WILAN
WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP
ADVANCEMENT NETWORK

# Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence (TFGBV) Needs Assessment Report

August 2025

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# ABOUT THIS REPORT

This abridged Needs Assessment was carried out as part of the process of developing the Ford Foundation-Funded Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) prevention chatbot. The assessment provides a broader understanding of TFGBV in Nigeria by combining survey data, expert interviews, focus group discussions and secondary research.

The analysis offers an evidence-based context for designing a prevention-focused AI chatbot that can help women and girls identify risks early, take protective action, and access trusted resources. It also highlights cultural, legal, and technological factors that must be considered to make prevention efforts effective and relevant.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Technology is reshaping opportunities for women and girls in Nigeria, opening doors to education, business, and civic participation. At the same time, it is creating new channels for abuse. TFGBV, which includes cyberstalking, sextortion, image-based harassment, and coordinated disinformation, is now a growing and under-addressed threat.

Findings from this assessment show that a large proportion of Nigerian women face targeted abuse online. **Seventy percent of survey respondents said they or someone they know had been harassed after participating in public discussions.** Such abuse is often gendered, sexualised, and sustained, with harmful content remaining online for long periods due to slow platform responses. Cultural stigma, fear of blame, and low digital literacy leave many survivors isolated and unwilling to report incidents.

Key challenges identified include low awareness of digital safety tools, high-risk engagement topics such as feminism, politics, and relationship advice, and deep-rooted cultural norms that discourage speaking out.

**In response, the report proposes a prevention-first AI chatbot that will:**

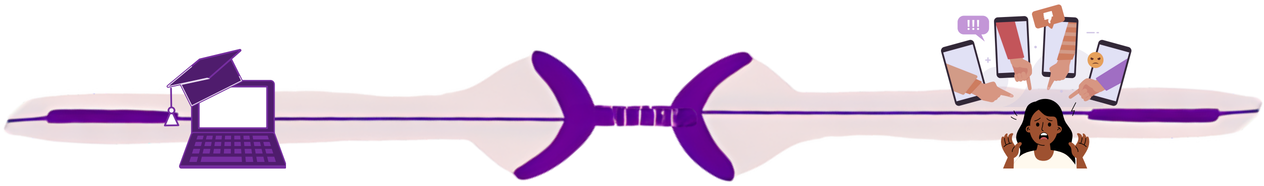
- Detect early warning signs of harassment and offer personalised safety guidance
- Provide practical tips to strengthen online security and reduce vulnerability
- Connect users discreetly to credible support and referral pathways
- Operate in multiple languages to ensure accessibility across diverse communities
- Uphold strong privacy protections, including anonymous use and optional chat history clearing

This chatbot will be paired with public education campaigns that use relatable and culturally relevant content to encourage safe online behaviour. Together, these interventions aim to create a proactive safety net that empowers women and girls to remain active, visible, and safe in digital spaces.

The report concludes that prevention must combine technology, cultural sensitivity, education, and accountability from platforms to close the gap between the risks women face online and the support they can access.

# INTRODUCTION

Technology has become a double-edged sword in the lives of women and girls. On one hand, increased internet and mobile access open opportunities for learning, economic empowerment, and civic participation. On the other hand, these same technologies are being weaponised to perpetrate Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV). In its 2021 report, titled **Making All Spaces Safe,** UNFPA defined TFGBV as "an act of violence perpetrated by one or more individuals that is committed, assisted, aggravated and amplified in part or fully by the use of information and communication technologies or digital media, against a person on the basis of their gender" [1].



A 2021 survey across 51 countries found that up to 38% of women have suffered online violence in their lifetime, with 85% having witnessed it. Adolescent girls are particularly affected: in a study spanning 22 countries, 58% of girls aged 15–25 reported personal experiences of online harassment[2]. These abuses range from cyberbullying and trolling to doxxing, online stalking, sexual harassment, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. The impact of TFGBV is severe; survivors report long-lasting psychological trauma, reputational damage, self-censorship (or withdrawal from online spaces), and even physical consequences when digital threats spill into real life. Crucially, TFGBV replicates and reinforces the gender inequalities at the root of offline gender-based violence: those targeted are disproportionately female, and the violence often exploits social stigma around women's bodies, sexuality, and public voice.

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(1) UNFPA, Technology-facilitated Gender-based Violence: Making All Spaces Safe (New York, 2021). Available at: https://www.unfpa.org/publications/technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-making-all-spaces-safe.

(2) **Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence. (2023).** Technology and gender-based violence: Risks and opportunities. Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence.

