

– A Review of Research Literature and Policy Frameworks on Technology-Facilitated Abuse and Support



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Digital dimensions of intimate partner violence

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Introduction

The National Centre for Knowledge of Men's Violence Against Women (NCK), based at Uppsala University, Sweden has been commissioned by the Swedish Government to conduct research and raise national awareness of men's violence against women, including intimate partner violence, honour-based violence and oppression, as well as violence in same-sex relationships. The National Centre for Knowledge om Men's Violence Against Women also provides support to victims of violence through national helplines and operates a specialist clinic in Uppsala for women who have experienced violence.

In 2024, the Swedish Gender Equality Authority was commissioned to map the state of knowledge on the digital dimensions of men's violence against women, intimate partner violence, honor-related violence and oppression, as well as prostitution and human trafficking (A2024/00815). On behalf of the Gender Equality Agency, NCK has conducted an overview focusing on the digital dimensions of intimate partner violence. The report "Digitala dimensioner av våld i vuxnas nära relationer" was published in 2025.

This is an English translation of the summary, discussion and conclusions from the report in Swedish. The full report in Swedish can be found here: uu.se/nck/om-oss/ncks-publikationer

The conclusions and analysis presented in the report are those of the National Centre for Knowledge of Men's Violence Against Women.

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Summary

Digitalisation has fundamentally changed everyday life and, with it, the expression of violence. Violence and abuse in digital environments should not be seen as a new form of violence, but rather an extension of established patterns of control and abuse. Technology enables perpetrators to extend their reach, increase monitoring and create a sense of constant presence. This reinforces the consequences of violence and abuse, as well as restricts the autonomy of the victim-survivor.

The purpose of the report is to increase knowledge about the role of technology from two perspectives: firstly, how it affects violence in intimate relationships and, secondly, how it is used for help seeking among adults who have been subjected to violence and abuse. The report has two complementary components: an overview of international frameworks and strategies,

and a synthesis of existing review literature (25 published review articles). The first component draws on current policy documents from the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe, and the European Union (EU), as well as examples of national initiatives. The second component examines review articles published in the last ten years that focus on intimate partner violence, where digital technologies are implicated either in the perpetration of abuse or in help-seeking and support processes. Together, these complimentary components provide a broader understanding of how information and communication technology is used – both as a tool for violence, and as a resource for support.

International frameworks, such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention), and the EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence, make it clear that individuals' same rights apply both online and offline, and that measures to address technology-facilitated abuse should be prioritized. There is a lack of global consensus on conceptualizations and definitions of technology-facilitated abuse, which makes it difficult to measure prevalence and develop policy. International efforts are underway to develop this, but empirical data is still limited, especially from low- and middle-income countries.

Technology-facilitated abuse in adult intimate relationships manifests itself in various ways, including digital control, surveillance, and sharing of intimate images without consent (or threatening to do so). This abuse often co-occurs with violence that occurs in the physical world, which is amplified by the dimensions of technology. Technology-facilitated abuse is characterized by a feeling of constant presence (“omnipresence”) where the perpetrator can exert control regardless of time and place. The violence can also be perceived as constant and persistent because digital content can be disseminated quickly and persist for a long time. The existing literature has largely focused on technology as a means of control and violence, but the same tools can also be used by victim-survivors to resist and regain their autonomy. Digital tools can serve as support, for example, through security planning applications and online forums where victim-survivors can find it easier to talk about their experiences. A recurring theme highlighted in several studies is the need for practical knowledge (such as digital skills, safety awareness and the ability to use tools securely), as digital tools only serve as support if they are designed in an accessible way that allows individuals to use them safely. These efforts can increase access to help and support for victim-survivors. At the same time, it is important that the responsibility for addressing technology-facilitated abuse is not placed on the individual, but rather is seen as a shared social responsibility.

Studies on technology-facilitated abuse show conflicting results regarding gender differences in prevalence, i.e., whether women or men are most frequently affected. This can partly be explained by methodological variations and a lack of consensus on terminology. However, this does not mean that violence and abuse can be understood as gender-neutral. Evidence consistently shows that when factors such as the relationship with the perpetrator, frequency, severity, and consequences are taken into account, clear gendered patterns emerge: women are more likely to be subjected to more frequent and severe violence, with greater negative consequences. These mechanisms are also relevant to technology-facilitated abuse, highlighting the necessity of developing research methods that reflect the specific context of violence, rather than focusing simply on its occurrence.

