

VIRTUAL VIOLENCE, REAL HARM:

Promoting State Responsibility for Technology-Facilitated
Gender Based Violence against Women in Morocco
Action Research Report

عنـف معلـوماتي ، ضرر على حياتي :

تعزير مسؤولية الدولة عن العنف بواسطة تكنولوجيا المعلومات
والاتصال ضد النساء في المغرب
تقرير بحث – عملي

October 2019



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Mobilising for Rights Associates or MRA - “woman” in Arabic - is an international non-profit organization based in Rabat and working across the Maghreb. Our mission is to contribute to changes in four domains - legal, structural, cultural and relational - to promote women’s human rights. We work for grassroots, micro-level changes in behaviors and practices to support our activism for macro level reform initiatives. Our multidimensional strategies are designed for various layers of sustainable transformation for women.

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This action research report is part of a larger *Promoting Freedom from Technology Facilitated Gender-based Violence in Morocco* initiative. It was prepared by Stephanie Willman Bordat and Saida Kouzzi, Founding Partners at MRA Mobilising for Rights Associates.

Both English and Arabic versions of the report are available in PDF format on the MRA website.

— Thank you —

@ the seven Moroccan NGO partners in this action research: [Association Amal pour la Femme et le Développement](#) (El Hajeb), [Fédération des Ligues des Droits des Femmes](#) (Ouarzazate), [Association Anaouat pour Femme et Enfant](#) (Chichaoua), [Association Tafiil Moubadarat](#) (Taza), [Association Tahadi pour l'Egalité et la Citoyenneté](#) (Casablanca), [Association Mhashass](#) (Larache), and [Association Voix de Femmes Marocaines](#) (Agadir).

@ the 1794 people who participated in this action research.

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Ambassade de Norvège

TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN MOROCCO

Action Research Report Executive Summary

Prepared by: MRA Mobilising for Rights Associates, in collaboration with Association Amal pour la Femme et le Développement (El Hajeb), Fédération des Ligues des Droits des Femmes (Ouarzazate), Anaouat pour femme et enfant (Chichaoua), Tafil Al Moubadarat (Taza), Association Tahadi pour l'Egalité et la Citoyenneté (Casablanca), Association Mhashass (Larache), and Association Voix de Femmes Marocaines (Agadir).

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DATE:
October 2019

TFGBV is the use of information, digital and/or communication technologies to cause physical, psychological, economic, social, moral or sexual harm, directed at or disproportionately affecting women. Law 103-13 recently criminalized certain forms of TFGBV. This action research aims to produce a knowledge base on TFGBV in Morocco and promote State accountability for its response. It included interviews, group discussions and an online survey with 1794 women, men and public actors in the law enforcement, justice and health care sectors from 39 diverse sites across the country.

Women's experiences with TFGBV

- Over half of aggressors are unknown to the victim or act anonymously. Aggressors known to the victims represent a wide diversity of men from intimate, personal and professional relationships.
- Most prevalent motives for committing TFGBV are pressure or coercion for sexual relations, extortion or fraud for money, and avoiding legal obligations in family matters.
- TFGBV is omnipresent and pervasive across a wide range of online spaces, most frequently via messaging applications, phone calls, text messages and social media platforms.
- Numerous forms of violent behaviors reported include harassment, threats, abusive comments, insults, defamatory lies, blackmail, and nonconsensual sharing of private images or communications.
- TFGBV is characterized by its frequent and repeated nature, with 35% of respondents reporting several incidents per day. It tends to persist over time, with 57% of respondents reporting violence that lasts from one month to more than a year.
- There is a close link between “online” TFGBV and “offline” violence in the “real world.” Initial online violence frequently escalates into physical violence, violent incidents such as rape are recorded and distributed online, and victims often abused by their entourage for having “caused” the violence.

Impacts on women's lives and their reactions

- Violence in the “virtual” world causes real harm in the “real world,” with women suffering a host of psychological, economic, physical, familial, social, sexual, and professional prejudices as a result of TFGBV. Several attempted suicide, others left school, quit or lost their jobs, or were forced to move.
- Women most often respond to TFGBV by making changes or sacrifices in their own lives, including reducing or cancelling participation in online spaces, and changing certain key elements of their identity, such as their phone numbers or profiles.

Responses of women's entourage

- 70% of women interviewed and 35% of respondents to the online survey remained silent about the TFGBV, not reaching out to anyone in their personal or professional entourage for help.
- Women remain silent out of fears of being considered at fault, blamed for the violence, deprived of their telephone, and having their movements and activities restricted by their families.
- Reactions from families were quite mixed, most often resulting in a weak to no response, followed by reactions punishing the victim, and in only a few cases action against the aggressor.

Responses of public actors-law enforcement, justice and health systems

- Only 10% of women reported the TFGBV to public authorities, primarily to law enforcement.
- Women do not report TFGBV to authorities due to a lack of knowledge of laws and procedures, fears of being blamed, judged, or even prosecuted themselves, pessimism about the usefulness of reporting violence, skepticism that reporting would lead to any outcome, long and complicated procedures, lack of confidence in the system, and the impossibility of obtaining the evidence requested by authorities.
- The majority of women who reported the TFGBV received no results or follow-up. Aggressors were arrested in a mere handful of cases, while in several instances the victims themselves were prosecuted for illicit sexual relations.
- 8 out of 10 women reporting TFGBV expressed their dissatisfaction with the public actor response, and described not being taken seriously, accusations that they themselves were to blame, and the burden placed on them to bring proof of the aggressor's identity.

Responses of telephone companies and social media platforms

- It was extremely rare that women reported the TFGBV to either the relevant local telephone company or social media platforms.
- Women do not seek assistance from the telephone companies and social media platforms out of a lack of knowledge of any mechanisms or procedures, fears of being blamed, and a sense that it would be useless and that neither platforms nor telephone companies would do anything to help.
- In the handful of cases where women sought assistance, telephone companies told them they could not help or intervene to stop the abuse without an order from the prosecutor.

Recommendations for developing recommendations

- Recognize that TFGBV is real violence that causes real harms in the real world;
- Understand how TFGBV undermines women's ability to exercise a diversity of other human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- Hold aggressors, not victims, responsible for causing TFGBV, and end the culture of impunity;
- Hold public State actors, not victims, accountable for finding solutions to TFGBV, and for preventing, protecting, punishing, prosecuting and providing remedies;
- Develop holistic strategies that respond to all of the reasons women do not report TFGBV, addressing issues of knowledge, of fears, and of inadequate policies, procedures and practices defining public actor roles and responsibilities.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

The following suggested questions are intended to be used as a framework for when reading this report and analyzing TFGBV in Morocco. We encourage groups to use these questions when organizing workshops, round tables and meetings to discuss the findings of the action research and develop concrete solutions to address the problem.

1. **Violence against women** is a form of discrimination against women and a human rights violation. It includes gender-based violence against women, that is, violence directed against a woman because she is a woman and/or that affects women disproportionately. It is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.¹

Question: In what ways do the examples of TFGBV illustrated in this report fall under this definition of violence against women?

2. International human rights law prohibits gender stereotypes and stereotyping which undermine the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. States have obligation to eliminate discrimination against women and men in all areas of their lives. This obligation requires States to take measures to address gender stereotypes in both public and private life, as well as to refrain from stereotyping.

*A **gender stereotype** is “a generalised view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by women and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women’s and men’s capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives.”²*

Questions:

What gender stereotypes do you notice when reading this report?

About women? About men? Who is perpetrating them?

How are these stereotypes harmful?

3. Under international human rights law, States have an obligation to:
 - **Prevent** acts of violence against women
 - **Protect** women from violence
 - **Prosecute** perpetrators of violence against women
 - **Punish** perpetrators of violence against women
 - **Provide redress, reparation and remedies** to women victims of violence.

Questions:

Are the public authorities meeting these five obligations as regards TFGBV?

Why or why not?

What concrete steps and actions should be taken and put into place by the State to meet each one of these five obligations?

¹ https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session38/Documents/A_HRC_38_47_EN.docx

² <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/GenderStereotypes.aspx>

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Acronyms

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
ICT	Internet and Communications Technologies
IDI	In-Depth Interviews
KII	Key Informant Interviews
MAD	Moroccan dirhams
NGO	Non-governmental organization
TFGBV	Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence
VAW	Violence Against Women

I. ACTION RESEARCH OVERVIEW

What is Technology-Facilitated Gender Based Violence against Women?¹

This action research used a broad and inclusive definition of Technology-Facilitated Gender Based Violence against Women (TFGBV). As this is an emerging issue, participants were encouraged to share a wide range of experiences to capture any unanticipated manifestations of TFGBV in the Moroccan context.

TFGBV is the use of information, digital and/or communication technologies (ICTs):

By someone to mistreat someone else, whether emotionally, psychologically, socially, economically, physically, sexually, or otherwise;

Through for example, mobile phones and smartphones, the Internet, social media platforms, or e-mails;

That targets a woman because she is a woman and/or affects women disproportionately.

Why conduct action research on TFGBV in Morocco?

➤ **Emerging International Human Rights Standards**

United Nations Human Rights bodies have recently begun to address Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence, emphasizing that the same human rights that people have offline must also be protected online. For example, the July 2017 CEDAW *Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women* recognizes that GBV manifests itself in “technology-mediated” settings and environments, and calls on States to “establish a system to regularly collect, analyse and publish statistical data on the number of complaints about all forms of gender-based violence against women, including technology mediated violence.”²

Likewise, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences focused her 2018 annual report on TFGBV, describing how, “Emerging forms of ICT have facilitated new types of gender-based violence and gender inequality in access to technologies, which hinder women’s and girls’ full enjoyment of their human rights and their ability

¹ This definition draws largely from the *Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on online violence against women and girls from a human rights perspective*, A/HRC/38/47, 14 June 2018, available at https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session38/Documents/A_HRC_38_47_EN.D.OCX

² CEDAW/C/GC/35, 14 July 2107, para 49, available at https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/CEDAW_C_GC_35_8267_E.pdf

to achieve gender equality,”³ and calling on States to fulfil their obligations to prevent, protect women from, punish, prosecute and provide reparations for acts of TFGBV.⁴

➤ **ICTs in Morocco:**

Morocco has a relatively high rate of mobile and Internet use. 94.6% of persons ages 12-65 have a mobile phone, 94.6% in urban areas and 88.8% in rural areas. 80.7% of men and 71.8% of women have a Smartphone. 60.6% of homes have a computer or tablet.⁵ With 22,567,154 Internet users in December 2017, Morocco has a 62.4% usage rate, and 15,000,000 Moroccans are on Facebook.⁶ 51.4 % of women use the Internet, versus 62.8% of men.⁷ Only 21.4% of are aware of the dangers of using the Internet, and nearly 76% are unaware of the existence of any protective mechanisms.⁸

Despite this high rate of ICT use, there is currently a lack of information, studies, or State or NGO programs on TFGBV in Morocco. Neither the 2009 *Enquête Nationale sur la Prévalence de la Violence à l’Egard des Femmes* (ENPVEF),⁹ nor the more recent two *Rapports Annuels sur la Violence à l’égard des femmes*¹⁰ mentioned TFGBV at all.¹¹

➤ **Law reforms in Morocco:**

The recently enacted *Law 103-13 on the Elimination of Violence against Women*¹² introduced new Penal Code provisions specifically addressing TFGBV:

Article 447-1

“Shall be sentenced to imprisonment from six months to three years and a fine ranging from 2,000 to 20,000 MAD, any person who intentionally, by any means whatsoever including computer systems, captures, records, broadcasts or disseminates someone’s private or confidential information or statements without their prior approval.

The same punishment shall be applied to any person who intentionally, and by any means whatsoever, installs, records, broadcasts or disseminates someone’s pictures while in a private place without their approval.”

³ *Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women*, para.14, (2018).

⁴ See also the United Nations Human Rights Council resolution on *Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls: Preventing and responding to violence against women and girls in digital contexts*, 1/HRC/38/L.6 (2 July 2018), available at http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/d_res_dec/A_HRC_38_L6.docx

⁵ <https://www.anrt.ma/sites/default/files/publications/enquete-tic-2018.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#ma>

⁷ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/chart-these-countries-internet-use-higher-among-women-men>

⁸ <https://www.anrt.ma/sites/default/files/publications/enquete-tic-2018.pdf>

⁹ *Enquête Nationale sur la Prévalence de la Violence à l’Egard des Femmes* (Haut Commissariat au Plan, 2009).

¹⁰ Ministry of Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development ,

<http://www.social.gov.ma/sites/default/files/e%2020%لللعنف%20الوطني%20المرصد%20تقرير%20FR%20OK.pdf>

¹¹ Preliminary results from the *Deuxième enquête nationale sur la prévalence de la violence à l’égard des femmes au Maroc* released in May 2019 indicate that TFGBV was included as a topic in this study, and that 13.4% of women respondents reported suffering some form of such violence. See also <https://www.giswatch.org/en/country-report/sexual-rights/morocco>.

¹² Royaume du Maroc. Dahir no. 1.18.19 du 5 Jumada II 1439 (22 février 2018) portant promulgation de la loi n° 103.13 sur la lutte contre les violences faites aux femmes. An English language translation is available on the MRA website.

Article 447-2	“Shall be sentenced to imprisonment from one to three years and a fine ranging from 2,000 to 20,000 MAD, any person who intentionally, by any means whatsoever including computer systems, broadcasts or disseminates a combination of someone’s statements or pictures without their prior approval; or any person who broadcasts or disseminates false allegations or statements aiming thereby to harm someone’s private life or reputation.”
Article 447-3	Increases the penalties for the above crimes if these are committed against “a spouse, a divorcé, a fiancé, one of the ascendants or descendants, custodian or any person having authority or tutorship over the victim; or are committed against a minor or a woman due to her sex.”
Article 503-1-1	Expands the Penal Code’s definition of sexual harassment to include “written letters, phone or electronic messages, records or images of sexual nature for sexual purposes,” punishable with one to six months of imprisonment and/or a fine ranging from 2,000 to 10,000 MAD.

Additionally, Article 1 of Law n°09-08 on the *Protection of persons with regard to the processing of personal data* provides that, “Information technology is at the service of the citizen and evolves within the framework of international cooperation. It must not undermine the identity, or collective or individual human rights and freedoms. It should not be a means to disclose secrets of citizens’ private lives.”¹³

There is therefore a critical need at this time for the systematic collection and analysis of data on TFGBV in Morocco to bring public attention to the issue, shed light on the realities of TFGBV, establish a baseline by which to monitor and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of these new legal provisions, identify deficiencies in the State response to TFGBV, demonstrate the need for specific reforms of laws, policies and services, and develop evidence-based specific proposals for advocacy.

What are the objectives of this action research?

The goals of this phase of our *Promoting Freedom from Technology Facilitated Gender-based Violence in Morocco* initiative include:

- Produce a knowledge base on TFGBV in Morocco;
- Promote State accountability and responsibility for their response to TFGBV;
- Support the inclusion of TFGBV issues in NGO and State initiatives;
- Foster local systems relationships among NGO and public actors to effectively address TFGBV;
- Promote public dialogue on TFGBV as a human rights issue.

This action research specifically aimed to develop a qualitative, illustrative snapshot of TFGBV in Morocco by gathering information on:

- Forms of TFGBV experienced by women

¹³

<http://adala.justice.gov.ma/production/legislation/fr/Nouveautes/Protection%20des%20personnes%20physiques%20%C3%A0%20l%E2%80%99%C3%A9gard%20du%20traitement%20des%20donn%C3%A9es%20%C3%A0%20caract%C3%A8re%20personnel.pdf>

- Profiles of TFGBV perpetrators
- Technologies used to commit TFGBV
- Consequences and impacts of TFGBV on women
- Reactions and resistance by women to TFGBV
- Responses from families and communities
- Responses by State actors
- Responses by phone companies and social media platforms.

Who are the partners in this action research?

Seven Moroccan partner NGOs located in diverse urban, small town and rural areas across the country collaborated in this action research:

- [*Association Amal pour la Femme et le Développement*](#) (El Hajeb, Middle Atlas)
- [*Fédération des Liges des Droits des Femmes*](#) (Ouarzazate, High Atlas)
- [*Association Anaouat pour Femme et Enfant*](#) (Chichaoua, southwest)
- [*Association Tafiil Moubadarat*](#) (Taza, eastern Morocco)
- [*Association Tahadi pour l'Egalité et la Citoyenneté*](#) (Casablanca)
- [*Association Mhashass*](#) (Larache, northwest)
- [*Association Voix de Femmes Marocaines*](#) (Agadir, southern Atlantic coast)

What was the methodology used?

➤ **Methods**

The multifaceted action research was comprised of Individual In-Depth Interviews, Facilitated Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews, and an On-line Survey. The Protocols for the Interviews and Discussion Groups were in Arabic, while the online survey had both Arabic and French versions available.¹⁴

Action research is collaborative social inquiry that takes a practical approach to identifying and analyzing problems, creating knowledge, developing solutions, and designing social action. It involves the participation of members of the local community directly concerned with the change sought in all of these phases. As such, it is both a research strategy and a reform process, intended to support democratization.

Participation was anonymous and confidential, with no names or other personal identifying information recorded or stored. Basic demographic information on respondents' approximate ages, occupations and place of residence was noted only to assess participant diversity and representativeness. Interviews and group discussions were not recorded or videotaped. Respondents were not paid for their participation in the research.

¹⁴ The complete research package can be accessed online at <https://mrawomen.ma/wp-content/uploads/doc/Guide%20Arabe%20recherche%20action%20VFTIC%20site%20web.pdf>

Method	Participants	Protocol Used	Objective	Average Time to Complete
Individual Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women who had experienced TFGBV Men who had committed TFGBV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual Interview Guide : Women Individual Interview Guide : Aggressors 	Solicit individual women's personal experiences with TFGBV. Solicit individual men's personal experiences committing TFGBV.	30 – 90 minutes, 45 minutes on average
Discussion Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Groups of women Groups of men Mixed groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Group Guide 	Gain an understanding of how groups of people understand experiences of TFGBV generally.	1 ½ - 2 ½ hours, 2 hours on average
Key Stakeholder Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police and Gendarmes Prosecutors Lawyers Health care professionals School officials Telephone company representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key Stakeholder Interview Guide 	Solicit key stakeholder's personal experiences managing cases of TFGBV in their professional capacity.	30 – 90 minutes, 45 minutes on average
On-line Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women who had experienced TFGBV 	Online survey via SurveyMonkey ¹⁵	Solicit individual women's personal experiences with TFGBV.	

➤ Themes

The Protocols and online survey were comprised of 40 open and close ended questions, designed to solicit information and experiences around the themes listed below.