Nigeria is experiencing a rapid growth in internet usage, especially via mobile phones, with millions of women and girls coming online. This connectivity, while empowering, has exposed them to online gender-based attacks in unprecedented ways. Recent research and stakeholder testimonies indicate that TFGBV is an urgent and under-recognized problem in Nigeria.

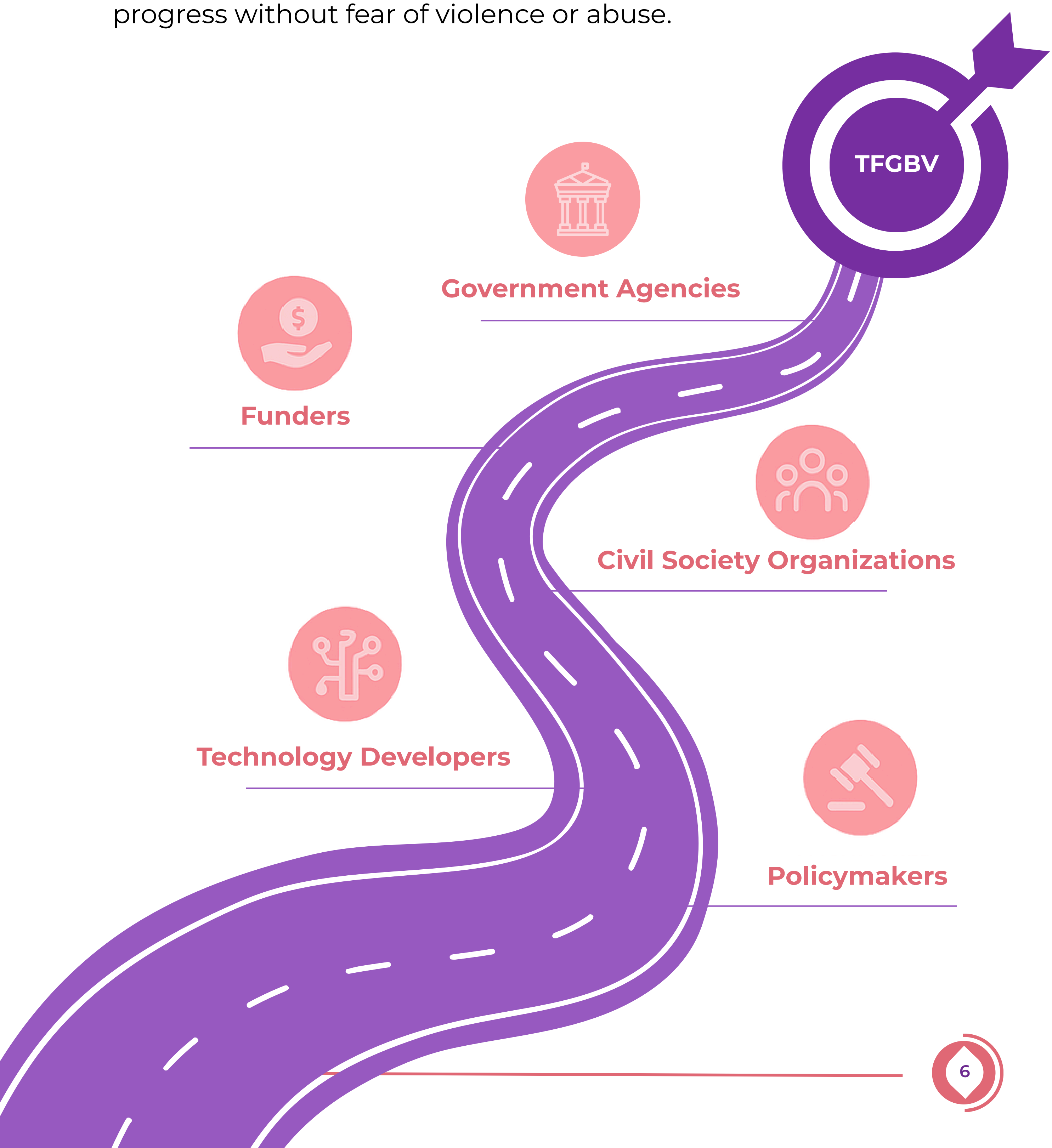
In a 2025 multi-country survey of West and Central Africa (including Nigeria) by Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative (BBYDI), **92% of respondents (mostly women) reported experiencing at least one form of technology-facilitated abuse** – from cyberstalking and misogynistic hate speech to non-consensual image sharing and sextortion[3]. Alarmingly, fewer than half of these survivors had ever reported the incidents, citing stigma, fear of blame, and distrust in the very systems meant to protect them. Indeed, survivors often suffer in silence: culturally ingrained victim-blaming around abuse mean that many women feel that speaking up will only lead to further shame or retribution. Perpetrators who may be anonymous strangers, acquaintances, or intimate partners exploit these silences, confident that legal or social consequences are unlikely.

