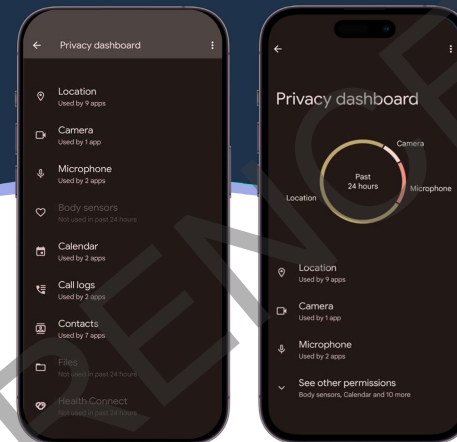
iPhone safety check



Requires

- ✓ iOS 16 or later
- ✓ Two-factor authentication
- ✓ Sign in with Apple ID

Android privacy dashboard



Requires

- ✓ Android 12 or later
- ✓ Focus on last 24 hrs

Self-care as part of secondary defence



Give your phone or accounts to a trusted friend/colleague to manage until the intensity wanes



Reach out and talk with people you trust



Inform your manager/workplace and ask for support



Don't respond straight away, or at all

Setting up the shield

REPORTABLE ATTACKS

Responding through reporting

Reporting

- ✓ Reporting to the platform
- ✓ Keeping records and evidence

Responding

- ✓ Considering your risk level
- ✓ Using your allies and tools to fight back when safe to do so

03. Tertiary



The online-offline escalation



03.
Tertiary

Mechanisms for action

Report directly to the platform

StopNCII.org
Stop Non-Consensual Intimate Image Abuse

Should government play a greater role in setting up services that support victim-survivors?

National mental health of violence against women helpline



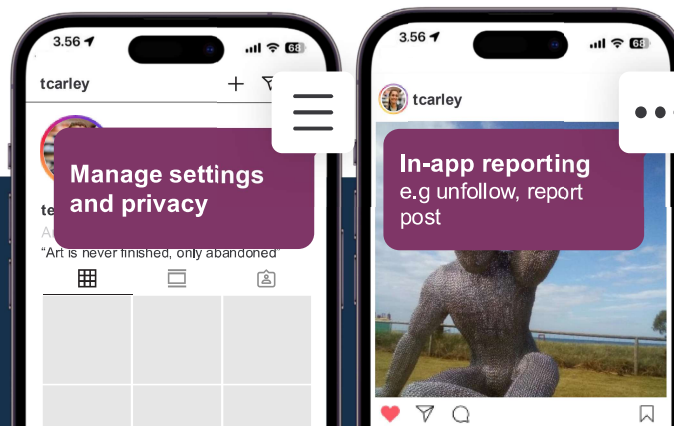
Global challenges with reporting

Limited legislative options

Language and cultural context



Reporting to the platform



Priority actions

- Review your online presence and **remove** anything that can be used to locate or contact you
- Secure** your accounts and change your passwords
- Make your account **private**



Call emergency services **immediately**

Record keeping

Screenshot and save

Create a log

Consider local laws

Consider your safety

Sample Technology Abuse Log						
Details of abuse	Date	Time	Information about Abuser (name, relationship, contact information/handle)	Type of tech	Witnesses	Documentation

03.
Tertiary

THE FIGHT BACK

WHY build the defences, not withdraw, and advocate for systemic change?

There are **26 countries** where women serve as Heads of State and/or Government. At the current rate, gender equality in the highest positions of power will not be reached for another 130 years

*As of 15 Sept 2023



We are defending the right to have **women's voices promoted and protected**, to participate in all aspects of society and for women to feel safe and respected

Deciding if it is safe or worth a response



When addressing an attack that is specifically sexist

Be authentic
Use a personal narrative, which can connect to people on universal values (i.e. equality, fairness, what is best for all women and girls)

Utilise validators
from your network of support to affirm your pushback and counter-narratives

Emphasise
the severity of the issue and contextualize why it is harmful

Keep in mind
that a woman's race and age can unfortunately impact how pushback is perceived



Sample language:

"This has no place in the media"

"My appearance is not news"

"Don't depict women as being less serious and having less to offer"

"I have much to offer my constituents"

"This speech damages our political debate and democracy"



Source: Wilfore K. A Digital Resilience Toolkit for Women In Politics - Persisting and Fighting Back Against Misogyny and Digital Platforms' Failures #ShePersisted

Focus on what you can control



Publishing a statement on social media

condemning the type of harassment you faced and correcting the record if necessary



Deploying your own online community

to correct the narrative and share positive content



Screenshot and share the abuse you've faced

to call out the behavior

Be careful
about offering a platform to the attacks. Calling out the harasser directly could result in further abuse and should only be done if the attacks have already reached a widespread audience.

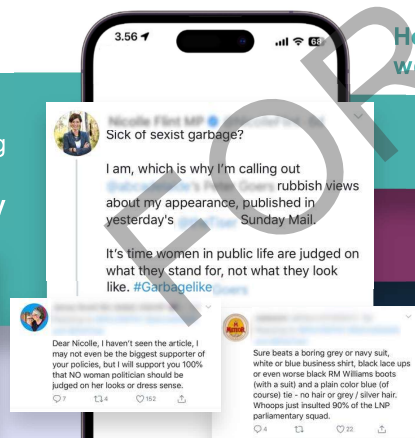
Source: Wilfore K. A Digital Resilience Toolkit for Women In Politics - Persisting and Fighting Back Against Misogyny and Digital Platforms' Failures #ShePersisted

Helping other women online consider being an upstander

Help other women by:

If you see someone being abused online, don't scroll by

Consider being an upstander – but make sure you are not perpetuating the problem



Showing your support

Expressing your solidarity

Reporting the content

Upstander messaging for organisations



Publish a statement of solidarity



Amplify the voices of other women even when online abuse is not occurring



Reply to the original post engage with it as intended



Assist with reporting

THE QUEENSLAND FIREBIRDS ARE APPALLED BY ONLINE ABUSE DIRECTED AT OUR PLAYERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

WE, AND THE ENTIRE NETBALL QUEENSLAND COMMUNITY, STRONGLY CONDEMN RACISM AND ALL OTHER FORMS OF PERSONAL ABUSE.

IT'S SIMPLY NOT GOOD ENOUGH AND HAS NO PLACE IN OUR SPORT OR SOCIETY. IT HAS TO STOP.

BEING INCLUSIVE - RESPECTING DIFFERENCE AND DIVERSITY - IS A VALUE OF NETBALL QUEENSLAND AND WE STAND WHOLEHEARTEDLY WITH OUR PLAYERS WHO HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO THIS ABUSE, JUST AS WE WOULD ANY MEMBER OF OUR COMMUNITY.

NETBALL QUEENSLAND HAS AND WILL CONTINUE TO REPORT ALL ABUSE TO RELEVANT AUTHORITIES.



Statement of solidarity
by an Australian women's professional sporting team

Collective advocacy



Peer protection
and allies



Document Offences



Networks and
Solidarity

Thank you



Australian Government



eSafety
Commissioner

esafety.gov.au