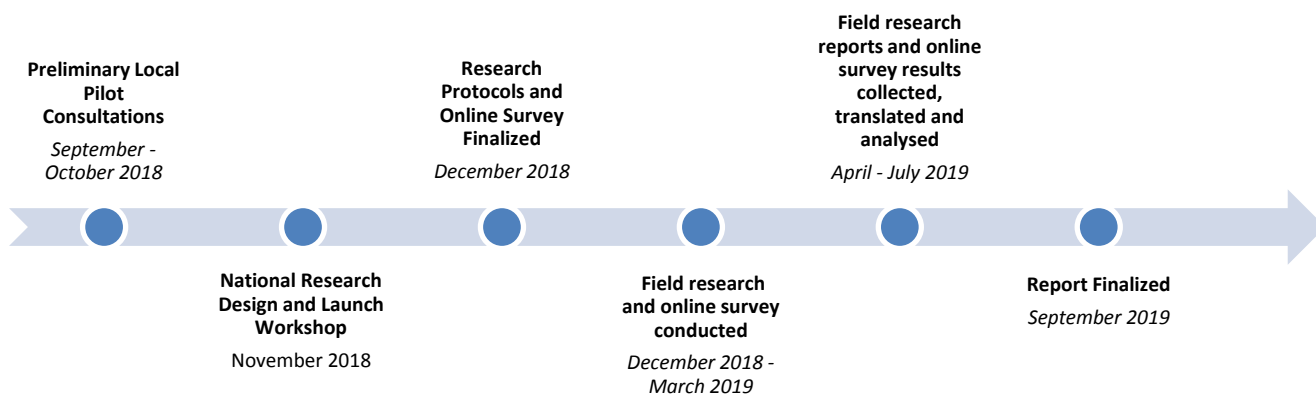
A significant part of this action research focuses on the State response to TFGBV. In general, studies and policy efforts related to GBV in Morocco to date have tended to examine issues related to the victims themselves, prevalence rates and types of violence. Such an approach is thus limited in approach and content, not at all assessing public actor performance, monitoring how

¹⁵ The survey was open from January 18, 2019 through March 31, 2019, and was entirely anonymous and confidential. It was widely publicized through social media pages and groups managed by MRA and the partner NGOs, as well periodic email announcements to contact lists of over 2000 local NGOs, activists, lawyers, journalists and women public figures. The survey generated substantial coverage in the Moroccan media. In addition, we designed and distributed a one page flyer announcement about the survey with tear-off tabs with the survey website link, for local groups to post in strategic places in their communities. The Arabic language version of the online survey is available at https://mrawomen.ma/wp-content/uploads/doc/TFVAW_Morocco_MRA_Arabic.pdf and the French version at https://mrawomen.ma/wp-content/uploads/doc/TFVAW_Morocco_MRA_French.pdf.

State institutions are responding to GBV cases, evaluating how effective public interventions are, or holding the State accountable and responsible for its response.

Women's experiences with TFGBV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggressor profile • Forms of technology used • Content of the communications • Types of violent behaviors • How long ago the violence occurred • Frequency of the violence • Total duration of the violence • Any related acts of offline violence
Impacts of TFGBV on women's lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of harm suffered as a result
Women's reactions to the TFGBV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How women responded to the violence
Reactions and responses by women's entourage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If women did or did not speak to anyone in her entourage • Reasons why or why not • The entourage's reactions • Results of their responses • Women's satisfaction with these responses • What women would have wanted as a response
Responses by public actors : law enforcement, justice system and health sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If women did or did not speak to any public actors • Reasons why or why not • The public actors' reactions • Results of their responses • Women's satisfaction with these responses • What women would have wanted as a response
Responses by social media platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If women did or did not reach out to the social media platform involved • Reasons why or why not • The platforms' reactions • Results of their responses • Women's satisfaction with these responses • What women would have wanted as a response
Responses by telephone companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If women did or did not reach out to the relevant phone company • Reasons why or why not • The telephone companies' reactions • Results of their responses • Women's satisfaction with these responses • What women would have wanted as a response

➤ **Process and Timeline**



September – October 2018

- Conducted literature review around TFGBV
- Conducted preliminary pilot local consultations in seven partner NGO communities to:
 - Define the specific themes to include in the action research
 - Choose the appropriate research strategies and methods
 - Identify all appropriate stakeholders to interview during action research

November 2018

- Held National Launch Workshop with seven partner NGOs to:
 - Share and discuss results of pilot local consultations
 - Strategize the research design and methodology

December 2018

- Finalized four Research Protocols and online survey
- Prepared complete research package including objectives, activities, and methodological framework for the action research, including guidelines and benchmarks for identifying and recruiting participants, and interview and group facilitation techniques.
- Launched the action research via email and social media distribution of research tools
- Shared the online survey announcement broadly via email and social media to NGOs and press across Morocco
- Posted flyer announcements on online survey in strategic places in local communities

December 2018 – March 2019

- Training workshops held for 44 selected members of 7 core partner NGOs and 8 additional collaborating local associations to serve as interviewers and group discussion facilitators
- Recruitment of participants through announcement flyer, inviting beneficiaries of NGO programs, word of mouth, social media, visiting schools and universities, and outreach to additional NGOs and women's centers in local communities
- Action research conducted in seven communities
- Mid-term assessments conducted (January)

April – July 2019

- Developed format for community level action research reports
- Reports from community level action research submitted and translated
- Findings from community level action research reports compiled and analyzed
- Data from the online SurveyMonkey survey compiled and analyzed through the platform's online analysis tools
- Online SurveyMonkey survey results translated
- Draft report written

September 2019

- Report finalized

➤ **Research Teams**



➤ **Research locations**

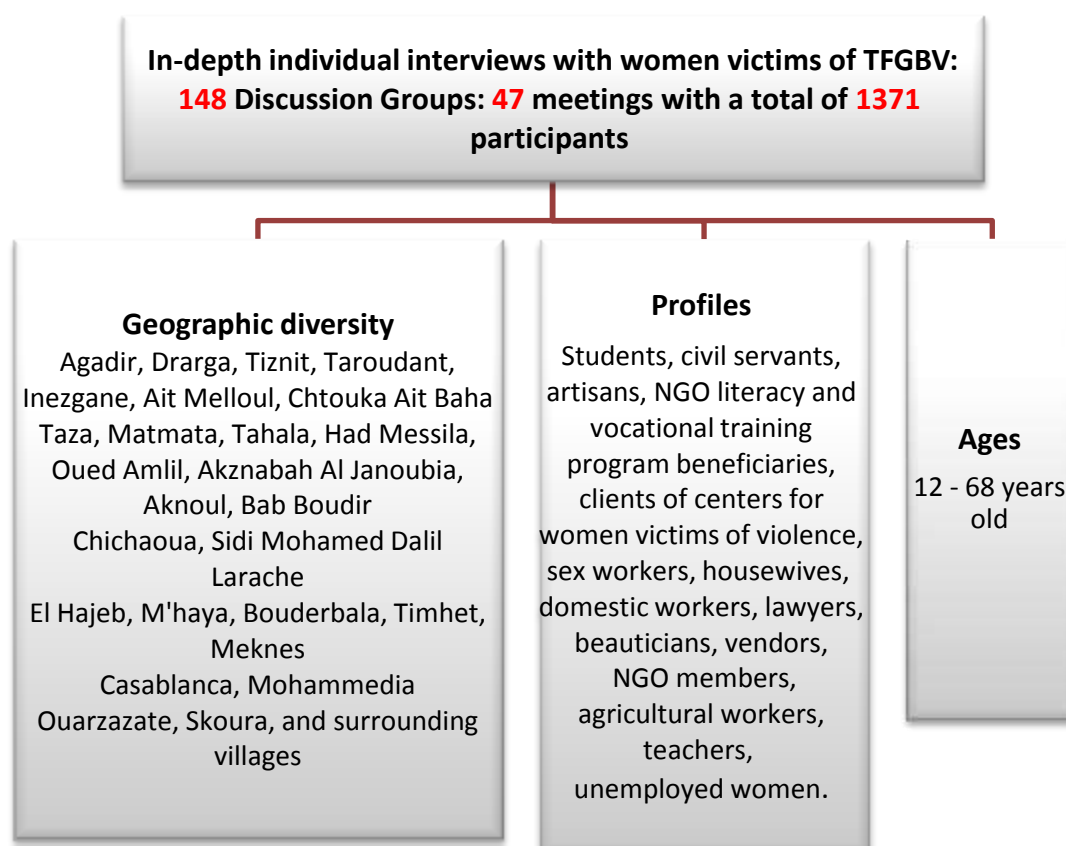


The above map illustrates the different locations where the action research was conducted. Blue points indicate the seven core research sites where the partner NGOs are located: Larache, Casablanca, Agadir, Chichaoua, Ouarzazate, El Hajeb and Taza. Red points denote additional sites where research activities were also carried out. In total, interviews and group discussions were conducted in 39 cities, towns and villages in different regions across the country.

➤ **Participants**¹⁶

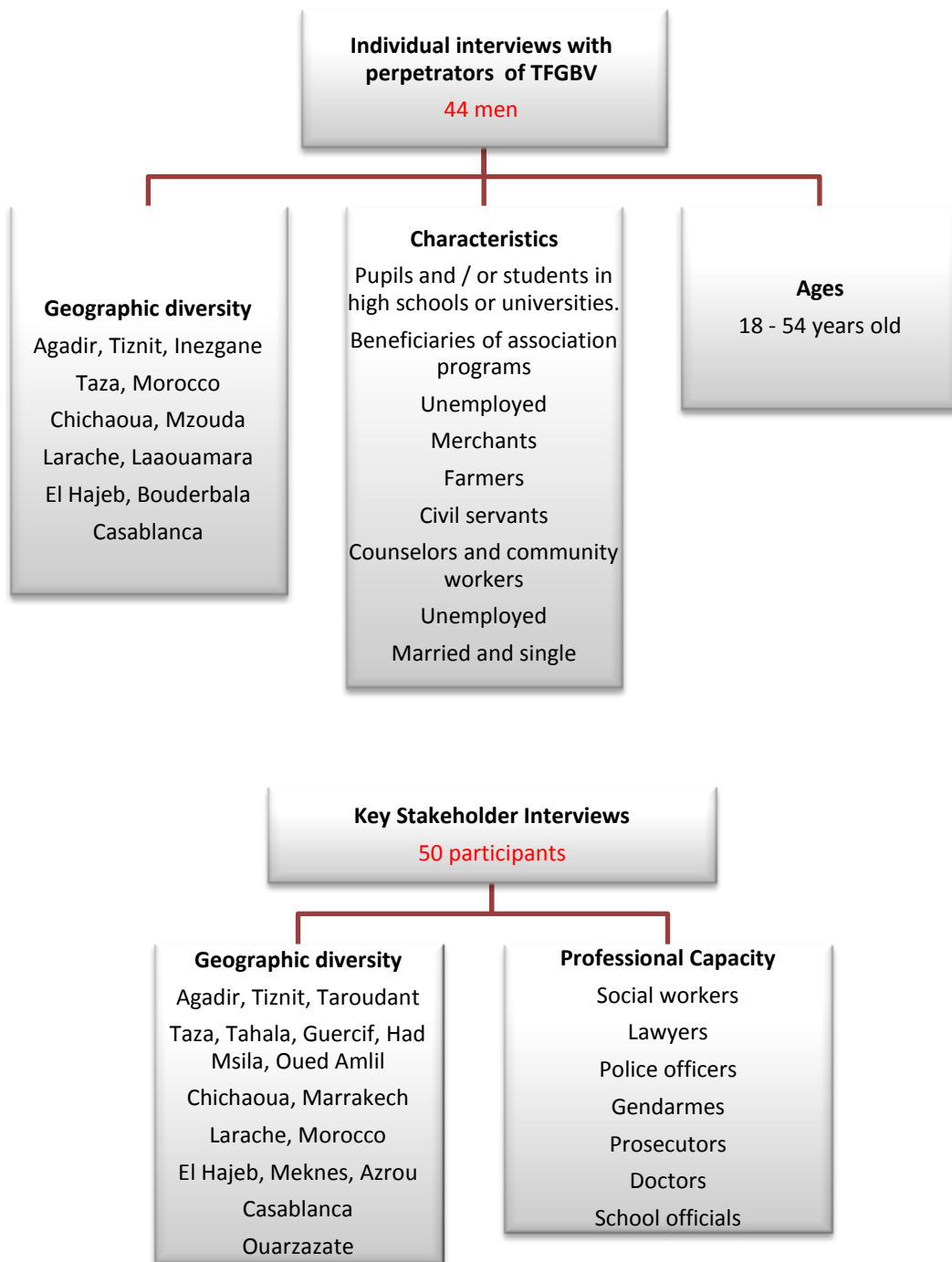
In-Depth Interviews with women victims of TFGBV	148
In-Depth Interviews with aggressors of TFGBV	44
Key Informant Interviews with public actors	50
Individual Interviews with telecommunications service providers	10
Facilitated Group Discussions	47 group discussions 1371 participants
Online SurveyMonkey survey	171 respondents
Total # of action research participants	1794

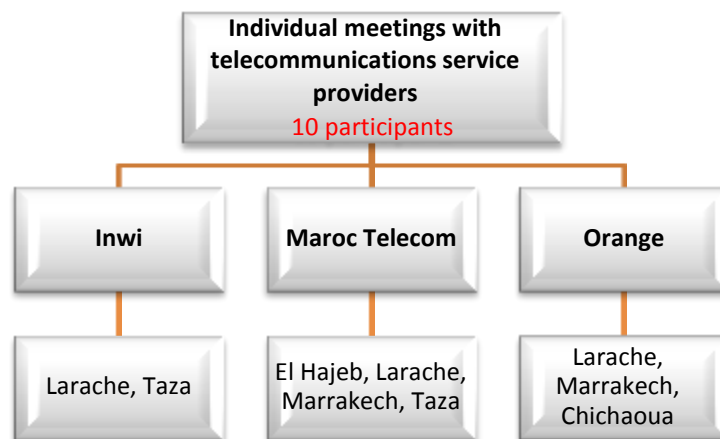
As illustrated in the above map and detailed in the Summary Table: Action Research Implementation, participants came from a diversity of urban, peri-urban and rural areas. Women participants in the interviews and group discussions reflected a wide range of socio-economic profiles, marital status, and professional activities. The majority of the fieldwork was conducted in the Moroccan dialect of Arabic, with Tamazight or French also used in interviews and group discussions as appropriate.



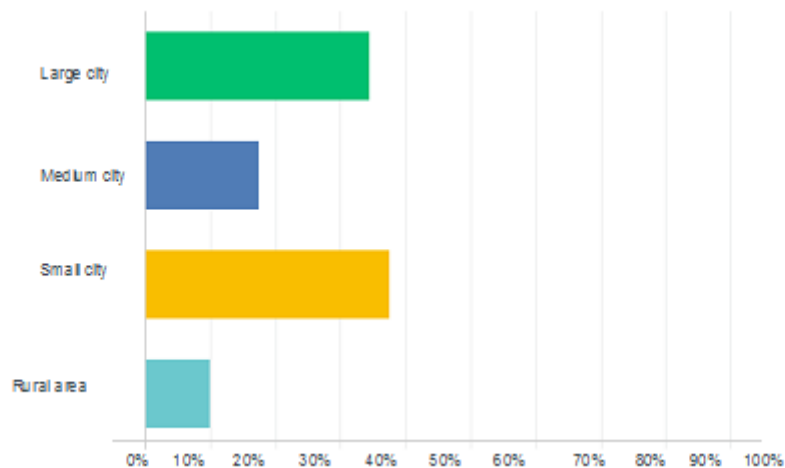
¹⁶ Detailed charts of the action research implementation can be found in the appendices to the Arabic report.

In addition to in-depth interviews and group discussions with women, NGO partners also interviewed male aggressors and key stakeholders about their experiences with TFGBV in their professional capacity.

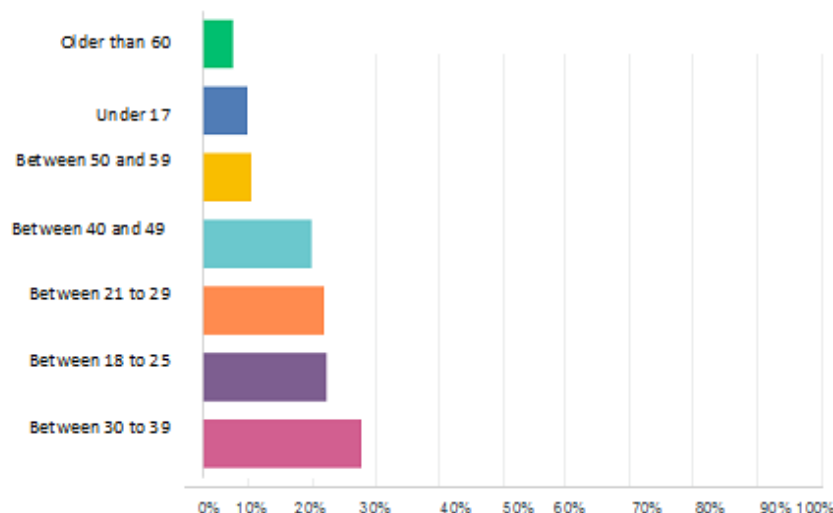




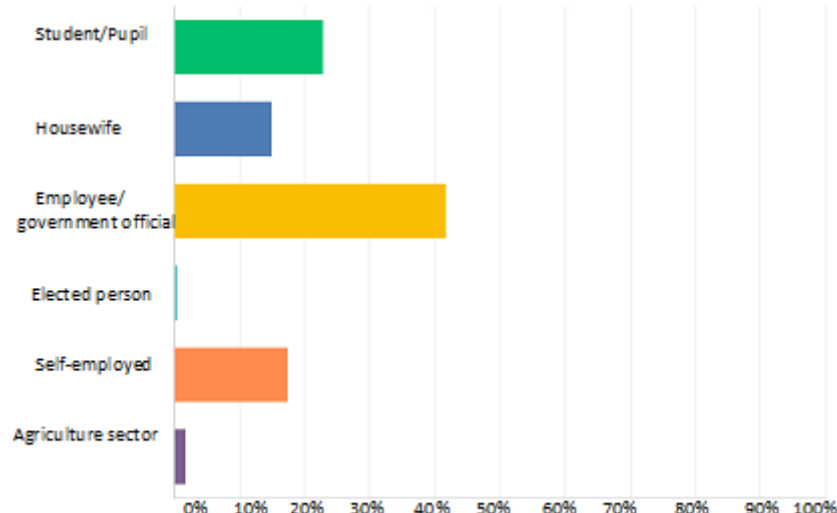
Although respondents were not asked to reveal their specific place of residence, geographic diversity was also reflected in the online survey, with 34.59% from a large city, 17.61% from a medium size town, 37.74% from a small town, and 10.06% from rural areas.



Respondents to the online survey likewise reflected a broad diversity in ages of women having experienced technology facilitated violence.



Respondents to the online survey reported a diversity of professional activities.



➤ **Challenges to action research**

Partner organizations did not report significant challenges recruiting women for the interviews or groups discussions. Many participants were selected from among existing beneficiaries of the organizations' diverse programs, were already familiar with the organization's work, and had a pre-existing relationship of trust with its members.

"It was easy to convince them to participate in the action research because they were all victims of technology-facilitated violence and wanted to contribute in educating others about the subject."

However, some groups reported subsequent challenges to getting women to open up and speak freely about the violence they had experienced. Oftentimes they were afraid of others finding out, ashamed or traumatized, or considered the topics of "sex, harassment, indecent personal pictures and photos...as immoral and should not be revealed out loud." This was particularly true in the group discussions. Even though group discussions were designed for participants to discuss the topic generally and not their own experiences, many women directly expressed their hesitation about sharing personal stories in the group setting. Nonetheless, they spoke about the experiences of other women, or cases they had seen in online videos.¹⁷

As is consistent with prior experience conducting action research in Morocco, obtaining interviews with public actors was extremely difficult to impossible. Law enforcement and justice system officials in particular quite usually require written requests from the local NGOs and authorizations from the central authorities before agreeing to grant interviews.¹⁸

¹⁷ The "Exorcist of Berkane" was one case cited.