Technology is double-edged – it can both reinforce violence and create opportunities for resistance. Completely or partially limiting one's digital presence does not necessarily lead to increased safety for the victim-survivor. On the contrary, it can reinforce isolation. There are also risks in viewing technology-facilitated abuse as a separate phenomenon compared to other forms of violence, as this can lead to narrow solutions and further restrictions on the scope of actions available to victim-survivors. The digital arena functions as an extension of the already existing dynamics of violence, abuse and control, not as an isolated or new phenomenon. Safety cannot be defined solely as the absence of contact with the perpetrator, but also as access to social support. Meeting these challenges requires an approach that integrates knowledge about technology and violence into existing frameworks of support.

The report's conclusions highlight how the digital arena has become an increasingly important venue for intimate partner violence, which poses new demands on knowledge development, collaboration between actors, and strategic work. The report shows that a lack of shared conceptualizations and definitions hinders understanding and action, both in policy and research.

There is some evidence to suggest that people may be more likely to report violence and abuse when questions are asked in a digital setting. This highlights the importance of creating opportunities for detection, support, and protection in digital environments. At the same time, digital forums have a dual nature: they can open up new opportunities for support and assistance, but they can also pose risks related to surveillance and lack of control over digital conversations. Access to digital support is also unevenly distributed, with groups such as older people, LGBTQ+ individuals, and migrants facing particular barriers. Similar to the literature on technology-facilitated abuse, existing work on support is dominated by occidental perspectives, and solutions tailored to specific groups are often lacking. The few studies that have included minority groups show that context-specific digital interventions can be effective, which underscores the need for inclusive methods. At the same time, the lack of data on different groups limits the ability to draw general conclusions.

In addition, the possibilities for addressing and combating technology-facilitated abuse are limited by legal and social structures, where the tension between protection against violence and the maintenance of freedom of speech can create difficult dilemmas. This emphasises the importance of establishing cooperation and interaction between technological development, legal frameworks and other social practices. A holistic perspective is required, where technology-facilitated abuse is integrated into existing strategies against violence, without restricting individuals' use of technology. National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women (NCK) can contribute to knowledge, support and expertise in this area, in close dialogue with other actors and in accordance with technological developments.

Discussion

The purpose of the report was to deepen understanding and increase knowledge about the role of technology in intimate partner violence both as a tool for exerting control, surveillance, and threats, as well as a resource in help-seeking processes. By analysing international policy documents and research reviews, the report provides an understanding of how technology-facilitated abuse looks in adult intimate relationships, how those who seek help use technology, and other strategies developed to acknowledge and respond to violence and abuse.

This discussion is informed by both components of the report: an overview of international policy frameworks and a review of existing review articles, with the aim of demonstrating how the two parts complement each other to provide a common understanding of technology-facilitated abuse and support through technology. This section highlights key challenges, opportunities and knowledge gaps in the field of research and contains reflections and conclusions based on the collected material. The aim is to broaden our understanding and knowledge in this field; however, the ambition is not merely to summarise the current status of knowledge. It is also our intention to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of technology-facilitated abuse and support through technology, as well as to address the dynamic relationship between practice and research.

In addition to the perspectives and initiatives discussed in the report, there are also ongoing efforts in Sweden, to provide digital forms of support and to raise awareness of technology-facilitated violence. There are central Swedish support initiatives based on technology, particularly within civil society, which go beyond the scope and focus of the report. For example, many women's and girls' shelters have long provided various forms of digital support and initiatives, such as chat functions or other web-based resources. These forms of support are well-established in the Swedish context and are a central part of the practical work to reduce intimate partner violence and provide opportunities to victim-survivors.

In addition, there are specific aspects in the Swedish context linked to technology-facilitated abuse that do not fall within the scope of the report. These include, for example, the widespread use of electronic identification (such as BankID) in Sweden, which entails risks linked to economic abuse, for instance. Another important aspect is how security measures – such as protected identity – can impose practical limitations on access to digital services. Although protected identity is not inherently an obstacle to obtaining e-identification, many people find it difficult in practice, as a visit to the bank may pose a potential risk of information being disclosed (Government Offices of Sweden, 2024a; Swedish Gender Equality Agency, 2023).