At present, Nigeria’s policy and legal frameworks are struggling to keep pace with the fast-evolving digital landscape. Existing laws (like the Cybercrimes Act 2015) address certain offenses (e.g. cyberstalking or online threats) in a general sense, but they do not comprehensively cover the full continuum of TFGBV. The consequence or this limited capacity of law enforcement to investigate cybercrimes targeting women is a substantial “justice gap”: women and girls rarely see their abusers held accountable, which in turn perpetuates impunity and discourages reporting.

This report presents an abridged Needs Assessment of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria. Key sections examine the methodology, the TFGBV landscape specific to Nigeria, and an overview of the key findings of the research.

(3) Daily Trust. (2025, May 6). TFGBV: First AI WhatsApp chatbot 'Kemi' launched. https://dailytrust.com/tfgbv-first-ai-whatsapp-chatbot-kemi-launched/#:~:text=The%20launch%20of%20Kemi%20followed,half%20ever%20reported%20these%20experiences

Our goal is to provide policymakers, technology developers, civil society organizations, funders, and government agencies with a professional, evidence-based roadmap for understanding TFGBV and for leveraging technology (particularly AI chatbots) in its prevention and response. Ultimately, protecting women and girls in the digital age is far more than a matter of rights and safety online, it is essential for full participation in Nigeria's socio-economic progress without fear of violence or abuse.


TFGBV
Government Agencies
Funders
Civil Society Organizations
Technology Developers
Policymakers

# KEY DATA POINTS

**150 million** cellular mobile connections were active in Nigeria in early 2025

**107 million** internet users as at January 2025

Nigeria was home to **38.7 million** social media user identities in January 2025, equating to **16.4 percent** of the total population[4].

There were **38.7 million** users aged 18 and above using social media in Nigeria at the beginning of 2025

**39.0 percent** of Nigeria's social media user identities were female, while **61.0 percent** were male.

**36.2 percent** of Nigeria's total internet user base (regardless of age) used at least one social media platform in January 2025

Data published in Meta's advertising resources indicate that Facebook had **38.7 million** users in Nigeria in early 2025.

Instagram had **9.90 million** users in Nigeria in early 2025[5].

TikTok had **37.4 million** users aged 18 and above in Nigeria in early 2025.

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(4) Kemp, S. (2025, March 3). Digital 2025: Nigeria. DataReportal – Global Digital Insights. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-nigeria

(5) Kemp, S. (2025, March 3). Digital 2025: Nigeria. DataReportal – Global Digital Insights. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-nigeria

# TECHNOLOGY FACILITATED GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (TFGBV) LANDSCAPE IN NIGERIA

TFGBV in Nigeria manifests across a range of digital spaces and contexts, creating a complex "risk environment" for women and girls. This section maps where and how technology-facilitated abuse occurs in Nigeria, who the perpetrators and targets are, and the factors that heighten risk. It is important to note that TFGBV is not confined to a single platform or type of relationship – it spans domestic spheres, workplace interactions, social media, and the public arena, often blurring the line between online and offline harm.

## Key risk environments and forms include:

- **Social media and online public forums** (such as Instagram & TikTok)[6].
- **Instant messaging, Chat groups, and Email** (such as WhatsApp, and iMessage)[7].
- **Image-based abuse and "Sextortion"** (including "deepfakes" or fabricated pornographic images)[8].
- **Domestic and intimate partner contexts** (TFGBV frequently intersects with domestic violence, Abusive partners or family members leverage technology to extend their control and abuse beyond the physical realm. Examples documented in Nigeria include husbands installing spyware on wives' phones to surveil their communications; partners insisting on checking phones and social media accounts and using any evidence of "indiscretion" as pretext for physical abuse; or estranged partners using social media to continue harassing and stalking women after separation). Additionally, women are more likely to experience TFGBV by current of former partners, with a high number of young people are reporting experiences of TFGBV in intimate partner violence[9].
- **Online target of women in politics, media, and activism**
- **Most recently using AI to objectify and undress images of women.**

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(6) TechHer, Understanding Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Exploring the role of digital platforms and liability, 14, 2020, accessed August 13, 2025, https://techherng.com/reportz/understanding-technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence/.

(7) TechHer, 14.

(8) TechHer, 16.