¹⁸ Such authorizations are extremely slow to process and rarely forthcoming, particularly within six-month timeframes for carrying out research.

Was there any impact from conducting the action research itself, other than the findings?

While the primary objective of the action research was to gather information on women's experiences with TFGBV and public and private sector responses, partner NGOs described how the process itself produced several immediate, concrete outcomes.

Participation in the action research served to:

- Provide an opportunity for women to *speak for the very first time* about the TFGBV they had suffered;
- *Raise awareness* on the issue of TFGBV among both women and key stakeholders;
- Encourage women to *seek assistance* for cases of TFGBV;
- Prompt men to *reflect on and modify their behavior*; and
- Incite public actor stakeholders to begin *reforming their procedures* to address TFGBV.

The vast majority of the participants in interviews and group discussions were unaware that Law 103-13 recently criminalized this type of violence; although the conversations focused on eliciting women's experiences, they also provided an occasion for the NGO to provide information on the new laws.

Among the women who participated in the IDIs and group discussions, NGOs reported:

- ✓ Increased and follow-up dialogues on the topic amongst themselves;
- ✓ Reflections on their online behavior and phone use;
- ✓ Requests for training workshops on the new laws related to TFGBV and on how to protect themselves online;
- ✓ At least ten women subsequently sought out individual counseling and legal assistance for cases of TFGBV;
- ✓ Several women brought in friends for counseling for the TFGBV they had experienced;
- ✓ At least four women subsequently filed complaints with local authorities for TFGBV.

From an all-men discussion group:

"The participants came to the conclusion that it (TFGBV) is an immoral behavior and that they will change their behavior and sensitize their friends to the seriousness of this punishable offence."

From a Key Informant Interview:

"A social worker in one regional hospital Violence against women unit said that they would start incorporating questions on technology facilitated violence into their standard intake form."

What are the next steps?

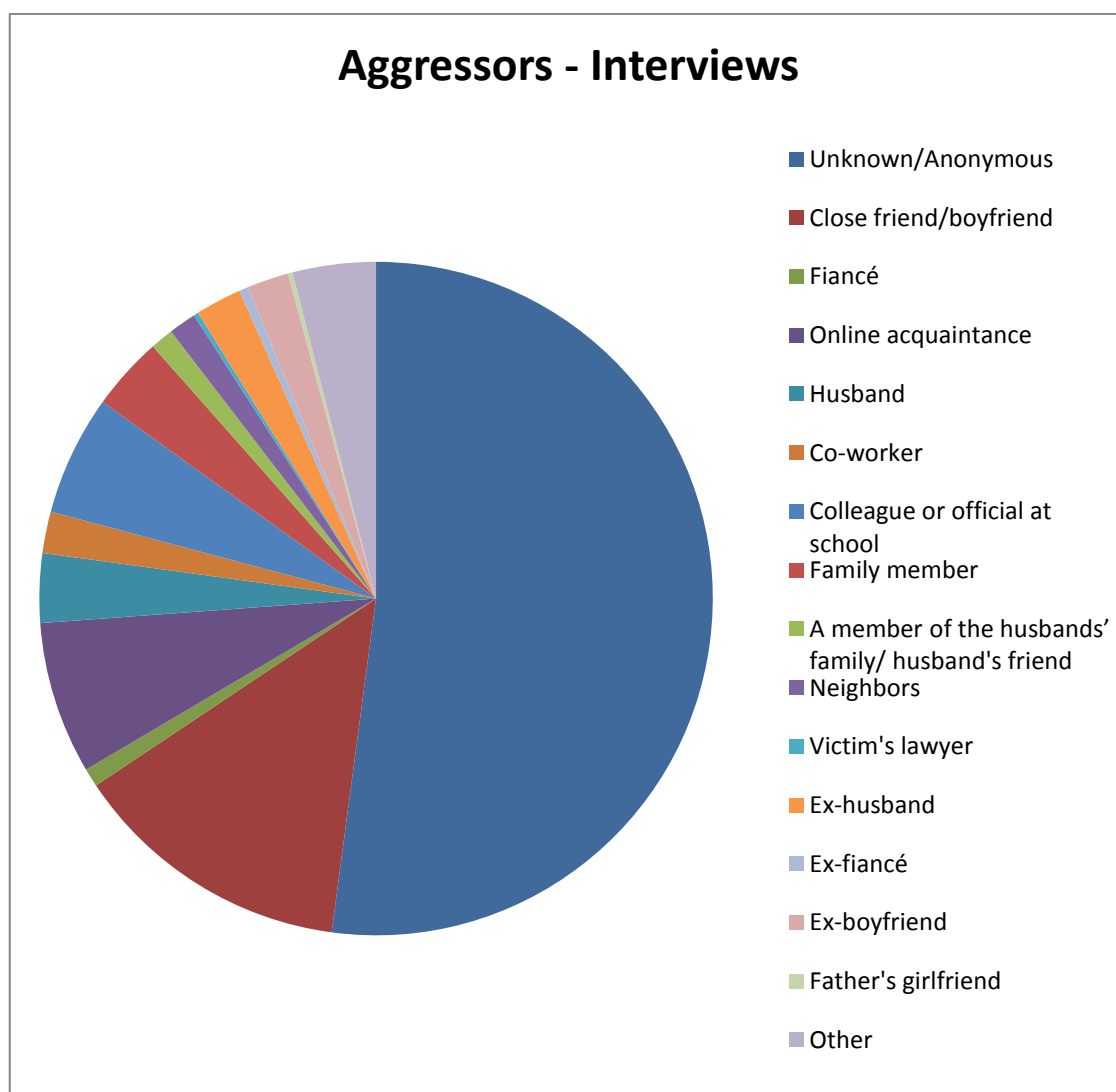
The action research findings will inform the next phases of this initiative, specifically to develop practical awareness-raising tools, and make concrete recommendations for reforms in laws, procedures, policies and practices on TFGBV.

II. RESEARCH FINDINGS

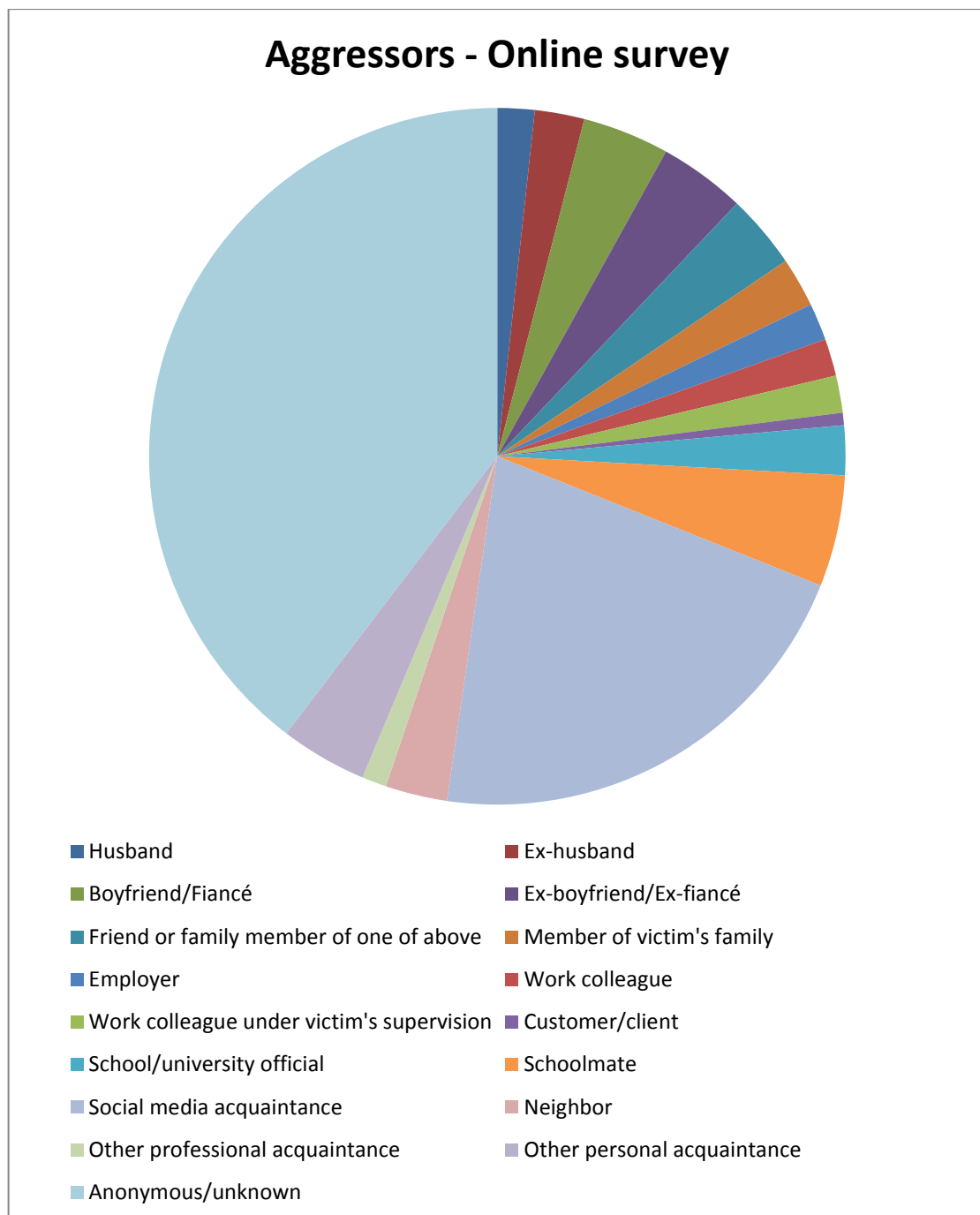
Who are the aggressors in TFGBV cases?

- A good majority of the aggressors were **unknown** to the victims. In other words, they were either strangers, or persons known to the victim but acting under the cover of **anonymity** provided by ICTs.
- At the same time, those aggressors known to the victims represented a **wide diversity** of men, primarily those with whom women had close intimate or friendly relationships, including fiancés and ex-fiancés, boyfriends and ex-boyfriends, husbands and ex-husbands, clients and former clients, employers, colleagues and teachers. It is worth pointing out for the Moroccan context that TFGBV occurred in both “illegitimate” (i.e. illegal or socially disapproved) relationships as well as in “legitimate” (i.e. legal or social approved) ones.

Women participating in the interviews and group discussions reported that the aggressor was:



Results from the online survey were consistent with this trend.



The threat to women is thus twofold; at the same time that TFGBV is most frequently perpetrated by anonymous/unknown persons, women are also at risk of such violence from basically any man in their professional and personal entourages.

In one case, a student was blackmailed by her teacher to have sexual relations with him in exchange for his registering her at the university.

In several instances, other people acted in complicity with the primary aggressor. One common scenario involved friends of the aggressor or even friends of the victim herself sharing previously confidential photos or text messages with the aggressor for subsequent (ab)use.

What are the aggressors' motives?

Two main themes repeatedly emerged in the interviews, group discussions and online survey regarding aggressors' motives for their behavior:

- Pressure or coercion to start, continue or resume **sexual relations** with the victim;
- Extortion, fraud or blackmail of the victim for **money**.

"One of the girls stated that she had been communicating with a person she knew via WhatsApp and he insisted that she send him pictures of her, pretending that he was in love and wanted to marry her. However, when he got the pictures he began blackmailing her and threatening to publish her photos online if she did not send him money and submit to his sexual desires."

Additionally, in the several instances of TFGBV committed by a husband, motives involved wanting to force the wife to agree to his polygamy request, gain an advantage in a divorce, avoid paying financial support, or obtain child custody.

"One young woman left the house after a quarrel with her husband. The husband confiscated her phone and used it to send sexually suggestive text messages to her cousin. Based on these messages, he (the husband) then filed a complaint against her and she was condemned to a suspended sentence of 6 months."

"Some married women in a discussion group described their husbands as beasts and ignoble for they forced them to record a video under threat of a weapon. They asked them to falsely admit that they had sexual relationships with other men. The husband will then use the video to obtain a divorce or marry a second wife."

Other reasons cited included a desire to cause problems in the victim's family, get revenge for perceived or actual rejection, and prevent the victim from entering into a relationship with or getting married to someone else.

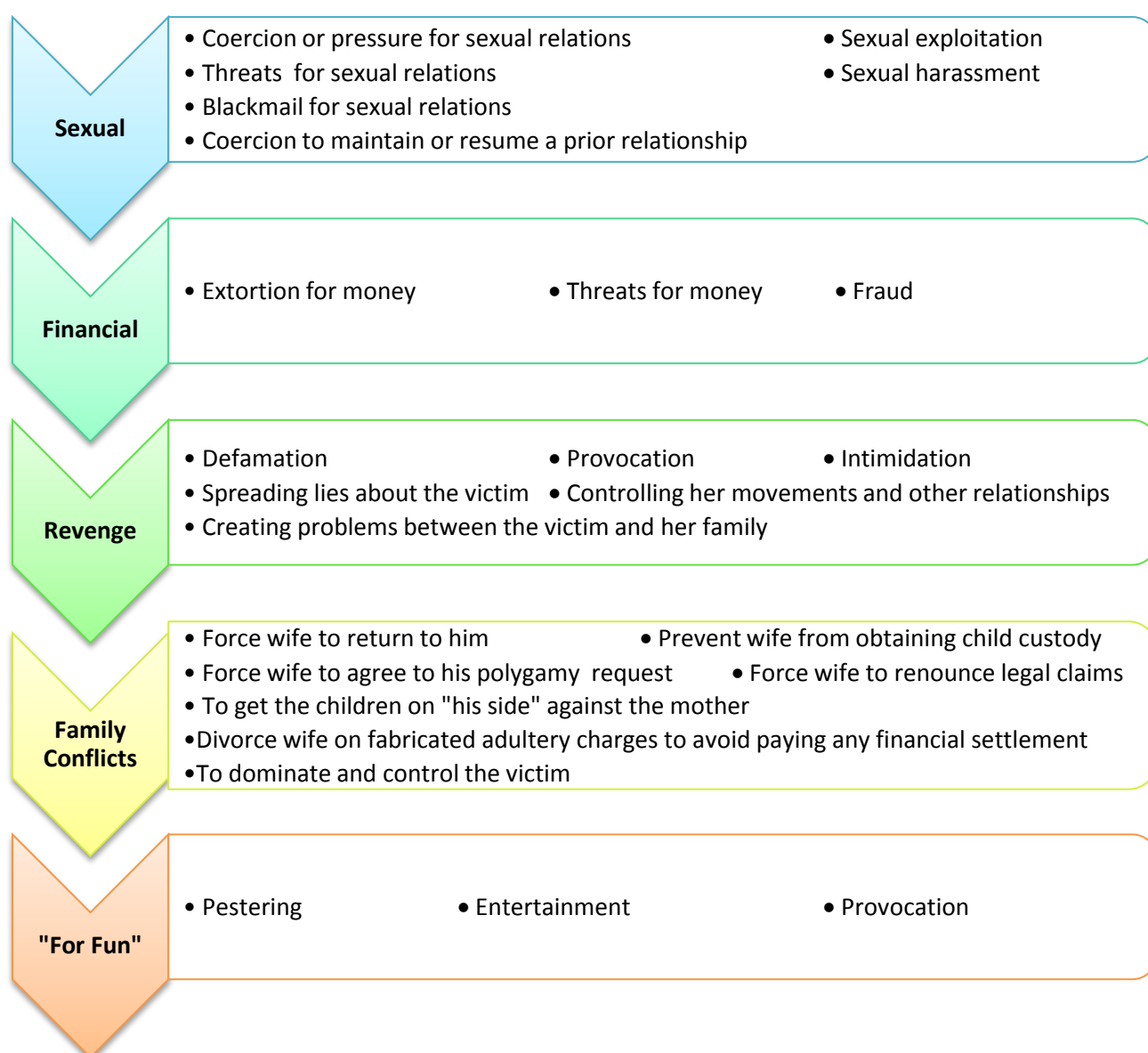
"One young woman used to send intimate pictures of hers to her soldier boyfriend. When things went wrong between them, she ended the relationship. He first promised to delete all pictures but when he heard that she was getting married to someone else, he threatened to send the pictures he claimed to have deleted to her fiancé and family. He started controlling her, asking her to leave her fiancé and to go out only with him, mainly in late hours. She changed her phone number and cajoled her mother to leave the city. That was the only thing she could do as she was too afraid of his threat. She dared not report the incident."

Two instances of workplace-related TFGBV were intended to hamper the victim's anti-corruption efforts.

"He wanted me to leave my position of responsibility, to persuade me to not take the necessary measures to correct the corruption-related malfunctions, to stop the practice of special favors, and to reorganize the administration."

Findings from interviews with the aggressors of TFGBV reflect these results, with men reporting that they were seeking sexual relationships, money, revenge, to "get the woman back," "just to have fun," or "entertainment."