Future research and policy development should build on these issues and further deepen the knowledge that already exists in this area.

A global phenomenon, but limited research and knowledge

A lack of a common understanding of terms and conceptualizations

Since the area of research is still relatively new, there is no consensus concerning terminology and definitions of technology-facilitated abuse, as different terms are used to describe similar or identical phenomena within the field (Kim & Ferrarresso, 2023). The same problem also exists within the global framework where different terms are adopted and used in different institutions. This is something noticed in the statement by the United Nations Secretary-General (UN, 2024a) where it emphasises the importance of developing global, consensus-based definitions and frameworks that can be adapted in line with technological developments. The use of different terms is also evident in reports from the United Nations, the European Union, the Council of Europe and other regional bodies. The lack of clear definitions and conceptualizations makes it difficult for researchers, decision-makers and practitioners to develop and implement effective interventions and preventive measures. Therefore, there is a significant need to use a shared language and consistent conceptualizations for future work.

The importance of agreeing on and using a shared language can also extend beyond the effectiveness of policy, legislation and practice. Common conceptualizations and a consistent understanding of the phenomenon can be helpful and crucial in comparing results across studies and countries, enabling decision-makers to identify evidence-based measures for specific geographical contexts and facilitating the development of clearer guidelines for, among other things, how support should be designed, assessed and implemented. The lack of a common frame of reference may instead risk fragmenting research and leading to inconsistent application and implementation of legislation and policy, which in turn may result in interventions and measures becoming ineffective or difficult to evaluate.

At the same time, it is important to emphasise that conceptualizations can never be static. Conceptualization development is necessary to create a common understanding and a shared language, but conceptualizations and terminology must also remain dynamic and capable of change in line with developments in society and knowledge. As our understanding of a phenomenon deepens, the analytical tools and conceptualizations used also require adjustment. This does not mean that they lose their precision, but rather that they remain relevant.

The difficulty of measuring and understanding the phenomenon

Developing reliable measurement tools for technology-facilitated abuse is a key prerequisite for designing measures that effectively address the problem. However, the work of measuring technology-facilitated abuse is characterised by several challenges. Rapid technological developments are constantly changing the conditions for both perpetrators and victim-survivors. At the same time, social and cultural contexts vary between countries, and the boundaries between online and offline are fluid. Different expressions of technology-facilitated abuse also differ in how well they can be identified and measured. Some actions, such as threats to share or the actual sharing of intimate images, are more concrete and can therefore be assumed to be easier to capture and measure in research. At the same time, evidence shows that it can sometimes be difficult to capture such actions, depending on how the questions are formulated (Walker & Sleath, 2017). Other forms that can be described as more subtle and diffuse in nature can be difficult for the victim-survivor to describe, which also makes it difficult for researchers to define and measure. This difference can also affect which issues become visible and what receives attention in research and policy work.

When it comes to age groups in research, there has been a clear tendency to view technology-facilitated abuse as an issue affecting primarily young people. This assumption appears to have created an imbalance in knowledge, as it is still difficult to find research that systematically highlights adults' experiences of technology-facilitated abuse. The studies included in the report show ambiguous results related to age and exposure to technology-facilitated abuse, with some studies showing that the prevalence is higher among children and young people, while others show that the prevalence is higher among adults (see, for example, Ray & Henry, 2025 cf. Walker & Sleath, 2017), which may be due to different ways of measuring technology-facilitated abuse. Even in international work in this area, many of the existing projects and programs have had a clear focus on young people, despite the fact that the prevalence among adults is most likely high. A further reflection on this is that the first studies on young people's experiences of technology-facilitated abuse were conducted more than fifteen years ago. Those who were then considered young people are now adults, which raises the question of how the research field needs to re-evaluate its assumptions about, among other things, age and digital competence.