(9) United Kingdom Department for Science, Innovation, & Technology, Digital Violence, Real World Harm: Evaluating Survivor-Centric Tools for Intimate Image Abuse in the Age of Gen AI, 15, July 2025, accessed August 13, 2025, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6878b4b80263c35f52e4dce2/Digital_violence_real_world_harm_evaluating_survivor_centric_tools_for_intimate_image_abuse_in_the_age_of_generative_AI.pdf.

## The key factors that heighten the risks of TFGBV in Nigeria include:

- **Psychosocial and cultural factors**: Nigeria's patriarchal societal structure makes it increasingly difficult for victims of gender abuse to speak up, as expectations of women's role within society are strongly tied to ethnic and religious identity. Many survivors suffer from a culture of silence and shaming around women expression and sexuality, further pushing victims away from speaking up. The psychological toll of constant harassment – anxiety, depression, fear – is very real and can be considered a form of gendered terror that drives women away from digital participation. Many Nigerians still hold conservative views about how women should behave both offline and online; for example, a woman speaking boldly on Twitter might attract comments that she is "indecent" or "un-African," which can quickly escalate into full-blown abuse.

- **Intersectionality:** Women who belong to marginalized groups, religious or ethnic minorities, or those with disabilities – often face compounded online abuse. In our survey, several respondents who chose "Other" when identifying risky topics wrote in comments that being a young woman with opinions is itself a risk factor – a telling insight that simply one's identity can invite harassment in Nigeria's online spaces.

In summary, the risk environment for TFGBV in Nigeria spans from the personal (intimate partner abuse via tech) to the public (social media hate), all underpinned by gender discrimination. Each environment has unique dynamics but also common threads: power imbalances, lack of accountability, and harm to women's agency and well-being. Recognizing these patterns is the first step in crafting effective interventions.

TechHer, Understanding Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence, 16.
TechHer, 19.
TechHer, Understanding Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence, 16.

# METHODOLOGY

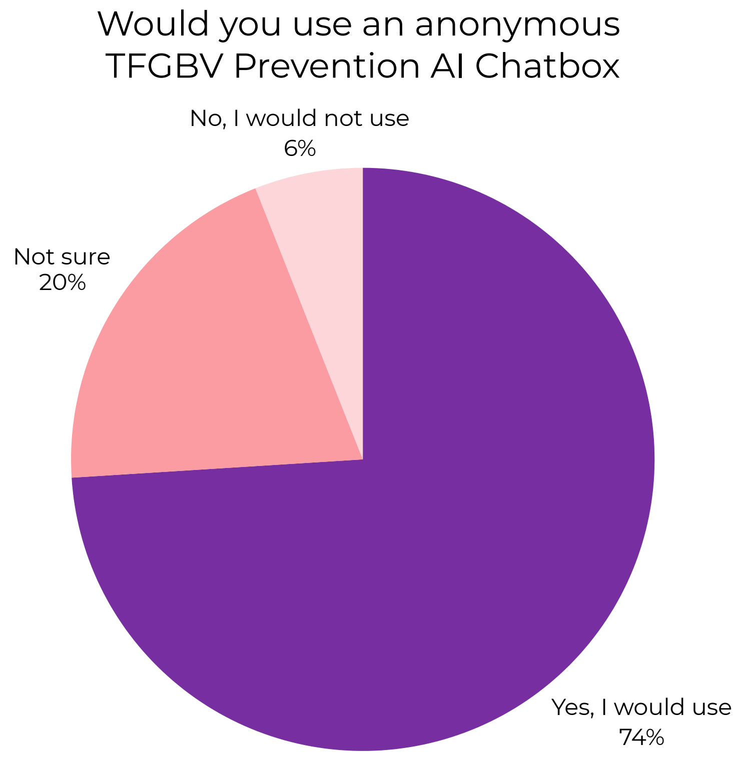
This Needs Assessment was conducted using mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative research) with a participatory approach to ensure that recommendations are grounded in both evidence and lived realities. The process involved three primary phases:

- **Stakeholder consultations:** We carried out in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholder groups in June 2025. A total of 5 key informant interviews were conducted with **digital safety experts, legal practitioners, social tech experts, and GBV experts.** In addition, a focus group session (with 13 participants) was held with a very rich array of participants: survivors of online harassment, young women activists, a lawyer specialising in GBV cases of those who have experienced or witnessed online abuse, gender-focused civil society advocates, and a mix of educators. Stakeholder voices – especially those of survivors – were prioritized to adhere to a survivor-centered and do-no-harm approach, meaning participants' confidentiality was strictly protected.