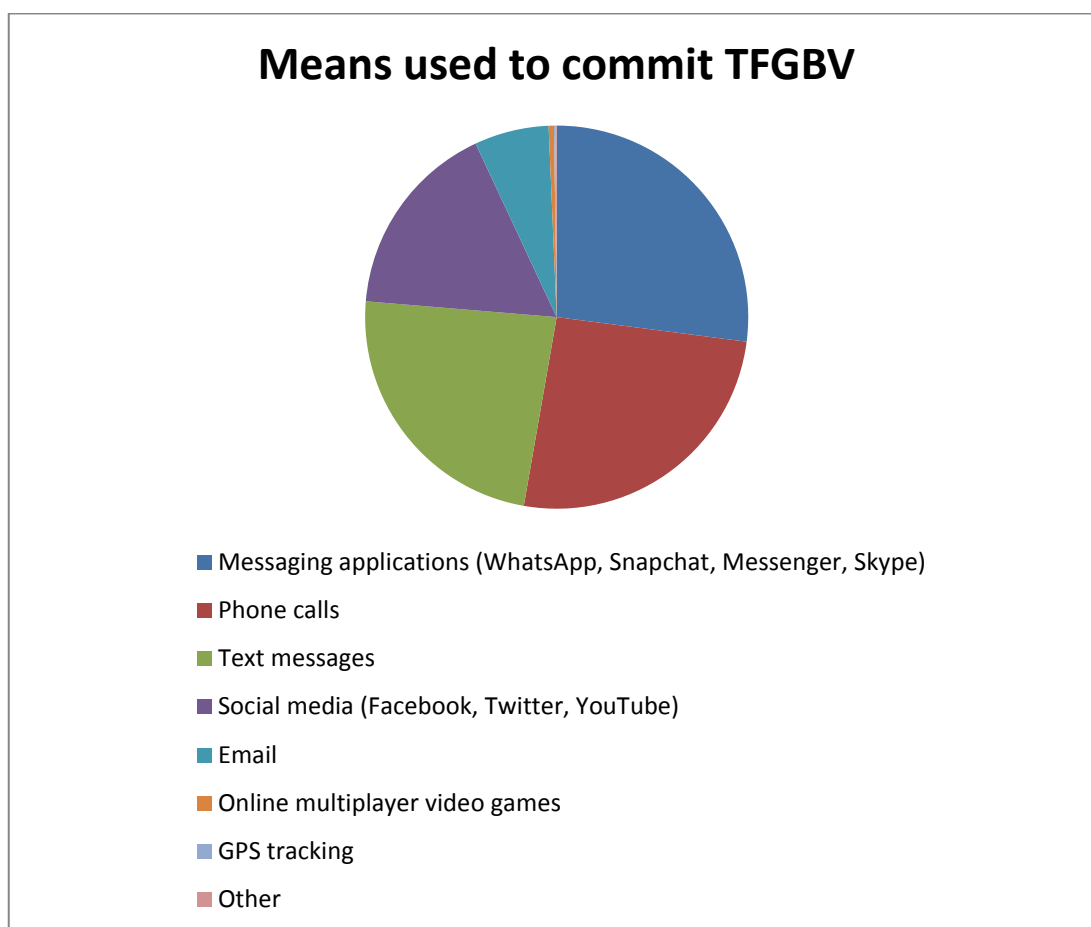
Summary Chart of Aggressor Motives



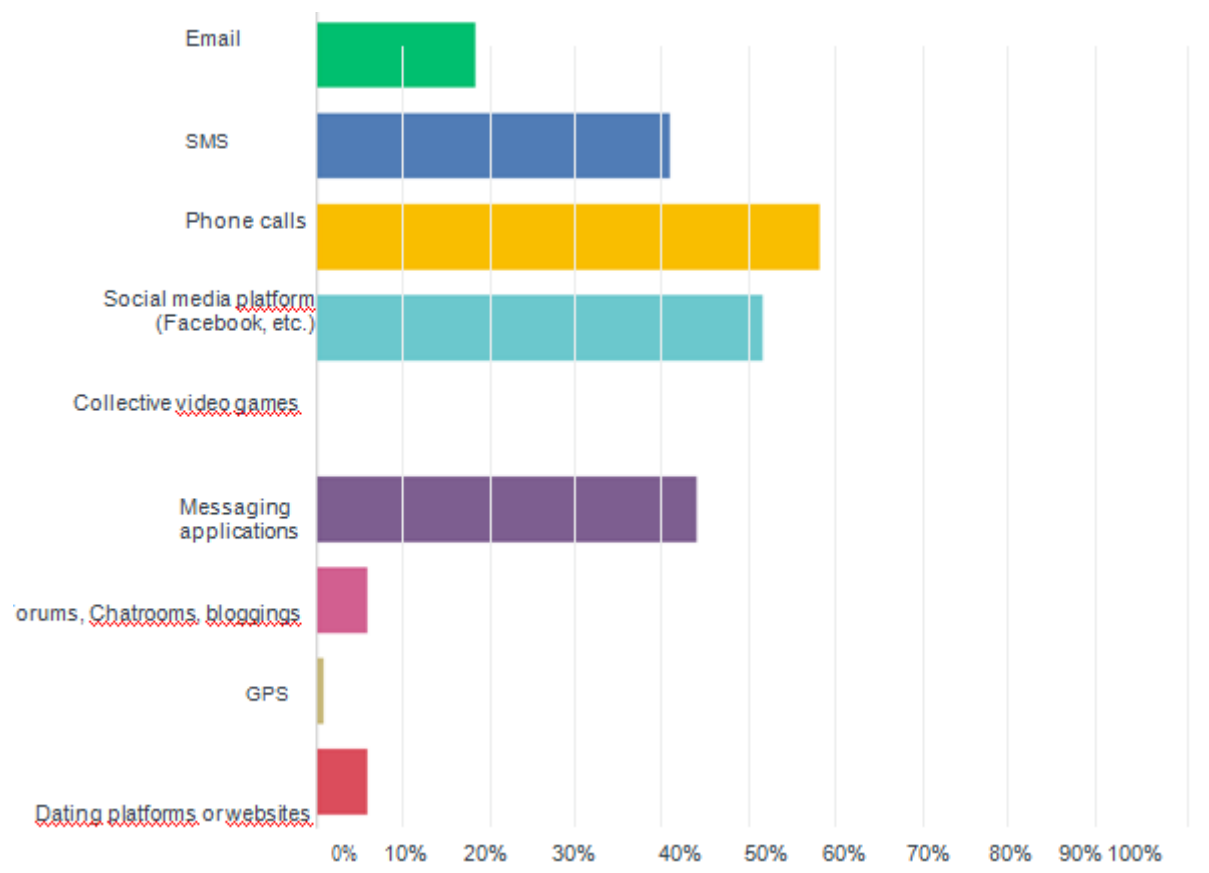
What means are used to commit TFGBV?

Women reported being subjected to technology facilitated violence by a wide variety of technologies available to aggressors. In other words, such violence is omnipresent and pervasive, making women vulnerable across a wide range of different online spaces.

Women participating in interviews and group discussions reported experiencing TFGBV via the following technologies:



Findings from the online survey were consistent in reflecting the prevalence of TFGBV throughout messaging applications, phone calls, text messages and social media platforms:

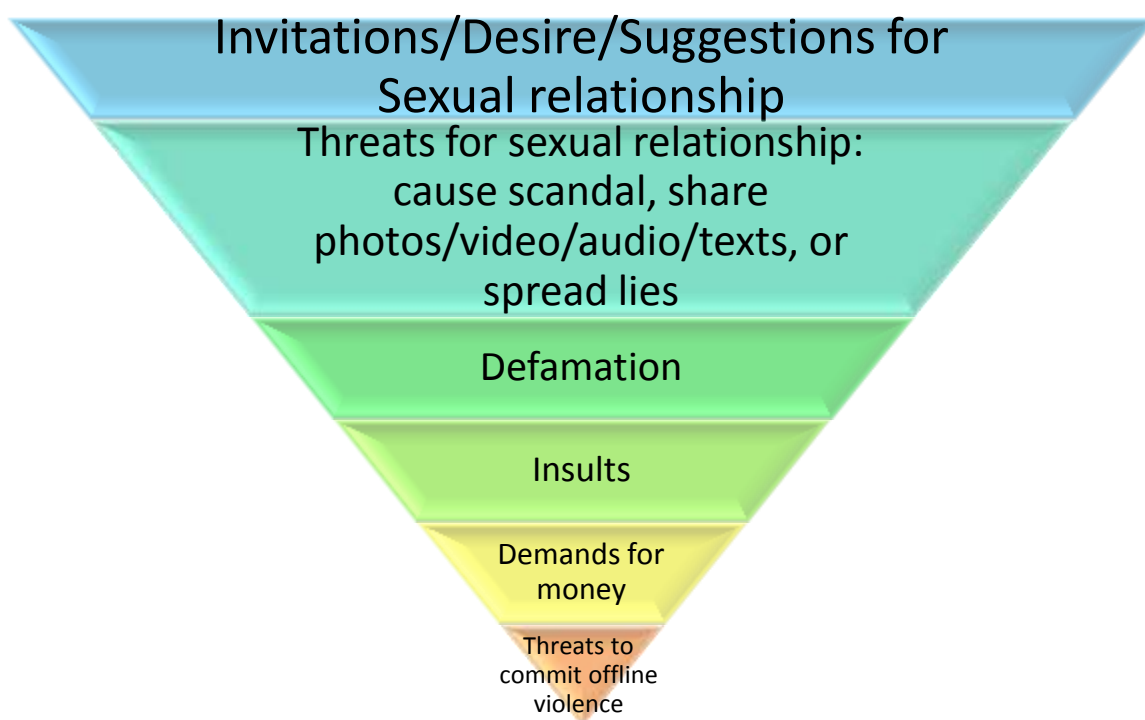


The fact that TFGBV is committed most predominantly through phone-based tools makes it particularly pervasive and invasive.¹⁹

¹⁹ As compared to computers, for example, which are turned off and left in a fixed place rather than carried with a person constantly, and create less dependency for carrying out daily functions.

What is the content of the violent communications?

The three common themes that emerged in the interviews and group discussions²⁰ as to the content of the violent communications reflect the aggressor's motives: **sexual relations, money, and family conflict**. The below themes are organized by descending order of prevalence, with those at the top and in larger font the most predominant.



It is worth noting that the threats to commit offline violence included threats to kill the victim, to stalk her, to kidnap her, to cause her facial mutilation, and to harm members of her family, including her children.

²⁰ This question was not included in the online survey.

I know lots of thing about you, if you do not meet me I will use them to scandalize you.

If you do not come back to me I will ruin your life.

I want to marry your daughter. She goes to indecent places with other men.

I want to have a sexual relationship with you. If you refuse I will post naked pictures of you and smear your image.

You are impolite, ignoble and bad.

I want to have a sexual relationship with you. If you refuse I will post naked pictures of you and smear your image.

If you do not send me pictures showing your body naked, I will kidnap you near your school and rape you.

If you do not have sex with me as you did with the other, I will tell your husband.

I'll send a gang to kill you.

If you do not have sex with me, I will publish the videos and pictures that I have of you on Facebook.

If you do not keep going out with me, I will smear your image in front of everybody in your neighborhood.

I want to marry you. I am a Gulf man spending my holiday in Morocco.

If you do not go out with me and agree to my requests, I will publish the conversations I had with you.

If you do not have sex with me, I will publish your pictures. Prostitute!

Say you are corrupt and have many lovers and that you are betraying your husband.

If you do not want to give me money, I will scandalize you before everybody, CORRUPT!

If you stop seeing me, I will post all your pictures and defame you.

If you do not give me the money I asked for, I will post your photos on the Internet.

If you do not come to my place and have sex with me as much as I wish and at no cost, I will post your photos on the Internet.

You will not marry anyone but me, for you are mine forever and if you dare say no, I will send the video to your new fiancé to watch you having sex with me, you treacherous!

If you do not have sex with me, I will post the video and photos in social media sites.

I no longer want you to be my wife. I want to defame you and scandalize you. I am going to marry another woman anyway.

If you do not waive your alimony rights, I will post this video and make you a joke among your entire family.

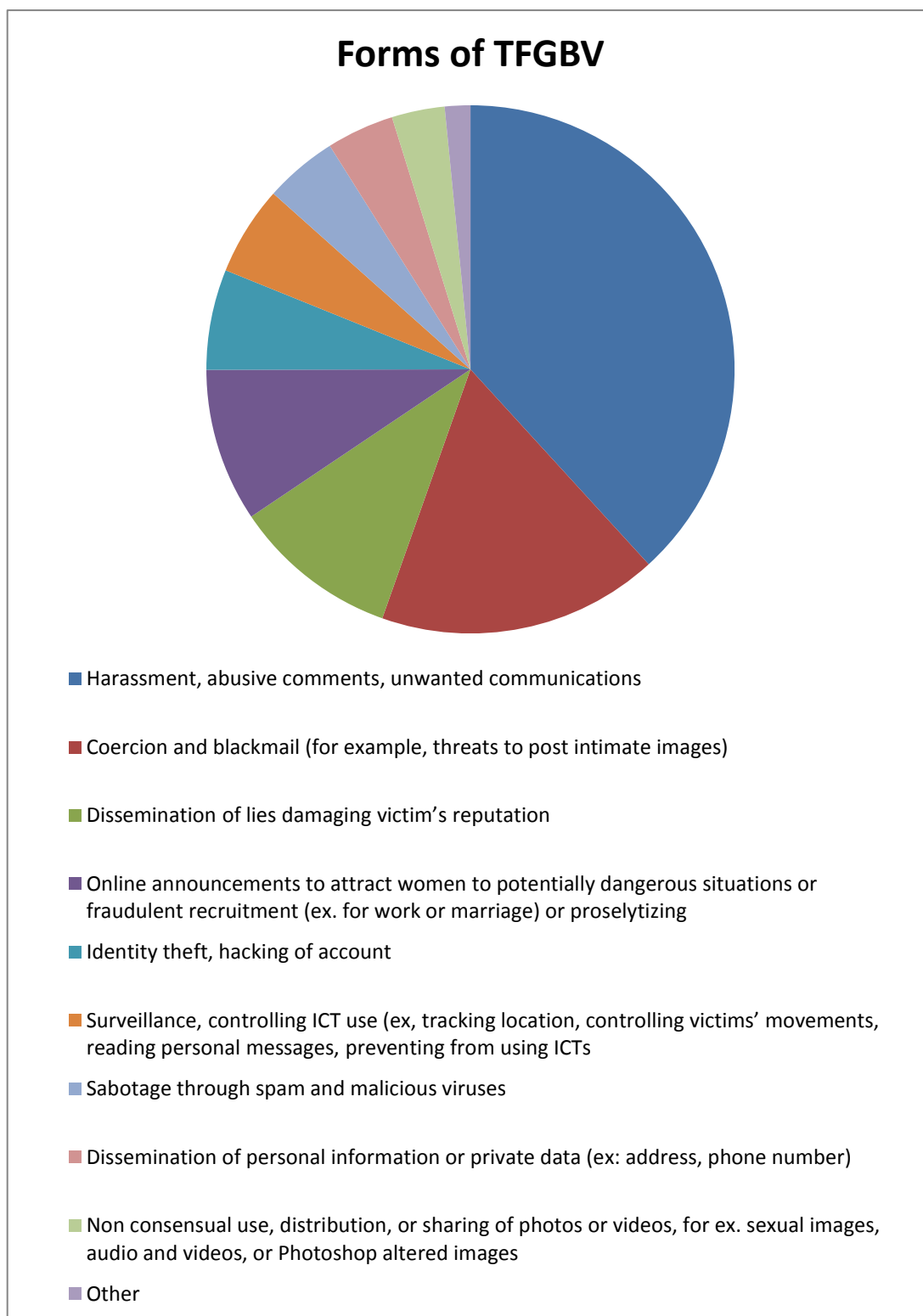
I want you to have sex with me in exchange of me helping you enrolling in the university.

Either you go with me for a week on holiday or I will fabricate a charge against you, send you to prison and ruin your life; you know I am a policeman and I can do it.

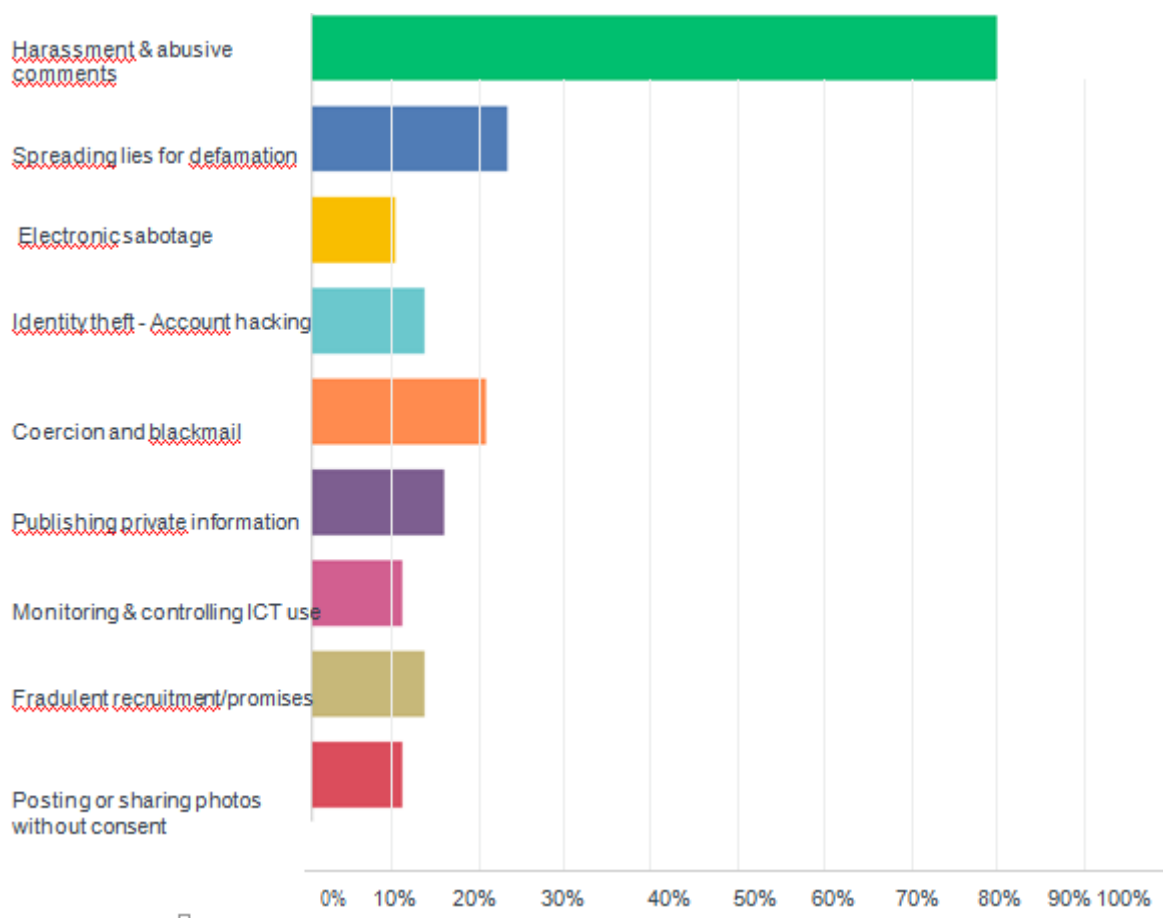
I was all turned on and waiting for you, but you didn't come, whore! If I cannot have you back and if our relationship does not continue as it was before, I will post your photos online and damage your reputation.

What types of behaviors does TFGBV involve?

Women in interviews and focus groups reported experiencing numerous forms of TFGBV:



Results from the online survey likewise reflect the prevalence and diversity of abusive behaviors committed against women.



A good number of cases involved threats to publically post photos, videos, recordings of phone calls, or private messages from the victim unless she agreed to have sexual relations with the aggressor, or pay him money. Oftentimes these are altered with Photoshop, or obtained by force or by hacking the victim's account.

"My fiancé invited me out. He gave me Coca cola to drink with some drugs in it. He tore off my clothes and videoed himself kissing all my body. When I woke up I started crying. He calmed me down saying that I am his love and would be his wife soon. Ten days later he asked me to go out with him and I refused. He then posted the video to all his friends. Consequently, my family and neighbors rejected me. I dare not go out or talk to anyone."

"He took my pictures and started threatening me, either I consent to his whims or he shall publish my pictures in pornographic sites."

"I received phone calls from perverts following the publication of my phone number on a sex site."

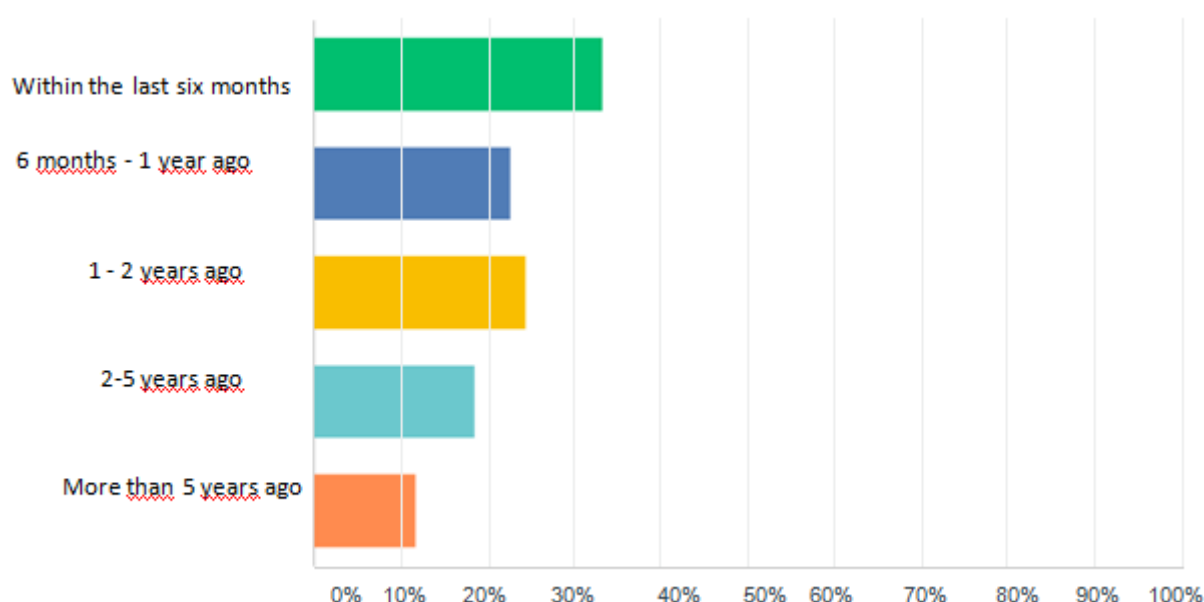
"Sometimes an abuser will buy a SIM card in his name and give it to the victim. When things go wrong between the abuser and the victim, the former asks for a copy of the SIM card and creates an account in social media using her restored information."

