16 Days of Activism
Day 12

The world has become increasingly more digital, and with COVID-19 pandemic, people have conducted more of their daily lives over the internet than ever before. Although digital technology can make our lives easier, it also makes bullying and cyber violence easier. Cyber gender-based violence is a growing global problem with potentially significant economic and societal consequences. U.N. Women and the U.N. Broadband Commission estimate that 73% of women have endured cyber violence, and that women are 27 times more likely as men to be harassed online.

Experts warn us not to think of cyber violence as a separate phenomenon to real-world forms of violence. Women and girls who have experienced sexual harassment, stalking or violence from an intimate partner 'offline' are also often victims of 'online' violence from the same person. As with all types of violence, cyber violence affects the lives of victims tremendously and comes in many forms. Cyber stalking, for example, refers to a person repeatedly sending unwanted e-mails or text messages to their victims. Cyber harassment relates to offending a person online with unwanted sexually explicit messages, threats of violence or hate speech. One of the most disturbing forms of online violence is non-consensual pornography, which former partners often commit. This means posting or distributing sexually graphic images or videos online without a person´s permission. (Research suggests that up to 90% of non-consensual pornography victims are women and the number of cases is rising.) There are various other forms of cyber violence, such as gender-based slurs and harassment, 'slut-shaming', 'sextortion', rape and death threats, 'doxing', and electronically enabled trafficking. Unfortunately, many cases of cyber violence are not reported to the police. In cases where victims do report the incidents, police and justice departments may not take it as seriously as real-life incidents of violence.

The uptick in cyber bullying among teens is also particularly alarming. A Pew Research Center study shows that 95% of teens connect to the internet, and 85% are social media users. According to Broadband Search, in 2021 73% of students feel they have been bullied, with 44% saying it has happened in the last 30 days. 64% of students who have been cyberbullied say it affects their ability to learn and stay safe at school. The Ditch the Label study shows that 41% of them developed social anxiety, 37% experienced depression, 26% had suicidal thoughts, and 25% engaged in self harm.

According to UN Women, the three most important ways to combat cyber violence are sensitization to the dangers, safeguards against harassment, and sanctions against those who perpetuate internet abuse. The sanctions must be serious and have consequences. Still, only 26% of law enforcement agencies in 86 countries surveyed are properly prepared to address the problem.

We must find a way to address this issue. Demand that those who commit cyber violence be prosecuted. Advocate for stricter sentences and monitoring. As our offline and online worlds become more connected, without addressing gender-based violence in both, we not only expose women and girls to risk of more harm, but also restrict them from the very positive benefits that digital inclusion can bring in all areas of their lives. If we want to close, rather than widen, the gender digital divide, ending cyber violence against women and girls must remain high up our priority list.

INTERNET VIOLENCE
BY THE NUMBERS

UN Women

73% of women have been exposed to or experienced online violence

23% of women reported being blamed for cyber violence done to them

20% of women feel that the internet is inappropriate for them

Women are **27 times** more likely than men to be abused online.

ZONTA SAYS **NO**

TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

#ZontaSaysNO
#16DaysofActivism
www.ZontaSaysNO.com

Where are People Cyberbullied?

Twitter 9%
YouTube 10%
WhatsApp 12%
Snapchat 31%
Facebook 37%
Instagram 42%

50%
40%
30%
20%
10%

Social Media Platforms

Issues Kids Feel Result From Cyberbullying

9% began abusing alcohol and or drugs
14% developed an eating disorder
20% started skipping class
24% stopped using social media altogether
25% engaged in self harm
26% deleted their social media profiles
26% had suicidal thoughts
37% developed depression
41% developed social anxiety

40%
30%
20%
10%

Effect of Cyberbullying