- **Literature and policy review**: We reviewed global and Nigerian literature on TFGBV. This included academic research, reports by international organizations (UN Women, UNFPA, World Bank, UK Gov Department of Science, Innovation, & Tech, etc.), and local studies and data. Key documents analyzed were the Irish Consortium on GBV's CSW67 brief on **"Technology and Gender-Based Violence: Risks and Opportunities",** Plan International's **"Free to Be Online?"** report (2020) on girls' experiences of online harassment; TechHer's Report **"Understanding Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence"**; relevant UN resolutions and CEDAW General Recommendations that frame state obligations for digital spaces; and Nigerian legislation such as the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.).

We also examined Nigerian case law and incident reports on cyber-harassment and image-based abuse to understand how existing laws are being applied. This desk research helped identify trends, gaps, and best practices relevant to the Nigerian context.

- **Online survey (Quantitative primary data)**: We conducted a short anonymous online survey targeting Nigerian women to gather quantitative evidence of their experiences and needs. A total of **212 women** responded to the survey (conducted via e-survey links shared on social media and messaging apps). The questionnaire covered awareness of TFGBV, personal exposure to online harassment (direct or indirect), and preferences for prevention and support tools. According to the survey **74% of women said they would use a chatbot that helps them stay safe online and connects them to help (all anonymously),** suggesting strong interest in the kind of AI tool we are proposing (only 6% said "No," while 20% were unsure).



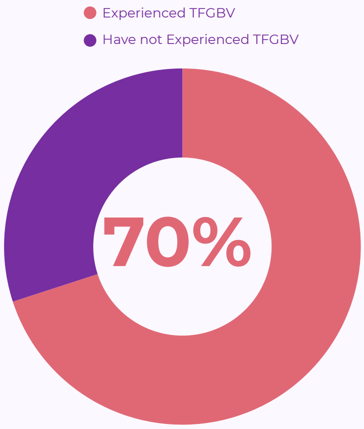
# KEY FINDINGS

These key findings highlight the most important trends, gaps, and opportunities in addressing Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) in Nigeria. Drawing from surveys, focus group discussions, and expert interviews, they reveal where abuse is most prevalent, the forms it takes, and the socio-cultural dynamics that influence survivors' experiences. The insights also point to practical prevention strategies, the role of culturally relevant communication, and the potential of technology-driven solutions like AI chatbots to strengthen response and referral pathways.

Below are some key findings from the research:

## 1. RISK ENVIRONMENTS AND FORMS OF TFGBV IN NIGERIA

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) is widespread in Nigeria, particularly on high-traffic platforms such as Instagram, Telegram, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok. These online spaces host persistent patterns of cyberstalking, impersonation, sextortion, deepfake pornography, and coordinated disinformation campaigns. Women and girls, especially content creators, journalists, political leaders, student activists, and social influencers, are most at risk. The abuse is often gendered, with 70% of surveyed women reporting they/someone they know have been targeted or harassed online after posting, commenting, or engaging in public discussions.



**70%** of surveyed women reported they/someone they know have been targeted or harassed online after posting, commenting, or engaging in public discussions.

One example involved a Nigerian content creator who had supported a lady, only to later find that images of the lady were altered using AI to discredit her. The manipulated visuals portrayed her as someone engaging in relationships with multiple men in exchange for favors, triggering waves of online abuse. Although the offender eventually admitted to using AI, the damage to her reputation and wellbeing had already been done. This illustrates how rapidly and irreversibly disinformation can spread in digital spaces, as observed in the **CSW67 report (Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence, 2023).**

Social media platforms often compound the harm by responding slowly to abuse reports. Harmful content may remain online for long periods, providing no real deterrent for perpetrators. This lack of timely action fosters an environment where harassment thrives, silences victims, and undermines women's visibility in public life. For political women and influencers, such attacks are frequently orchestrated to discredit, intimidate, and discourage them from pursuing leadership roles.