The interviews and groups discussions reflected a common dynamic of the TFGBV escalating over time. Very often, communications start out innocuously, turn flirtatious, then to direct and suggestive overtures, and finally to outright threats. One frequently cited scenario begins with the aggressor threatening to share prior non-sexual photos of or texts from the victim with her family unless she sends him sexual photos or videos. Such a pattern demonstrates the need to take initial, “minor” forms of TFGBV seriously, as the violence can get worse and escalate over time.

How long have women been experiencing TFGBV? How frequently? How long does the violence persist?

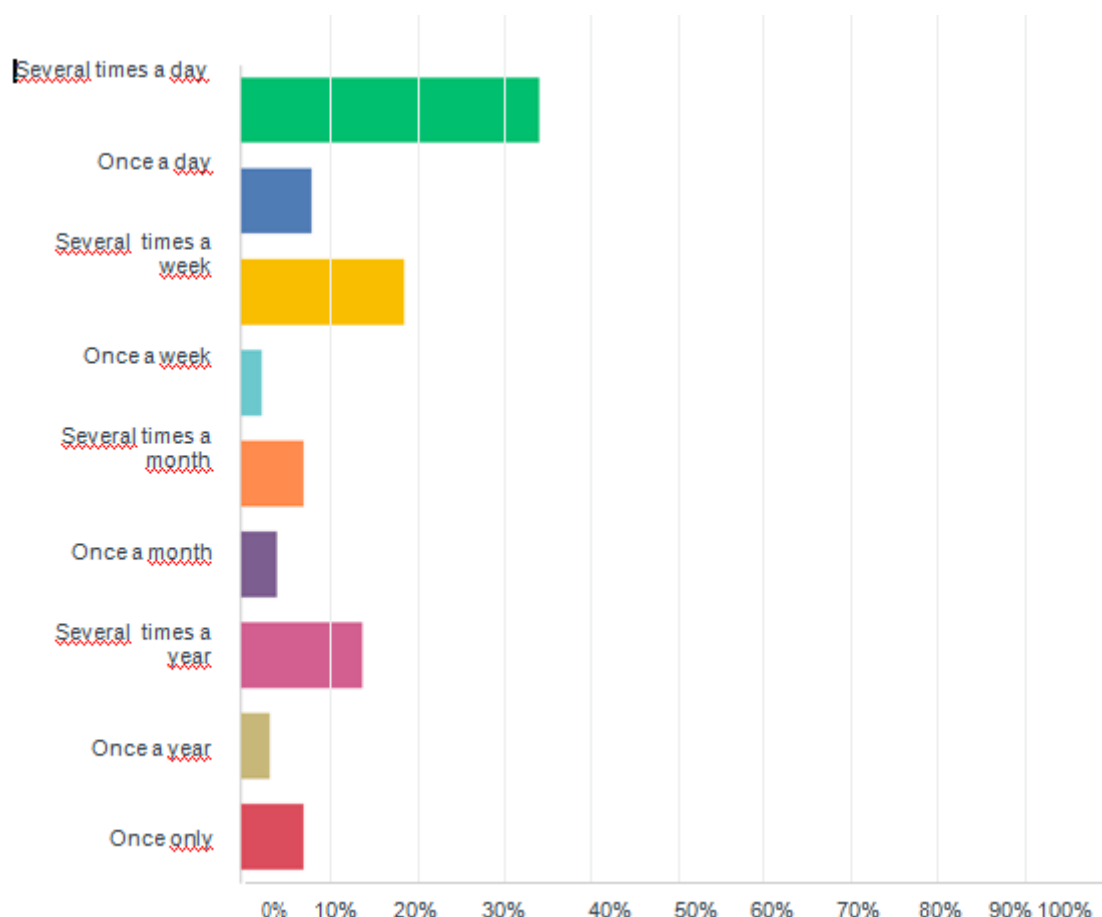
The action research revealed how TFGBV (a) **has existed for some time**, with some interviewees reporting instances of TFGBV that occurred ten years ago, and (b) has been **consistently increasing** over time.

Results from the online survey were consistent with those from the interviews and group discussions regarding the time frames when women had experienced such violence:



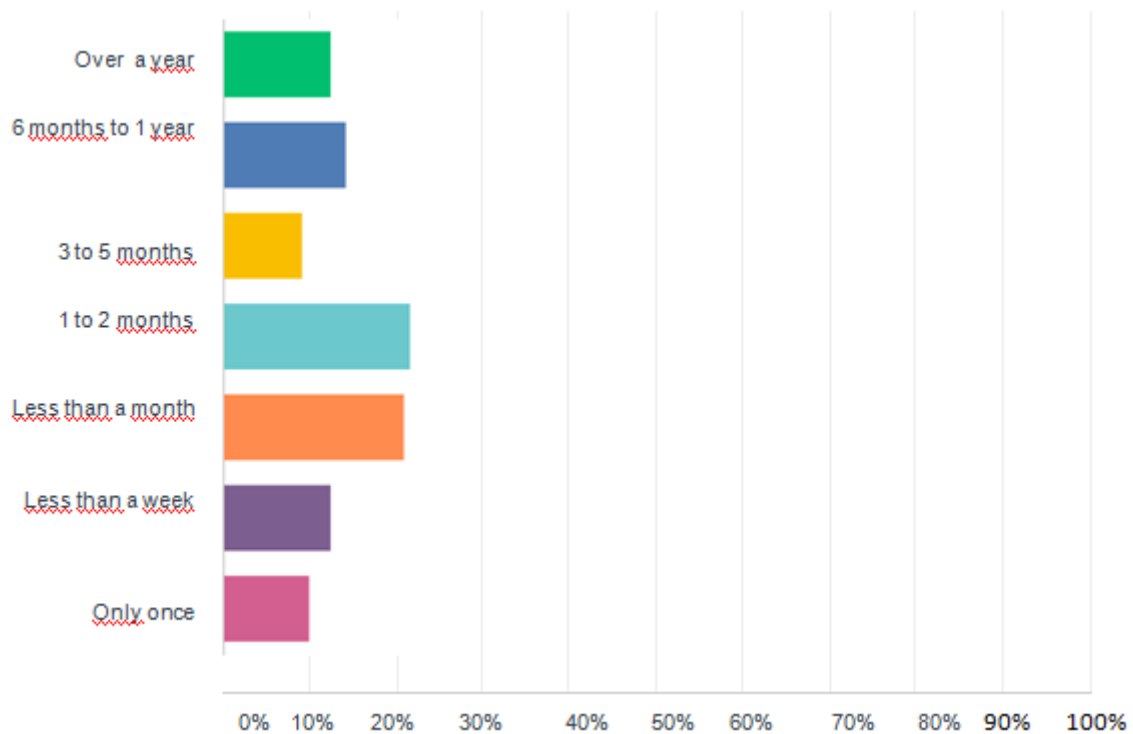
Another characteristic of TFGBV is its **frequent and repeated** nature. Women in interviews and discussion groups reported being subjected to such violence with a frequency most often ranging from anywhere from once a day to once a week. One report noted that “it (the harassment) often takes place at embarrassing times to increase pressure on the victim, i.e. late at night.”

Similarly, 34.43% of respondents to the online survey reported being subjected to TFGBV several times a day. It was rare - 7.38% - that women experienced only one incident.



TFGBV is also characterized by its **duration over time**. Only in a couple of extremely rare occasions did women in interviews or groups discussions describe single incidents of TFGBV, or experiences that lasted less than a month in total. Most predominantly, women reported instances of TFGBV persisting over a period of three to six months. In several cases, women reported violence that had lasted for over a year, or in one case, for ten years.

Findings from the online survey similarly reflected TFGBV persisting over time, with 57% of respondents indicating violence that lasted anywhere from one month to more than a year.



What is the relationship between TFGBV and offline (“real world”) violence?

The action research demonstrates how TFGBV, or “online” violence, is closely related to “offline” violence, with several different scenarios emerging from the interviews, group discussions, and online survey.

Scenario 1: Violence “offline” is committed by the same “online” aggressor

Example (a): What begins as on-line violence then escalates into off-line violence, such as when the same aggressor moves from harassment and threats on-line to stalking and physical violence against the victim in the “real world.”

He verbally assaulted me in a public place. He tried to follow me and hit me.

“One of the participants recounted the story of her minor daughter, who had been receiving phone calls repeatedly from a person pretending that he wants to marry her. After the mother took knowledge of the matter, she started answering the phone on her daughter’s behalf. Although she threatened the abuser of taking legal action against him, the abuser did not stop. On the contrary, he started stalking the girl in her way to and from school, and spreading rumours and lies as a way to smear her reputation. He also threatened the girl with retaliation if she continues to reject him.”

Example (b): An initial incident of “offline” violence such as sexual assault is recorded by video and then shared via internet, social media, messaging applications, etc.

Numerous stories shared during the fieldwork illustrate a vicious and ongoing cycle of violence back and forth between the “online” and “offline” worlds. One example raised on several occasions involved women being sexually assaulted, then the abuser threatening to publically post and distribute the video of the assault via ICTs, as a way of forcing the victim into subsequent and ongoing sexual assaults.

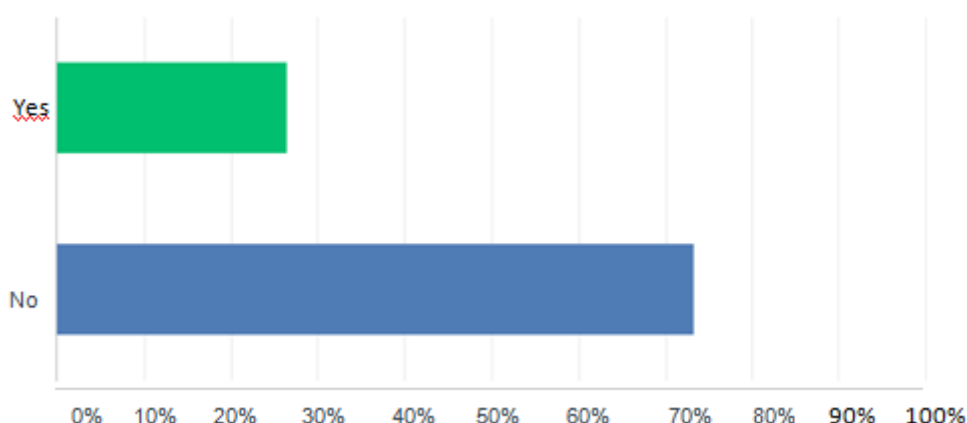
“I was raped. They posted the rape video online after they threatened to do so.”

Scenario 2: Violence “offline” is committed by other people as a result of the “online” violence

In a context where women are most frequently blamed for the violence committed against them, TFGBV that becomes public makes women vulnerable to additional “offline” abuse from family and community members. Interviews and group discussions revealed examples of women victims of TFGBV then “blamed, cursed and verbally abused in the street by neighbors,” and of psychological and physical abuse from family members.

At least one woman reported being detained at home by her family, another was thrown out of the home, and yet another’s husband broke her mobile phone and beat her.

Indeed, more than one in four of respondents to the online survey indicated that they had suffered some form of offline violence related to the online violence, including numerous incidents of stalking and physical assault by the same aggressor.



This link between online and offline violence demonstrates the need to take online violence seriously in order to prevent it from escalating and extending over into the “real” world.

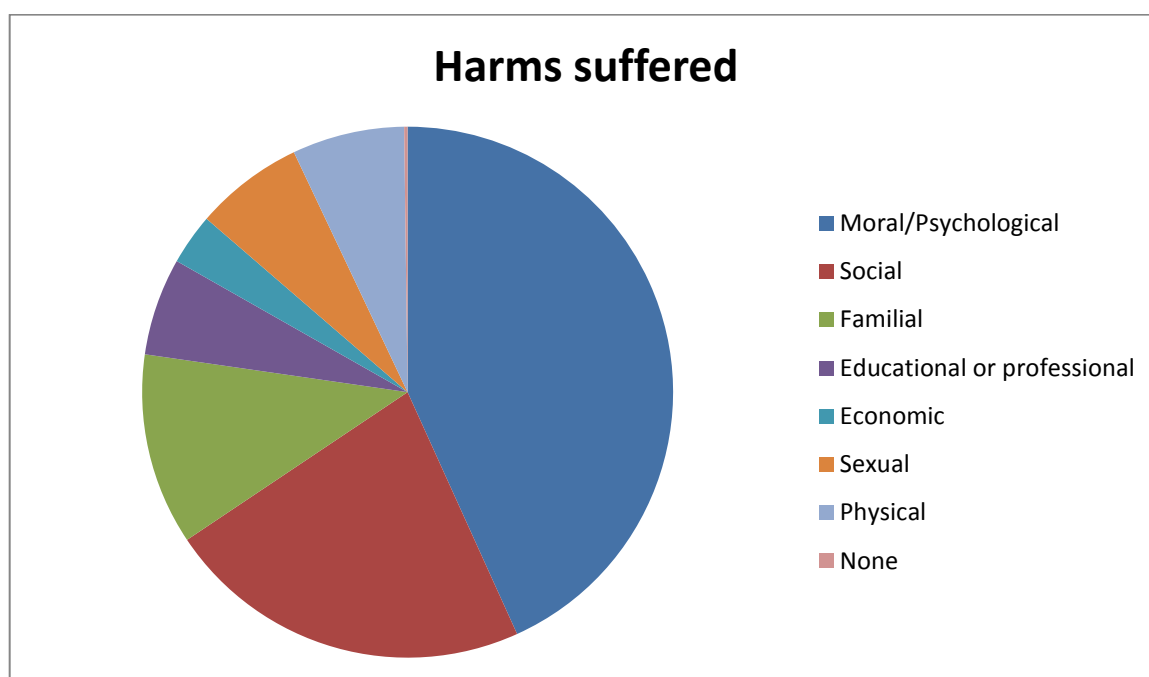
Scenario 3: The real life consequences and impact of TFGBV on victims’ lives can be characterized as **social, cultural, economic, or political violence**. These will be discussed in greater detail below.

What are the consequences and impact of TFGBV on women's lives?

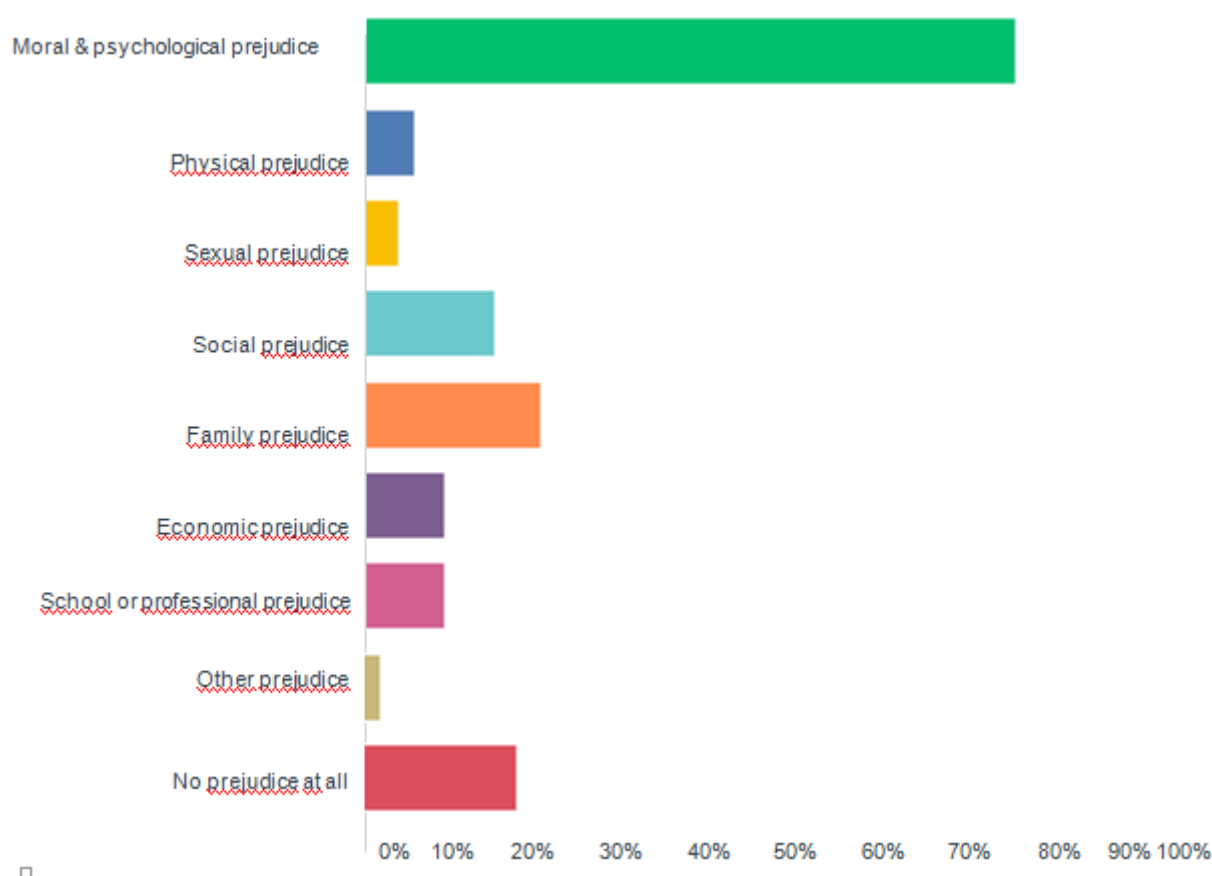
Findings from the action research demonstrate how violence in the “virtual world” causes women real harm in the “real world.”

Moral/psychological prejudices were the most commonly experienced, cited nearly unanimously by women participating in the action research. A majority of women reported experiencing multiple types of harms simultaneously, particularly social and familial. Sexual and physical harm were also cited, and in a number of instances, prejudices to women's education and employment.

Among the women participating in interviews and group discussions:



Among the respondents to the online survey:



Interviews with women revealed the extent to which victims of TFGBV suffered depression, anxiety and fear, experienced sleeplessness, quit school, quit or lost their jobs, were kicked out of their homes, moved to other towns, and in at least eight specific instances cited in the reports, attempted suicide.

"The abuser of one young woman published pictures of her and added to them other things affecting her reputation. This caused her a psychological trauma and negatively affected her relationship with her entourage and family. It also made her lose self-esteem. As a result, she attempted suicide and did not use a cell phone ever again."