The review of the research literature also highlights varied, and at times conflicting, perspectives on how gender affects exposure to technology-facilitated abuse. Some studies indicate that men can be exposed to the same extent as women, specifically in cases of sextortion (threats to share intimate images or videos unless the victim, for example, pays money or provides additional intimate content) (Rogers et al., 2022; Walker & Sleath, 2017). Other studies show that women are more frequently exposed (Marcum & Higgins, 2020; Eaton & McGlynn, 2020; Afrouz, 2023). Further, some studies show that men are more commonly exposed (Rogers et al., 2022; Walker & Sleath, 2017). One possible explanation for the variations in prevalence and gender is methodological differences between studies and a lack of consensus on the terminology (Kim & Ferrareso, 2023). One way to understand these seemingly contradictory findings is to view gender symmetry and gender asymmetry as two perspectives that illuminate different dimensions of the same phenomenon. Prevalence studies can capture a breadth of vulnerability, while quantitative measures of frequency, severity and consequences, as well as analyses of qualitative data, reveal how power and gender structures shape the expression and impact of violence. This means that similarities in reported exposure do not exclude the possibility that violence affects women and men in different ways, with different consequences (Powell & Flynn, 2023; Powell et al., 2022).

The same mechanisms that exist for violence and abuse in the physical arena also exist in the digital arena. In order to capture gender differences, it is not only the prevalence that is relevant, but also the severity of the violence, its frequency, previous experiences and the consequences of the violence (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Hester, 2013; Johnson, 2008; Walby & Towers, 2018). We argue that it is reasonable to apply these considerations to technology-facilitated abuse as well, emphasising they are crucial both for understanding the phenomenon and for designing interventions that are effective and tailored to the different needs and experiences of all victim-survivors of violence.

Lack of representation despite global efforts

Technology-facilitated abuse recurs in several international human rights frameworks and, like the internet itself, should be considered a global phenomenon. As digitalisation increases, so does the risk of technology being used to commit acts of violence. Variations in forms of expression, prevalence and the technical tools used are clearly evident in the compilations made by UN organisations such as UN Women (2025) and UNFPA (2025).

A large part of the empirical knowledge about technology-facilitated abuse originates from high- and middle-income countries, primarily in Europe, North America and Australia (UNFPA, 2022). This is also evident in the literature analysed in the report. Only a few studies cover regions other than Europe, Oceania (Australia) and North America, which means that important experiences and groups remain unseen. This is also noted in several articles as a key limitation. The field of research is still developing and most studies are based on small samples, although there are some larger quantitative studies, mainly from Australia and the United Kingdom (Afrouz, 2023). Therefore, there is a need for data that better reflects experiences from different parts of the world and from groups with varying access to and use of technology and digital resources. The lack of such studies risks leading to a distorted or otherwise inaccurate portrayal of the phenomenon and its scope, as experiences from certain contexts or groups may be underrepresented or missing entirely. For policymakers and professionals, the lack of representative data can result in initiatives or measures being ineffective or misdirected, as they cannot take into account differences in needs or resources. Collecting and analysing more

comprehensive and varied data enables an understanding of both patterns and context-specific variations, which in turn can contribute to the development of more accurate, effective and fairly designed interventions and measures.

Another prominent finding from the reviewed literature is the limited knowledge about certain groups, such as LGBTQI+ individuals, older adults and migrants (see, for example, Gilbar et al., 2023; Henry & Powell, 2018; Emezue et al., 2022; Leyton Zamora et al., 2023), groups that are often absent in the extant literature and whose experiences are thus rendered invisible in both research and policy development. The underrepresentation of these groups is not unique to research on technology-facilitated abuse, but it has clear consequences. For example, this is particularly problematic because the few studies that specifically focus on LGBTQI+ individuals show a higher degree of exposure to technology-facilitated abuse, and research focusing on women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds report particularly severe and long-lasting consequences. Without targeted knowledge about these groups, such important aspects risk being overlooked. At the same time, extensive work is being done within international organisations to broaden knowledge and understanding. The ongoing work led by the UN Human Rights Committee and its advisory board in preparation for a forthcoming report in 2026 (UN, 2024c) is one example that shows that the issue of technology-facilitated abuse is now being given greater priority. Such initiatives also reflect an ambition to develop efforts at the national level across all continents.

Old violence, same rights, new consequences

Same rights despite renewed arena for violence and abuse

Available evidence suggests that technology-facilitated abuse is strongly related to violence and abuse that occurs in the physical environment (Gilbar et al., 2022). Those who are subjected to digital surveillance often also have experience of being subjected to other forms of offline abuse. There is therefore criticism of viewing violence and abuse that occur online as something different from violence and abuse that occur offline or in “real life” (Gosse, 2021; Gilbar et al., 2022; Henry et al., 2019).