## 2. KNOWLEDGE AND RESPONSE GAPS

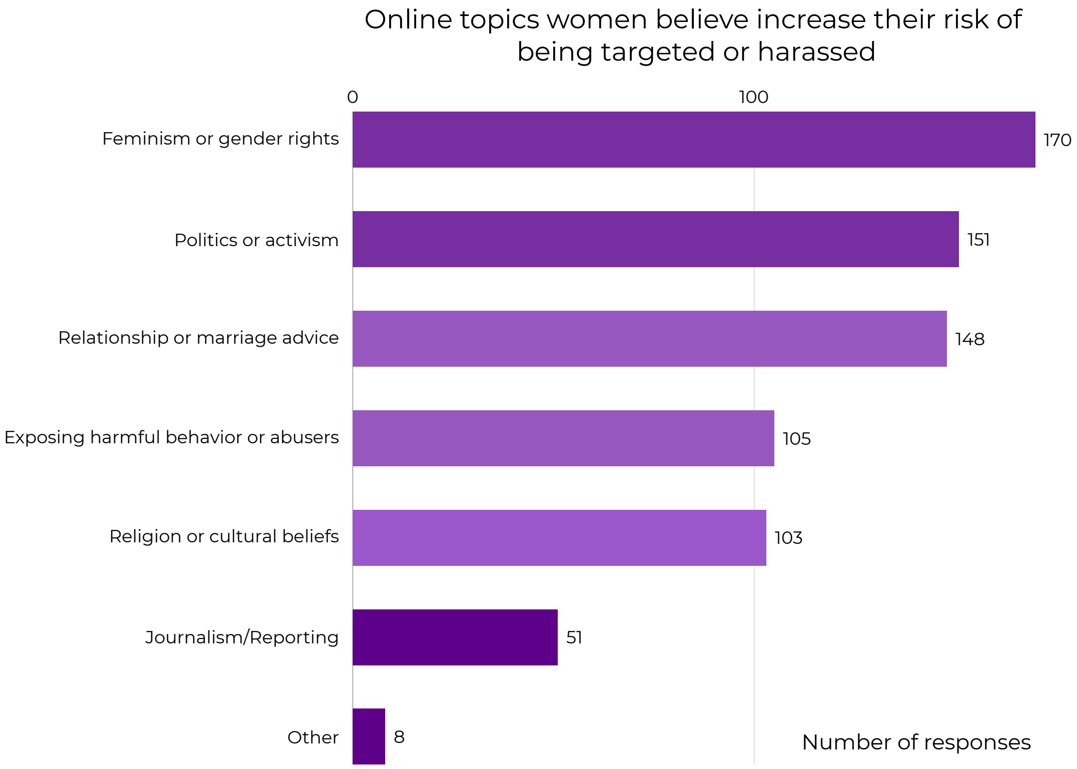
### Limited awareness of digital safety

Digital safety awareness among Nigerian women and girls remains alarmingly low. **More than three-quarters of survey participants admitted they did not know how to report online abuse,** and many were unfamiliar with basic protective tools such as muting, blocking, or enabling two-factor authentication. Misunderstandings about the scope of TFGBV are also common. Many equated it solely with the sharing of non-consensual intimate images, without recognising that it also includes verbal harassment, impersonation, and other forms of online abuse. **Only 53 percent** of the women surveyed had ever heard the term "technology-facilitated gender-based violence" before participating in this research.

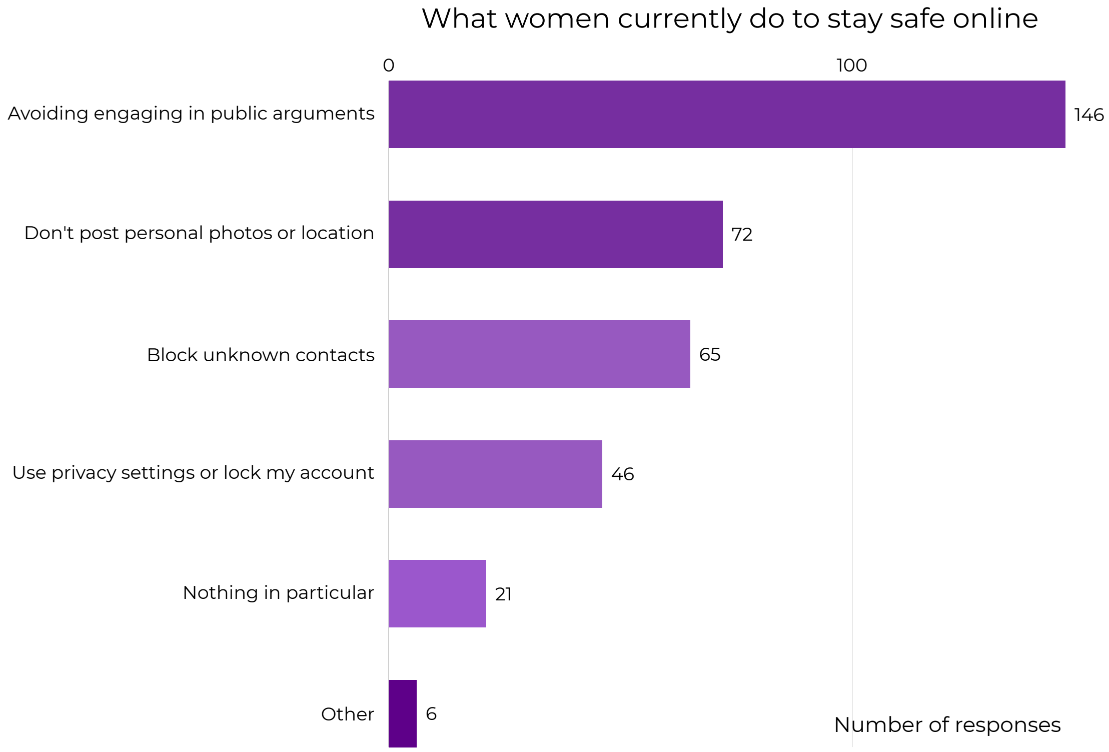
Some focus group discussion participants emphasised the need for preventive interventions at an early stage, advocating for digital education to be embedded in school curricula. They argued that integrating digital literacy into formal education would help young people especially girls, develop the skills to recognise, avoid, and respond to online abuse before it escalates.