"One of the students (a girl) was at school attending a sports class when someone stole her phone. He then began to send messages from her phone with sexual content, insults and other offensive words to her friends, teachers and everyone on the contact list. He also logged into her Facebook account and started posting all the pictures on the phone, both hers and those of her classmates and friends. The girl did not take any action against the abuser. She just told her friends that her phone was stolen and she was not the one who sent the messages they received. Then, the girl used her friend's phone to call the abuser who promised he would return her phone in a time and place he fixed. As he did not come the girl suffered a severe psychological trauma, and once, at school, she had a nervous breakdown and was taken to the hospital."

"Two merchants in the village where a young woman lived sent text messages with sexual content in her name to her brother's wife. The latter spread the news in the village, causing the victim serious problems with her entourage, especially her son, who stopped going to school for a long time due to what he heard about his mother from other students. She filed a complaint against the abusers, but it was closed due to the lack of evidence."

"One woman was divorced because a video of her dancing in a wedding party was leaked, knowing that her husband prevented her from dancing in ceremonies."

Now I am afraid and nervous all of the time.

I cannot sleep.

I am now suffering from a depression.

I am now restricted from using ICTs.

I do not go out and I do not answer the phone. I do not feel safe and am afraid that such online abuse will turn into real offline aggression.

I have become very fragile and cry throughout the night.

My life is ruined and I had a nervous breakdown.

I was fired from my job.

He cheated me and took all of the money I had.

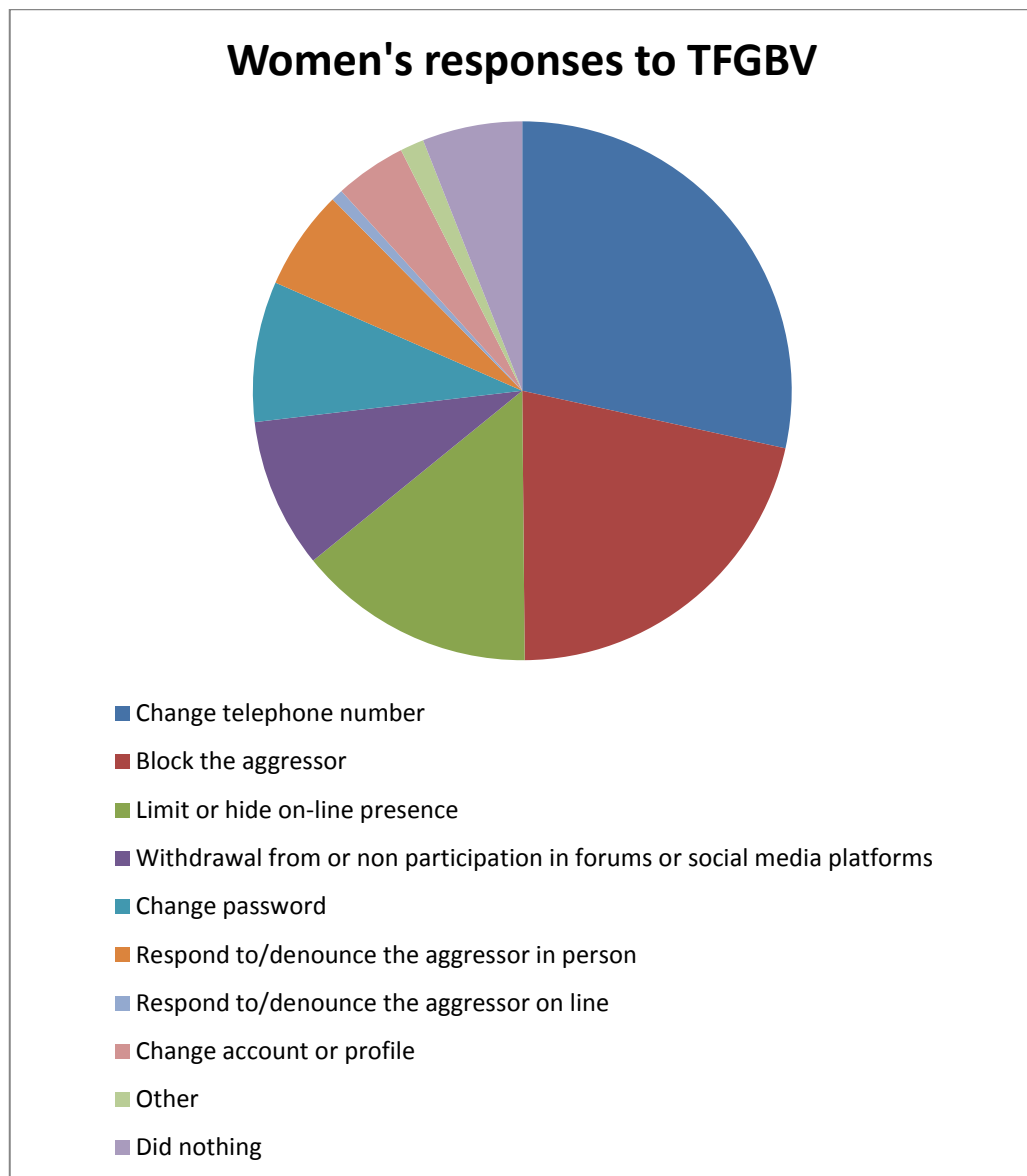
My husband and I have conflicts and arguments now about the identity of the caller.

I stopped going to work.

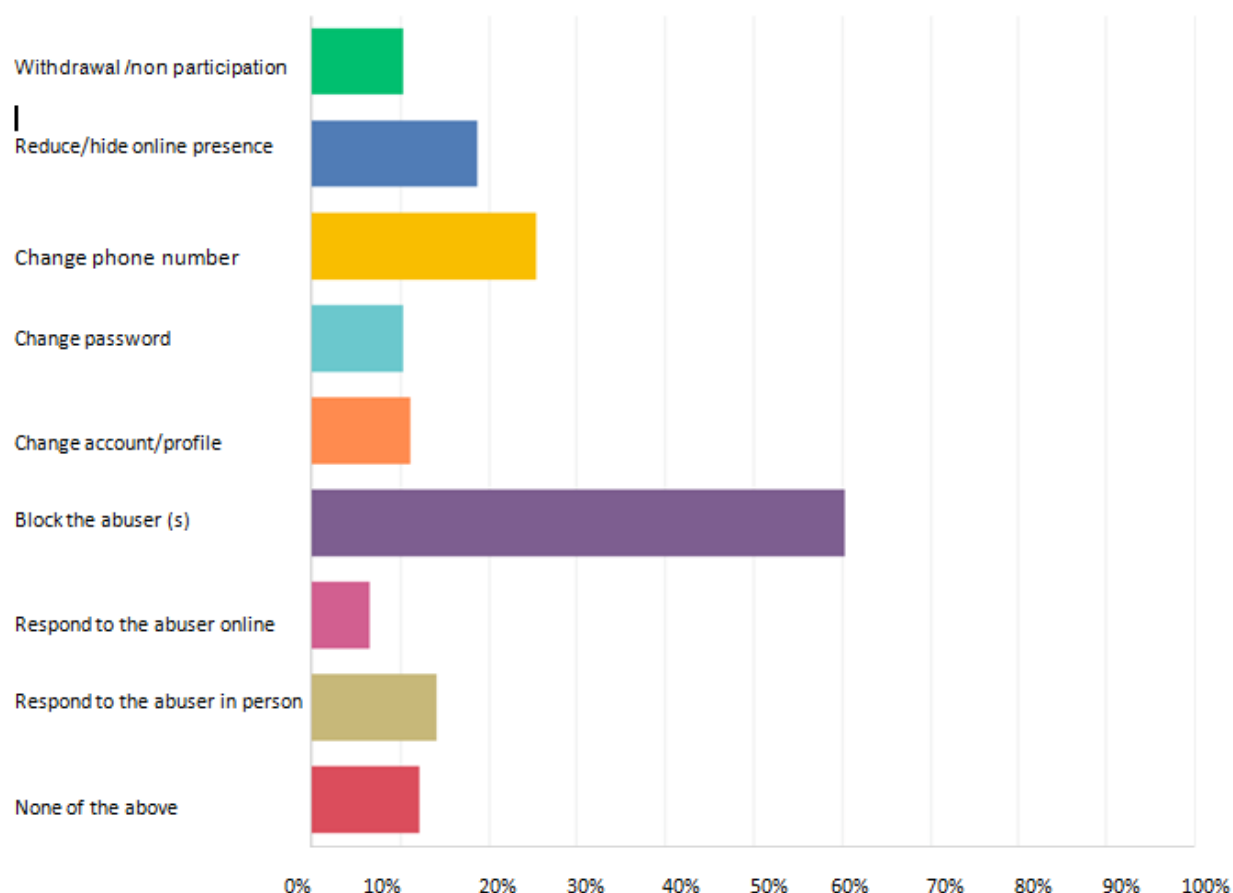
How do women respond and react to TFGBV?

The vast majority of women respond to TFGBV by making changes and sacrifices in their own lives to try to avoid or manage the violence by themselves. These primarily involve reducing or cancelling participation in online spaces, and changing certain key elements of their identity, such as phone numbers or profiles.

Among women interviewed:



Similarly, among respondents to the online survey:



Interviews and group discussions revealed several limits and concerns, both practical and in principle, with prevailing strategies that place the burden on women for avoiding or stopping the violence. As numerous respondents pointed out, blocking the aggressor was not always an effective strategy because he simply created a new social media profile or used a different phone number to persist in his abusive behavior.

Several women interviewed described how they were coerced into meeting the aggressor's demands as a survival strategy out of fear that blocking him would exacerbate the violence. In a common scenario, the aggressor threatened the victim that if she didn't meet his demands or blocked him, the situation would get even worse.

"I was in fear all of the time. They threatened to tell my family. They raped me every now and then. I went to them whenever they asked because I was afraid that if I refused they would tell my family."

"One cosmetics seller said that if she changed her phone number, it would have affected her economically. She would have lost clients, and demands would have fallen until her clients got her new phone number. 'It is really inconvenient for my clients if I change my number all the time.'"

Many women described the social and economic costs to them of attempting to respond to TFGBV. Changing phone numbers or profiles and withdrawing from social networks disrupts women's lives and can negatively impact their livelihoods. Vendors, merchants and others for example depend on their mobile phones and a consistent phone number to stay in regular touch with clients and earn a living.

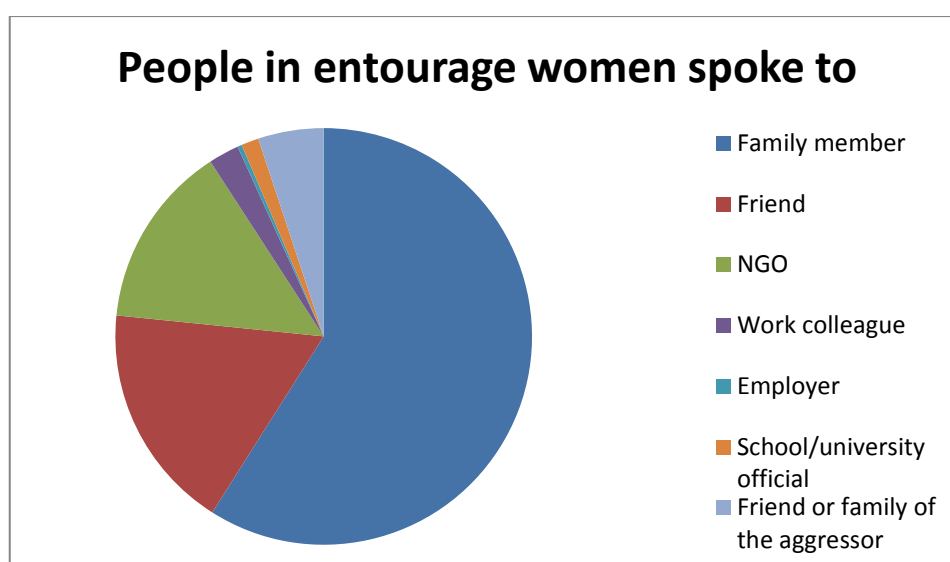
"I am obliged to deal with the annoying phone calls and insulting comments because if I changed my phone number I would have lost my clients." – A woman lawyer subjected to TFGBV.

What about the women's entourage?

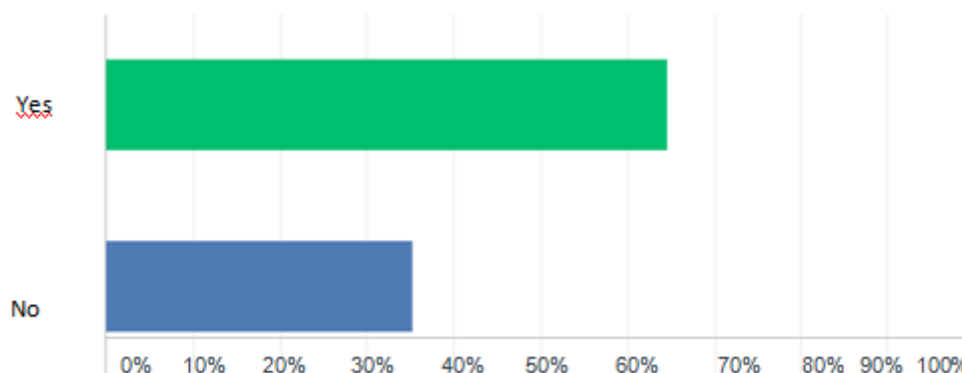
Do women reach out to and speak with anyone in their entourage about the TFGBV?

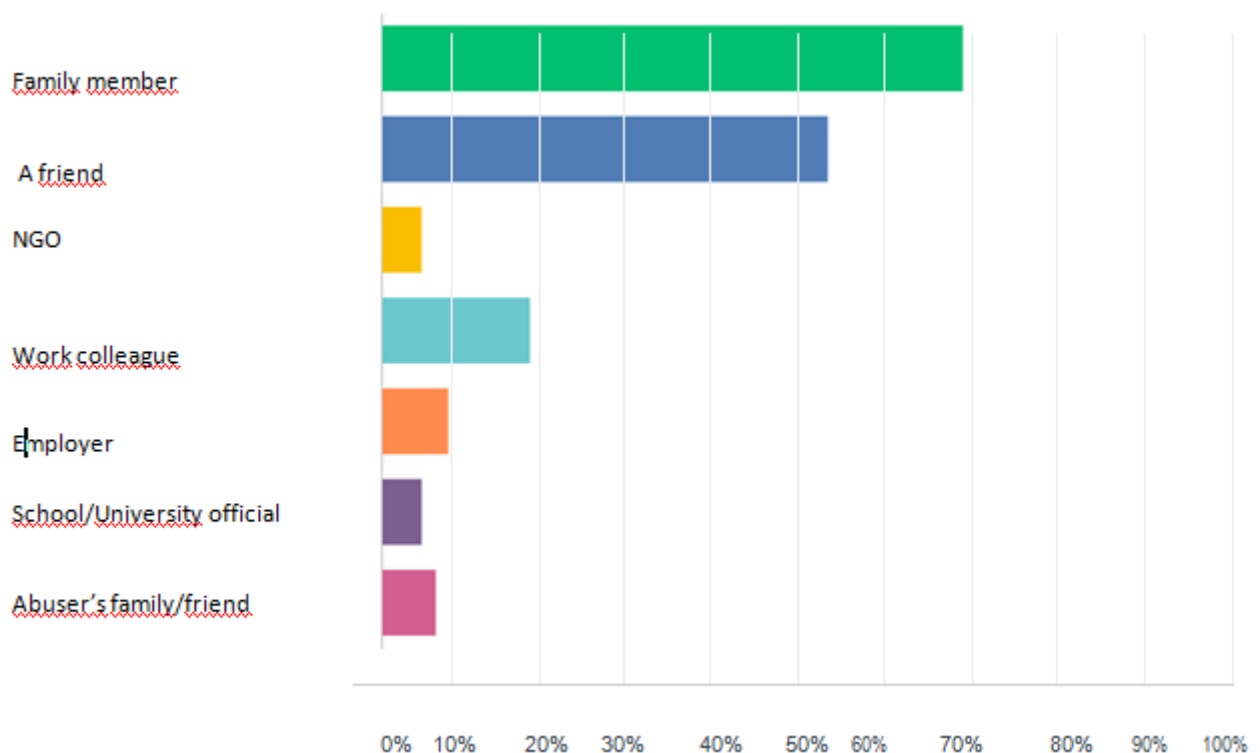
The dominant trend among women interviewed who experienced TFGBV was to **remain silent**. Overall across the research sites, only one-fourth to one-third of women depending on the region spoke to anyone about the violence.

Among the minority of women that did reach out to someone, the majority tendency was to speak to someone in their family, while some spoke to their friends. A few sought the intervention of the aggressor's family and friends.



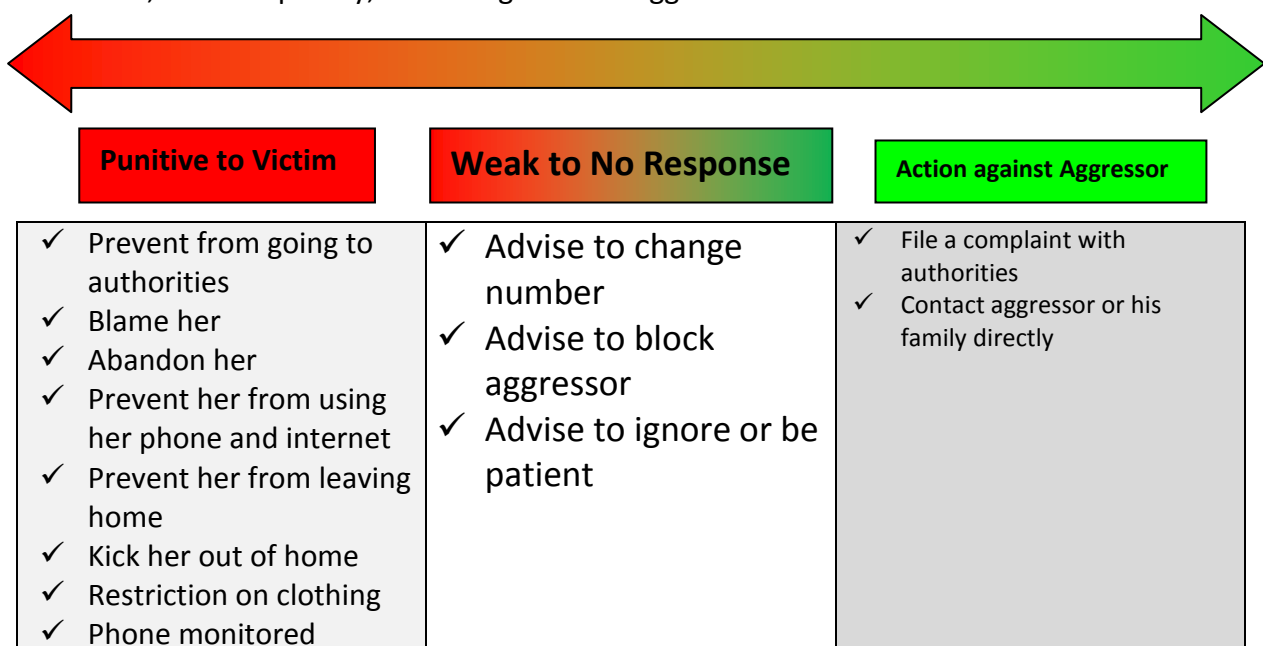
In contrast, a majority of respondents to the online survey did report reaching out to someone in their entourage, with again a preference for family members and friends.





How did the entourage respond and what were the outcomes?

For the minority of women in the interviews and discussion groups who did reach out to someone, the reactions among the entourage were quite mixed, and can be categorized along a continuum. The most prevalent trend was a weak to no response, followed by reactions punishing the victim, and then, least frequently, actions against the aggressor.



These mixed reactions illustrate the risks of revealing that one has been a victim of TFGBV, and likely explain the high rates of silence among women.

Some women said that their family members blamed them – ‘it’s you who allowed the violence, how would he know you if you didn’t give him the opportunity?’

“Most of them, especially married women, cannot do anything about it. Instead, their husbands take action against the abusers, often by blocking the perpetrator and changing the phone number or permanently forbidding their wives from using the phone or social media.”

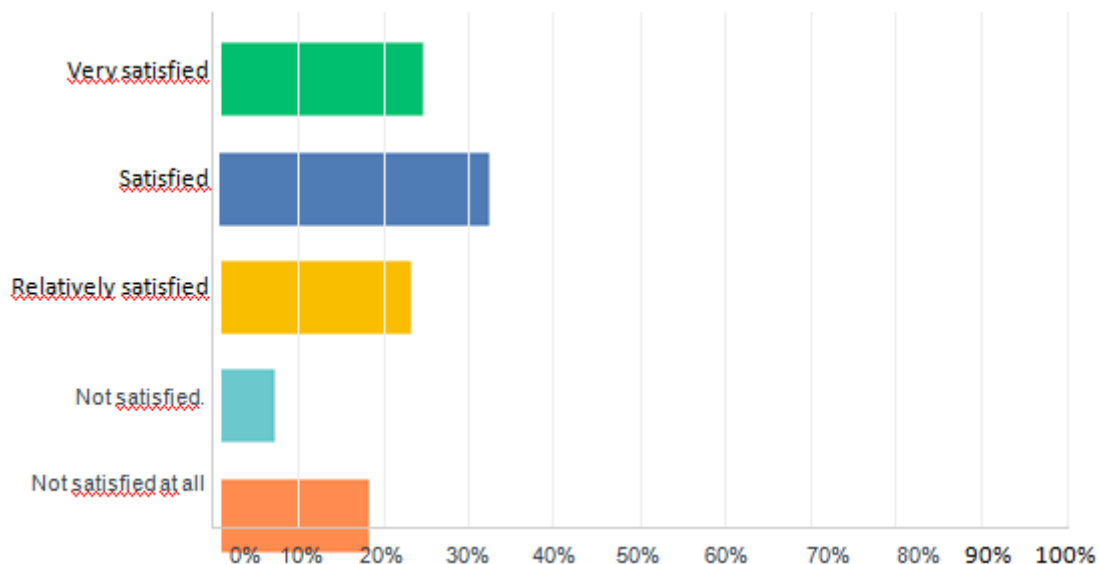
In contrast, among 60 respondents to the online survey who had reached out to someone, 32 reported supportive reactions from their entourage. These included directly confronting the aggressor or his family, and encouraging the woman to report the violence. Nonetheless, seven respondents described how their families got angry at and blamed them. The rest advised the women to stop using the internet, ignore the violence and do nothing, forget about it, or block the user.

Responses to the online survey suggest mixed outcomes, depending on the entourage’s reactions. Among 55 diverse answers, 16 indicated that thanks to the entourage’s advice or intervention, the violence stopped, eight claimed that nothing changed, and three reported more dramatic outcomes of being forced to drop out of school, move to another home, and break off an engagement. In only one instance was the aggressor arrested after the family encouraged the victim to make a complaint.

The family members are all angry and they do not talk to me anymore except my father. They expelled me from the house. My father took me to my aunt’s house. She lives in a different village.

How satisfied were women with the entourage’s reactions?

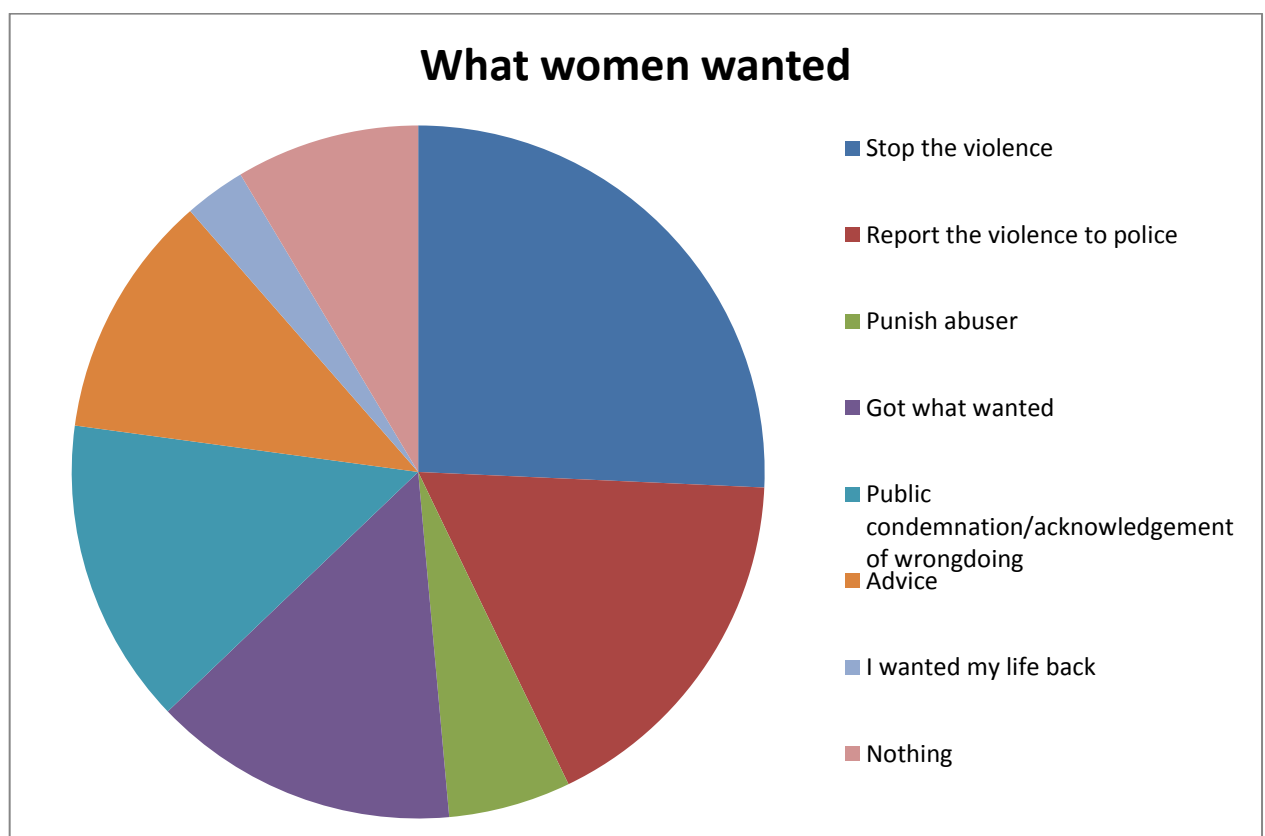
In interviews and group discussions, most women expressed dissatisfaction with the entourage’s reactions. In contrast, and consistent with the reactions described above, respondents to the online survey reported varying levels of satisfaction.



What had women hoped for as a response from their entourage?

Women interviewed who expressed dissatisfaction described what they had hoped for from their entourage. The most prevalent themes included punishment and accountability for the aggressor, reporting the violence to the police, encouragement and compassion, public acknowledgement and condemnation of the aggressor's behavior, and public support.

Similarly, among respondents to the online survey when asked what they had hoped for from their entourage:



Why don't women speak to anyone in their entourage?

As previously noted, two thirds to three-fourths of women interviewed and 35.45% of respondents to the online survey remained silent about the TFGBV they had been subjected to. The vast majority of these women consistently cited multiple fears as the reason:

- Fears of being judged, blamed herself, considered at fault for the violence;
- Fears of being deprived of her telephone or computer;
- Fear of being monitored and controlled;
- Fear of losing her freedom to dress a certain way or to go out of the home;
- Fears of being rejected by her family;
- Fears of getting into trouble with the authorities;
- Fears of the online violence escalating to offline violence.

Likewise, 61% of respondents to the online survey who had not spoken to anyone cited a host of fears as the reason.

"I was afraid of my family's reactions. I did not even tell my friends for fear that they would tell my family."

"I did not want my husband to know."

"I did not want others to think badly of me. They may think that it was me who encouraged him."

"I was afraid that I might be in trouble with my family."

"People will always blame the woman. They believe that they become responsible for the abuse as soon as they use 'suspicious' apps (referring to WhatsApp and others). If she did not use such applications the abuser would not have talked to, and as a result, abused her."

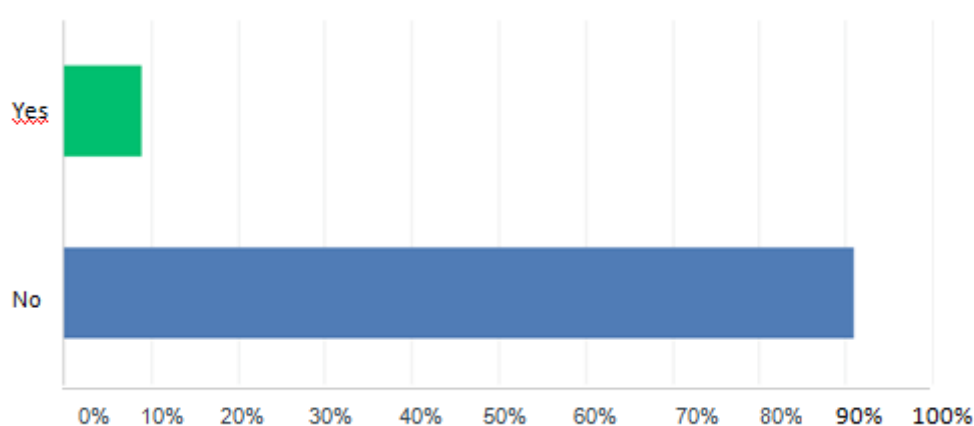
"Some women blamed women and girls for the abusers exploiting them because of their excessive use of the phone."

What about the public authorities?

Do women report TFGBV to the public authorities?

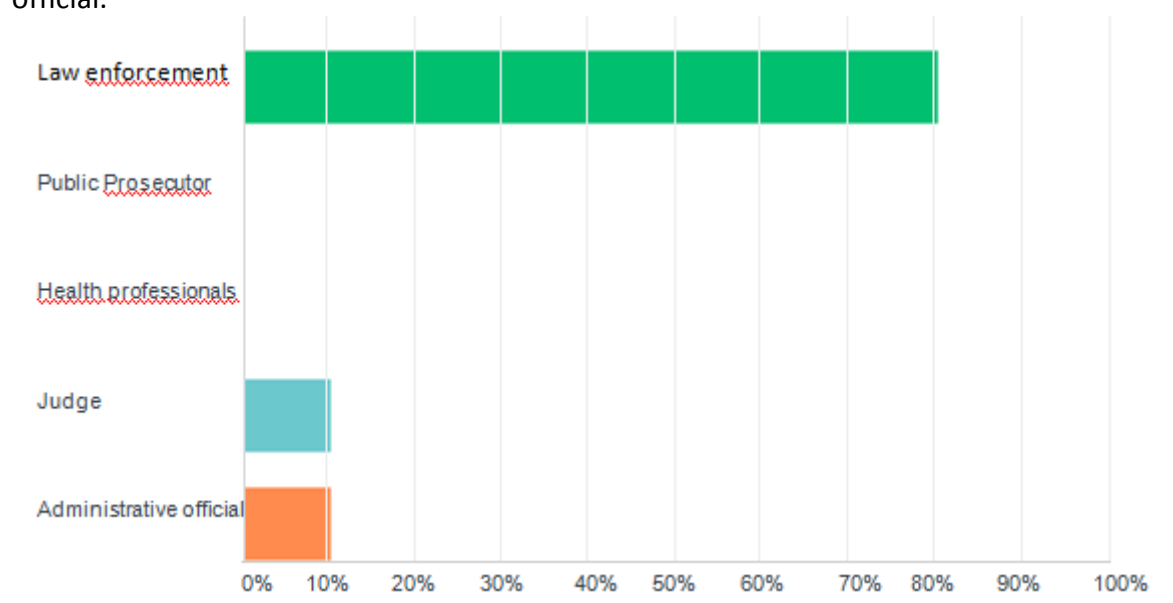
Women very rarely report TFGBV to public law enforcement, justice system, administrative, or health officials. During interviews and group discussions, only one woman out of ten had reported the violence to the public authorities.

Similarly among respondents to the online survey:



Among the 63 women that did report the TFGBV to public authorities, it was primarily to the police or gendarmes (37 instances), with a lesser number (19) of women who had reported the violence to the public prosecutor.

Likewise, among the ten respondents to the online survey who had reported the violence, eight of these instances were to law enforcement officials, one to a judge, and one to an administrative official.



How did the public authorities respond and what were the outcomes?

The interviews only revealed a handful of instances in which perpetrators of TFGBV were arrested, on average one per each of the seven research sites. These rare instances appear to be those in which the aggressor had posted pornographic photos or videos online. In contrast, findings suggest that threats, harassment and blackmail are most often “kept a secret.”

The majority of women who reported the TFGBV said that there were no results or follow-up, with public authorities taking a report but not conducting any further investigation. A good number of women described not being taken seriously, abuse and humiliation from law enforcement, or accusations that they themselves provoked and were to blame for the TFGBV. If victims cannot bring proof of the aggressor’s identity, which is the majority of cases with unknown or anonymous aggressors, law enforcement will generally not intervene or pursue a complaint.

“The police asked her questions such as ‘what were you really looking for when you accepted his friendship request?’ They reproach and blame the victim for the way she dresses up, walks, and so on...They always end the conversation with the famous expression, ‘just go home and we will contact you later.’ If the victim comes back to ask about her case, they often tell her ‘do not bother us every now and then. If there is anything we will contact you.’”

Interviews also revealed at least three cases where the victims were accused and prosecuted themselves for “indecent” or illicit sexual relations.²¹

In one instance a man who wanted to force a woman to have sex with him blackmailed her with a video of her having sexual relations with another man. When the woman reported this to the police, she and the man in the video were also arrested and eventually sentenced to 10 months imprisonment. The aggressor was sentenced to twelve months in prison.

One young woman filed a complaint against her boyfriend because he posted some indecent photos of her on Facebook. She was arrested together with the boyfriend. She dropped out of school and the case is still in front of the court.”

Responses to the online survey likewise suggest that most often the public authority response was inconsistent, unhelpful and inefficient, with no result. In four out of eight instances, reporting the violence changed nothing and the abuse continued. Frequently law enforcement placed the burden on the victims to bring proof of the aggressor’s identity and witnesses to the violence. This suggests a pattern of inadequate evidence collection in TFGBV cases.

Only two instances of the aggressor being sentenced to prison were cited by respondents to the online survey. In contrast, in one instance the victim was asked for a bribe, “if I don’t want my name to be mentioned and my father to know about the incident.” While in yet another, the victim who reported the violence was charged herself with illicit sexual relations and imprisoned for three months.

How satisfied were the women with the public authorities’ responses?

Reactions among women interviewed were mixed, depending on the outcome, with on average more than eight out of ten women expressing dissatisfaction with the public authorities’ response.

Likewise, of the eight respondents to this question in the online survey, six stated that they were “extremely dissatisfied” with the response they received from the local authorities, one was “very satisfied,” and one was “relatively satisfied.”

What had women hoped for as a response from public authorities?

The few women interviewed and respondents to the online survey who had reported the violence to the authorities described how they would have wanted:




- ✓ Support
- ✓ Acknowledgment of violence suffered
- ✓ Active investigation, arrest, prosecution and punishment
- ✓ Respect of the principle of confidentiality.

²¹ For having had sexual relations outside of marriage, as criminalized in articles 490 – 491 of the Moroccan Penal Code.

Why don't women report the TFGBV to public authorities?

The 90% majority of women in interviews and respondents to the online survey who had not reported the violence to the authorities cited several reasons, combining issues of knowledge, of feelings, and of actions.

Holistic "Head, Heart and Feet" Analysis of Why Women Do Not Report TFGBV

	<p>In terms of knowledge, several women mentioned that they did not know TFGBV was a crime and could be reported, or were not aware of the procedures to do so.</p>
	<p>In terms of feelings, many described their fears of being blamed, considered at fault, or of causing a scandal. Clearly the very real threat of being prosecuted oneself as a criminal for "indecent" or sexual relations outside of marriage, as described above, is also a deterrent to women reporting TFGBV to the authorities.</p>
	<p>In terms of actions, a good number of women expressed their pessimism about the usefulness of reporting to the authorities, saying that "it would be useless" or that "there's no point." They cited the long and complicated procedures, lack of confidence in the law enforcement and justice systems, skepticism that "anything would happen," and challenges to collecting and providing the evidence authorities demand.</p>

For example, among the 76 answers to this question in the online survey:

- 24 mentioned fear;
- 11 cited pessimism that the authorities would do anything;
- Eight stated that they didn't know who the aggressor was and had no proof;
- Two said that they didn't know the reporting procedures.

"All that would happen if I take action against such violence is they would ask me, 'why did you use this application in the first place?'"

"Because I did not know the procedures."

"I did not want the problem to grow worse."

"I was afraid that everyone would know about it."

"Because I did not know the abuser's identity."

"Because I did not think that the authorities will be able to help."

"I thought that it was not worth it. I know that even those who submit their complaint for physical abuse get nothing and their cases are classified, let alone me who has no substantial evidence of my claim."

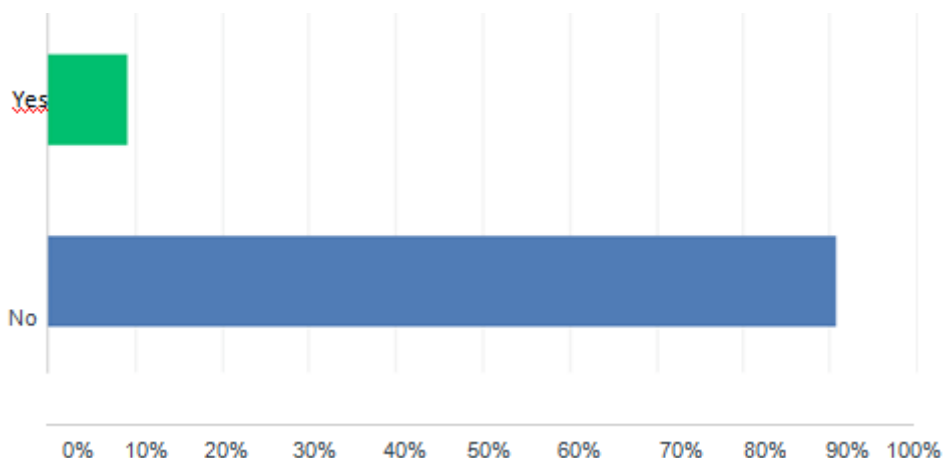
It is also interesting to note that 17 respondents expressed their view that “it wasn’t important,” suggesting the extent to which such violence has become normalized.