## Risk triggers and current safety practices

Survey results shed light on the types of online topics that women believe put them most at risk of harassment. Feminism or gender rights, politics or activism, and relationship or marriage advice were seen as the highest-risk areas. These were followed by exposing harmful behaviour or abusers, religion or cultural beliefs, journalism or reporting, and other miscellaneous subjects. The findings suggest that women who engage publicly on sensitive issues, particularly those involving gender, politics, or social justice, are more likely to attract targeted harassment.



In terms of how women currently protect themselves online, the most common measures included avoiding public arguments, not posting personal photos or location details, blocking unknown contacts, and using privacy settings or locking accounts. While these actions offer some protection, they also reflect a defensive approach that can limit women's freedom to participate fully in digital spaces.



## Cultural Barriers to Reporting

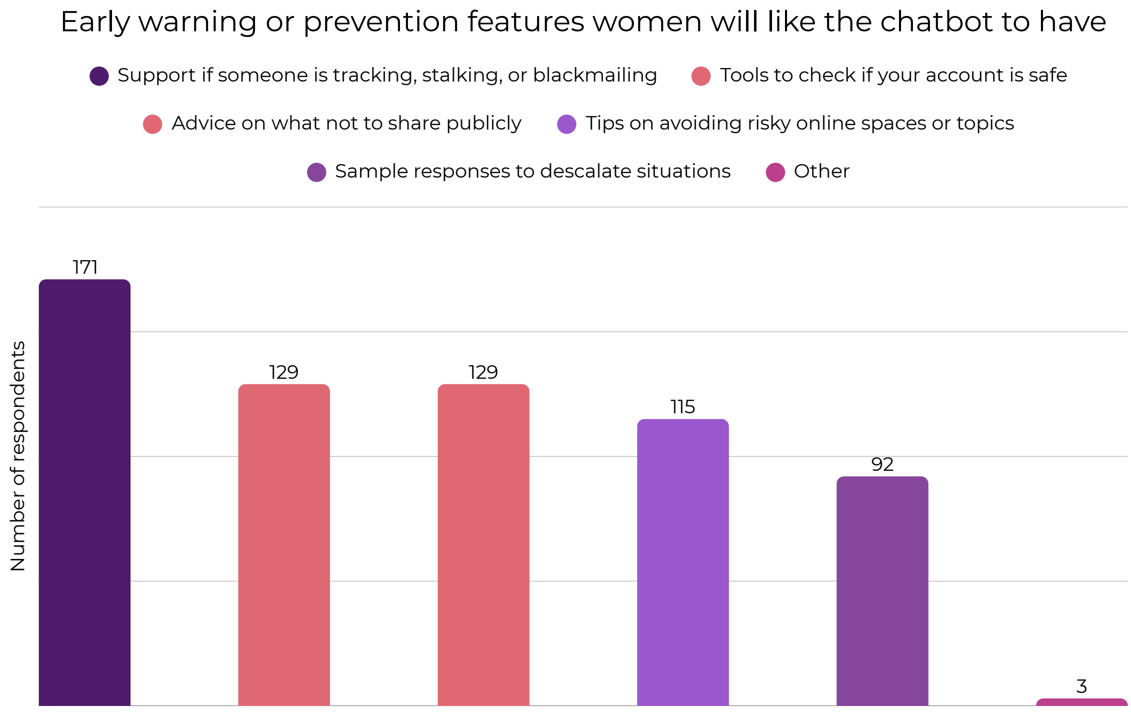
Beyond technical awareness, cultural factors continue to shape how survivors respond to abuse. Denial, internalised shame, and fear of blame discourage many from reporting incidents or seeking help. According to Chioma Agwuegbo, *societal conditions and limited access to digital literacy contribute to an environment where women are more often consumers of tech and not producers.* These barriers, combined with low awareness of rights and reporting channels, leave many without the knowledge or confidence to take action when abuse occurs.