What about the social media platforms?

Do women report the TFGBV to the social media platforms?

It was extremely rare for women who had experienced TFGBV to seek assistance from the platforms, with only ten women total from all seven research locations combined who had actually reported the violence to the platforms. Responses to this question tended to be a bit vague, as a good number of women in a couple of sites confused blocking the aggressor with the platforms’ reporting mechanisms.

Among respondents to the online survey, 90% reported that they did not contact the relevant social media platform to flag the violence.



How did the platforms respond and what were the outcomes?

Nine out of the ten women interviewed who had sought assistance from the platforms had reported the abuse to Facebook through its specific mechanism for flagging abuse; in a few instances it deleted the abuser’s account or took down the non consensual photos/videos.

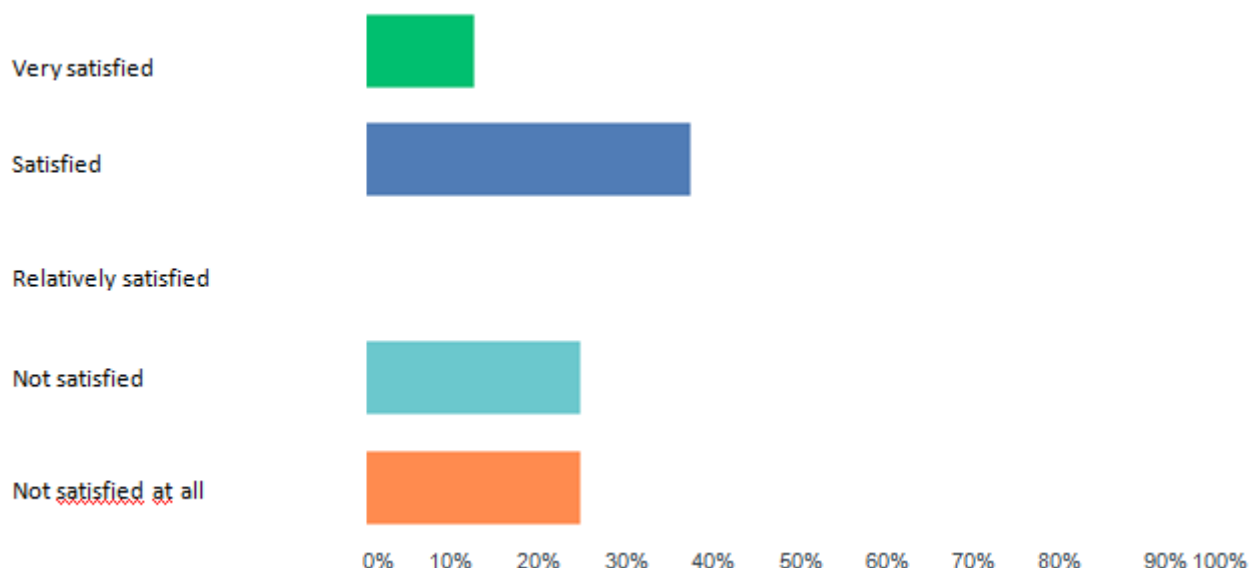
Among respondents to the online survey, in eight instances women reported the TFGBV to Facebook, once to Twitter, once to Snapchat, and once to YouTube.

Several women in the in-person interviews and in the online survey noted that even when the platform took action, the aggressors merely created another account with a new name and resumed the abuse.

How satisfied were women with the platforms' response?

A couple of women in the interviews who had reported the abuse to Facebook expressed their satisfaction with the rapid response by Facebook vis à vis the abuser's account.

The eight respondents to the online survey reported mixed levels of satisfaction with the results of their reporting the violence to the social media platform.



What had women hoped for as a response from the platforms?

Women in both interviews and the online survey wanted the platform to delete the nonconsensual or offensive content, i.e. remove the photos or videos, as well as delete the abusive user's account.

Why don't women report the violence to the platforms?

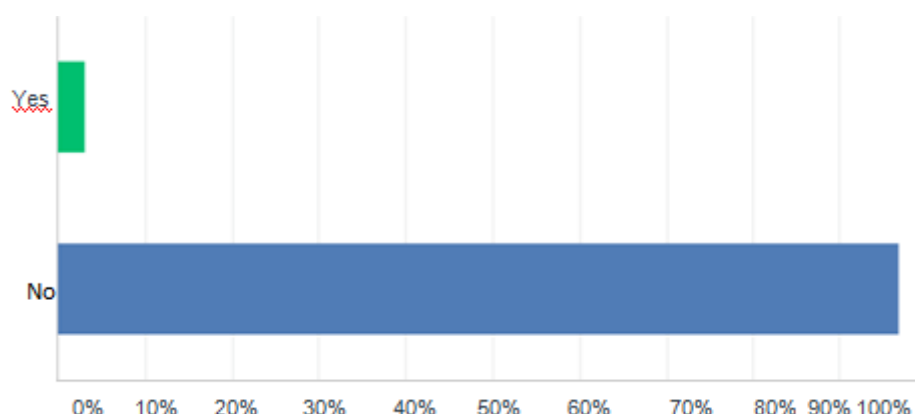
The vast majority of women interviewed said that they were not aware that the platforms had systems for making complaints and flagging abuse. Out of the 69 respondents to this question in the online survey, 13 did not report out of fear, 11 said they didn't know how to report violence to platforms, and 13 said that "it would be useless" and that "platforms are unable to help."

Here again it is interesting to note that the balance of online respondents described how "it wasn't necessary" to report the violence to platforms – either because they blocked the aggressor themselves, changed their own profiles, or because they "didn't think it was important." This provides another example of how, more often than not, women bear the responsibility for stopping the violence, while at the same time such violence is normalized.

What about the telephone companies?

Do women report TFGBV to telephone companies?

Interviews and groups discussions in the seven sites revealed only 23 instances²² where women sought assistance from the phone companies for TFGBV. Likewise, only 3% of respondents to the online survey reported the violence to the relevant local telephone company.²³



How did the telephone companies respond and what were the outcomes?

The few women interviewed or respondents to the online survey that did seek assistance from the telephone companies reported that when they asked for the name of the abuser to be able to provide it to the authorities, the company said that they could not release that information without a prosecutorial order. Companies provided no assistance or information to the women, and told them to go file a complaint with the Public Prosecutor.

These descriptions were consistent with what the telephone company representatives themselves said in interviews.²⁴

“Many women are being blackmailed for money, or sexually harassed, or repeatedly disturbed by frequent calls, or have their calls spied on, or their personal information pirated. They suffer psychological impact and come to us inquiring about the identity and whereabouts of the aggressor. However we can’t fulfill the victim’s requests because we can only give such information if asked by the Public Prosecutor.”

It is unclear if there are terms of service with the telephone subscription for which the offender could be held in violation because of the abuse. Women are thus caught in between the law enforcement authorities, who ask the victim for the abuser’s name in order to proceed with a complaint, and the telephone companies who refuse to provide it to them.

²² 17 to Maroc Telecom, three to Orange and three to Inwi.

²³ One to Orange and one to Inwi.

²⁴ Interview with two representatives of telephone companies.

How satisfied were women with the telephone company's response?

The handful of women who were interviewed unanimously expressed their dissatisfaction with the phone companies' response. Likewise, among the three respondents to the online survey who had reported the violence to phone companies, the two who answered this question were "not at all satisfied" with the result.²⁵

What had women hoped for as a response from the telephone companies?

Women interviewees and respondents to the online survey wanted a mechanism for phone companies to intervene to stop the abuse without first having to lodge a complaint with the prosecutor. Others wanted the phone companies' assistance in identifying the aggressor so that they could file a complaint with the law enforcement authorities against a specific person, rather than "against x" (an unknown person).

Why don't women report TFGBV to telephone companies?

Reasons given were similar to those for not reporting to the public authorities and social media platforms, primarily the sense that it would be useless to file a complaint, the phone company wouldn't help, and that procedures are long and complicated. Women also pointed out that the local agencies of the phone company are there primarily for commercial purposes, and do not provide other services.

²⁵ One did not answer this question.

III. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Analysis of the above findings leads to the following observations and conclusions about TFGBV in Morocco:

➤ **TFGBV is not considered “real” violence.**

The findings illustrate the extent to which TFGBV has been normalized. Despite the numerous and serious prejudices detailed earlier, there is a prevailing idea that “TFGBV doesn’t cause any real harm,” and that it is “easy” to address by changing your phone number or blocking the abuser. TFGBV is not taken seriously as a problem requiring intervention by the entourage, by the authorities, by the platforms, or by the telephone companies. Faced with this response, or lack thereof, women themselves internalize the idea that such violence and the harm they suffer are not worthy of a response.

“Some do not regard technology-facilitated violence as real violence. They claim that the victim can always change her phone number or stop using ICT if she happened to be abused.”

“The women in the focus groups did not even know that they could call TFGBV ‘violence’ or that it is now criminalized by the law.”

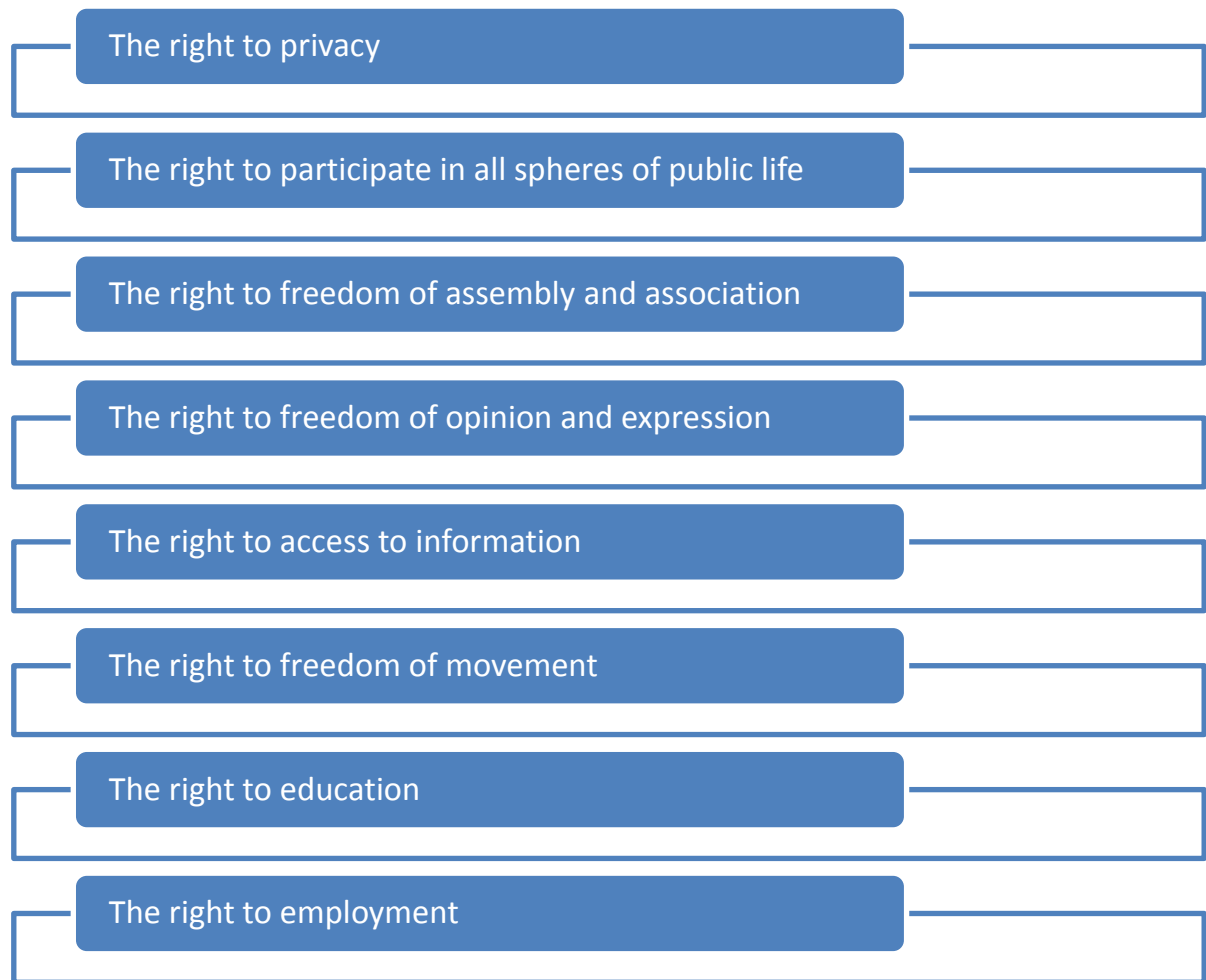
➤ **TFGBV undermines Moroccan women’s ability to fully enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms.**

Gender-based violence in and of itself is a form of discrimination and a violation of women’s human rights to **physical and mental health and integrity**. Additionally, whether by intention or as a result, TFGBV impacts a host of other rights guaranteed by national laws,²⁶ Constitutional principles, and international standards.

The above discussion of aggressors’ motives illustrates how, rather than being considered full and autonomous human beings in their own right, women are quite frequently treated as mere sources of sex and/or money.

By creating hostile and unsafe online environments, sharing images or conversations without consent, restricting women’s access to ICTs and their participation in online spaces, and causing numerous harms, TFGBV undermines a diversity of women’s human rights, including:

²⁶ As is the case, for example, when husbands use TFGBV to prevent women from exercising their rights under the 2004 Moroccan Family Code related to polygamy, divorce, child custody, or financial support.



➤ **Victims, not aggressors, are held responsible for causing TFGBV.**

Throughout the interviews, the group discussions and the online survey, participants described how women are considered at fault for the violence committed against them. Rather than focusing on the aggressor's wrongful acts and the harms the victim suffered, attention shifts to how her behavior purportedly contributed to the violence.

Regardless of whether women acquiesce as a survival strategy or try to resist and denounce the violence, aggressors themselves try to justify their actions by blaming the victim. To the aggressors' thinking, it's not their fault for committing violent acts, it's women's fault for not being able to defend themselves.

"Why did you accept my friend request on social media?"

"Why didn't you just reject or block my request?"

"Why did you respond to me in the first place?"

"Women need to be educated on how to protect themselves."

"If women refused violence in all forms at the outset, we (the abusers) would never have resorted to it."

These examples and others illustrate the problematic understanding of “consent” in the Moroccan context. Normally a person consents to an act if he or she freely and voluntarily agrees to engage in that specific act. However, here we see how initial agreement to enter into a mere conversation with someone on social media, for example, is conflated into blanket consent to engage in sexual relations, to be abused, etc. Likewise consensual sharing of private messages, photos or videos with one specific intimate partner is presumed to imply consent to the risk of widespread publication.

Families, communities, and law enforcement, justice system, and health sector personnel likewise treat women as the guilty party in TFGBV cases, which explains the silence and limited help-seeking behavior among victims.

In contrast, the male aggressors are not considered responsible for or held accountable for their abusive and harmful behaviors.

➤ **Victims, not the State, are considered responsible for finding a solution to the TFGBV.**

The action research illustrates how individual women victims themselves also bear the burden of both (a) finding ways to prevent and stop the violence, and (b) dealing with any negative consequences of it. In addition, they often do so all alone, isolated from their real world entourage and from their online networks.

In contrast, neither public law enforcement, justice system or health officials, nor the social media platforms or telephone companies profiting off of the technology being used to abuse women, consider themselves responsible for providing solutions to women or addressing TFGBV. The recently enacted Law 103-13 on the *Elimination of violence against women in Morocco* does not provide public actors with the necessary policies or procedures to apply the law. In other words, women cannot count on any legal help or protection, and thus use ICTs at their own risk.

It is interesting to note that in response to the last question in the on-line survey, “Is there anything else you would like to add?” a good number of answers offered solutions to address TFGBV, *solutions that were frequently directed at individual women and their own behavior*. In 13 out of 34 instances, respondents themselves reflect the general trend of holding women responsible for preventing or ending the violence by changing themselves, mainly by becoming more “educated” or by “speaking out.”

“The girl should stop the guy’s abuse before it gets worse.”

“Women need to defend themselves against any abuse or violence. They should not keep quiet.”

“We need to educate women on their rights and what to do in case they undergo such violence.”

In contrast, only ten solutions were directed at the State and public authorities, primarily through “a law that protects women against violence” and “severe punishments for the abuser to put an end to this violence.”

On the one hand women are already blamed for purportedly causing the violence, as well as for not stopping it. Ironically, on the other hand women are also blamed for not speaking out about and reporting the violence, and this in spite of the demonstrated ineffectiveness and substantial risks of doing so.

While it is obviously the case that the problem of violence cannot be resolved if it remains invisible, the prevalent approach reflected here of placing the burden of change on individual women merely reinforces existing dynamics that do not hold public authorities, social media platforms, or telephone companies accountable for their response.

This approach also relieves men of any responsibility for changing their own behavior and allows perpetrators to act with impunity. The lack of response reinforces the prevailing trend whereby men are entitled to exercise coercive control and violence over women and will not be held accountable by the State for their actions.

➤ ***Women have numerous, valid reasons for not reporting TFGBV that must be addressed.***

As illustrated in the findings, women rarely report TFGBV to public authorities for a host of reasons:

- ✓ They don't know that such violence is illegal
- ✓ They don't know the procedures for reporting TFGBV
- ✓ Fears of reactions from their family, community, and the public actors
- ✓ Pessimism and skepticism about effectiveness of any public actor intervention
- ✓ Justified concerns that reporting the violence could make the situation worse, or place her at risk for additional abuse or even arrest and prosecution herself.

The few women that do seek assistance from public authorities report mixed results, a majority of which are ineffective to or harmful for her.

It is interesting to note that the interviews and online survey turned up **nine instances where perpetrators were arrested, four instances where the victim herself was prosecuted for illicit sexual relations, and eight cases where women attempted suicide**. These figures were not gathered through a scientific, quantitative approach, and cannot and do not pretend to be representative. However, as anecdotal qualitative evidence, the fact that women victims of TFGBV interviewed were almost half as likely to be prosecuted themselves, and just as likely to attempt suicide, as they were to have aggressor arrested, should be cause for concern.

Public authorities must put into place appropriate structures, procedures and policies that address women's valid concerns for not speaking out. These must take a holistic approach addressing all three issues of **knowledge**, of **feelings**, and of **actions** that currently prevent an effective response to TFGBV and produce such negative outcomes for women and for society as a whole.

Unless and until the State assumes its responsibilities for its response to TFGBV, the risk to women of speaking out and reporting it will remain too high, and aggressors will continue to commit violence with impunity.

أرسلني لي صورك عارية
والا سأخضرك إلى المدرسة
واختطفك وأغتصبك

I want you to have sex
with me in exchange of
me helping you enrolling
in the university.

If you do not give me the money I asked for, I
will post your photos on the Internet.

إما أن تذهبي معي لقضاء أسبوع
بأكادير أو سوف أقوم بتلفيق قفص
لك وأرسلك للسجن وأدمر
حياتك تعرفين أنني شرطي
ويمكنني ذلك.

إما أن تعطيني القدر المالي
الذي طلبت منك أو أن
أقوم بنشر صورك عبر
الإنترنت

If you do not send me pictures
showing your body naked, I
will kidnap you near your
school and rape you.

أريدك أن تستمري
معي في العلاقة والا
سأفعل في حومتكم

If you do not come
back to me I will
ruin your life.



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