## 3. AI CHATBOT SOLUTION – DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND FEATURES

An effective TFGBV prevention chatbot for Nigerian women and girls must provide relevant information, be a safe, empathetic, and practical companion in moments of need. Feedback from respondents highlights **that trust, emotional support, and confidentiality are essential to its design.** The chatbot must speak in a warm and reassuring tone and offer judgment-free guidance that makes users feel heard and protected

### User-centered safety features

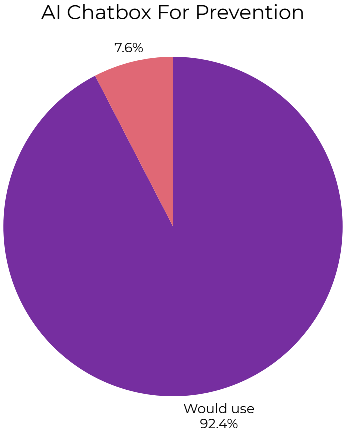
The chatbot should be equipped to detect red flags in user queries and respond instantly with relevant prevention tips, safety checks, and links to verified support services. According to survey results, the suggested features women would like to see are shown in the chart below.



These preferences reflect the need for both proactive safety measures and immediate assistance during crises.

## High adoption potential

There is strong interest in an AI chatbot for prevention, with **73%** of respondents indicating they would use a chatbot that helps them stay safe online and connects them directly to help. This adoption potential would increase when users feel the chatbot can deliver timely, personalised, and discreet support.



## Accessibility through language

To be inclusive, the chatbot must operate in multiple languages. Respondents favoured English as the primary language, followed by Pidgin, Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. Offering multilingual support ensures the tool is accessible across different literacy levels and cultural contexts.

## Privacy and trust as foundations

For many women, privacy is non-negotiable. The chatbot must include clear privacy safeguards, allow for anonymous reporting, and provide reassurance about how information will be handled. Features like auto-clearing chat history or optional password protection can enhance user trust.

In sum, a well-designed TFGBV chatbot is more than a piece of technology but a trusted ally. Its success will depend on how well it blends emotional intelligence, user-driven safety features, multilingual access, and strong privacy protections into one seamless experience.

## 4. PROMOTING PREVENTIVE BEHAVIORS AND DIGITAL SAFETY CULTURE

Simple, everyday online habits can significantly reduce the risk of technology-facilitated abuse. Practices such as creating strong, unique passwords, enabling two-factor authentication, and limiting who can see personal content are proven to strengthen digital safety. The survey and focus group discussions reveal that these behaviors are not consistently practiced among Nigerian women and girls. The gap is often due to limited awareness and a lack of practical guidance on how to apply these measures.

Building a culture of prevention requires education that is both relatable and easy to understand. Campaigns should use familiar and engaging formats such as short reels, infographics, and podcasts to explain digital safety tips in clear and simple language. When delivered by trusted voices, such as influencers or community advocates, these messages are more likely to reach and resonate with the intended audience.

The proposed AI chatbot can be an important part of this preventive culture. It can deliver timely safety reminders, practical advice, and awareness tips directly to users, making learning interactive and accessible. Pairing chatbot support with a wider public campaign ensures that prevention is reinforced through multiple channels, helping safe online habits become second nature.

## 5. CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES AND LOCAL CONTEXT CONSIDERATIONS

In Nigeria, many women choose not to speak openly about online abuse because of the deep stigma attached to such experiences. Fear of being judged, blamed, or socially isolated often outweighs the perceived benefits of seeking help. The prevention chatbot can help bridge this gap by offering private, stigma-free support in local languages and using culturally familiar expressions, making it easier for women to seek guidance without fear of exposure or judgment.

## 6. REFERRAL PATHWAYS AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

While survivors of TFGBV may eventually need legal, mental health, or emergency assistance, a prevention chatbot is designed to act earlier, helping users identify risks, take protective action, and connect with the right resources before abuse escalates. In this preventive role, the chatbot can provide tailored safety tips, guide users on how to respond to early warning signs, and offer discreet, geo-tagged links to trusted organisations such as Sexual Assault Centers, NAPTIP offices, and helplines for situations where risk levels increase.

It can also integrate light-touch, privacy-focused check-ins through familiar channels like WhatsApp, giving users an accessible way to ask questions or clarify concerns without exposing their identity. For rural or low-income users, USSD and offline formats can ensure that preventive information is available even without internet access.

By embedding early guidance with clear pathways to trained professionals such as lawyers, mental health advocates, and community safety volunteers the prevention chatbot can empower women to act at the first signs of harassment or digital threats, reducing the chances that these risks develop into full-scale abuse.

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