International reports in recent years have emphasised that the same rights should apply online as offline, which is reiterated in documents from the UN, the Council of Europe and the EU. When the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women was adopted in 1993, the internet was still in its infancy, and few could have foreseen the profound impact that information and communication technology (ICT) would have on people's lives. Against this background, UN Recommendation No. 35 appears particularly significant. It clarifies the responsibility of states to protect women against violence in both physical and digital environments, including by means of appropriate legislation, support mechanisms and protective measures. GREVIO's General Recommendation No. 1 confirms that technology-facilitated abuse is an extension of existing forms of violence and abuse, and that it is crucial not to trivialise the significance of abuse that occurs in digital contexts.

There is some evidence to suggest that technology introduces new dimensions that require special attention and handling (Henry & Powell, 2018). What happens in digital environments often has long-term consequences. For example, material can remain online for a long time, be easy to find and thus be perceived as constantly present, permanent and unavoidable (Henry et al., 2019; Afrouz, 2023). This creates a feeling of constant uncertainty, even after the relationship

has ended or when the former partner is no longer physically present. Evidence also highlights how technology can be a tool for limiting individuals' space for action when it blurs the boundaries between the public and private spheres, as technology makes it possible to monitor and control in ways that were previously not possible (Markwick et al., 2019).

The consequences of technology-facilitated abuse can have significant implications for individuals' mental and physical health, both in short and long term. Although the report does not analyse effects in detail, it can be assumed that the societal costs are extensive, not only through the need for urgent support measures, but also through long-term consequences if technology-facilitated abuse is not identified and prevented in a systematic way. The report written by the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls highlighted several concerning emerging trends in technology-facilitated abuse (Dubravka Šimonović, 2018). One observation is that violence in digital environments can cause women to withdraw from digital platforms, a withdrawal that risks reinforcing inequalities in access to information, influence and participation in society. Another observation is the economic consequences that can arise for the victim-survivor, for example when intimate images are disseminated and directly affect, or create uncertainty about, the possibility of finding employment. These aspects illustrate how technology-facilitated abuse is not isolated to violations in the digital sphere, rather it has tangible social and economic consequences for the victim-survivor.

Risk of a narrow view and overlooking the big picture

There are risks in viewing technology-facilitated abuse as a new or separate phenomenon, distinct from established forms of abuse in intimate relationships, such as physical, sexual, psychological or economic abuse. Intimate partner violence cannot be understood as a separate sphere; violence is often interlinked, with technology-facilitated abuse and violence in the physical arena interacting and reinforcing each other. A separation can instead create uncertainty for the victim-survivor, both in terms of identifying themselves as a victim of violence and knowing where to turn for support and protection. In addition, there is a risk that both professionals and victim-survivors lack knowledge about technology-facilitated abuse or about the tools available for help and support, which can make it difficult for the victim-survivor to get adequate support. There is also a risk that technology will be perceived as the problem, rather than the violence and abuse being perpetrated. An approach like this can shift the responsibility from the perpetrator to the victim-survivor, for example through recommendations that individuals should limit or completely avoid the use of ICT, through measures such as not participating in online forums or using social media.

The framework for the Swedish work within digitalisation policy aims to make the internet accessible to everyone and strengthen accessibility, competence and opportunities in all parts of society. The report does not aim to review all aspects of Swedish policy in this area, but the documents that have been reviewed do not take into account what happens when the digital world becomes a space for violence, abuse and control. One issue that should be raised is how the Swedish government could include knowledge about technology-facilitated abuse so that it is included as an integral part of digitalisation policy. There is a risk that measures to combat technology-facilitated abuse will be limited to reducing access to the internet, which is not desirable for individuals in a society where digital participation is widespread (Internetstiftelsen, 2023).

Technology-facilitated abuse violates the fundamental human right to a life free from violence. This is repeatedly emphasised in international reports, with the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls (Dubravka Šimonović, 2018) stating the following:

Online violence against women not only violates a woman's right to live free from violence and to participate online but also undermines democratic exercise and good governance, and as such creates a democratic deficit.

The intersection between technology and human rights is also discussed in the literature. Examples of this include Henry and Beard (2024), who in their scoping review highlight studies showing how legislative restrictions and the tension between protecting individuals from violence and upholding freedom of speech make it difficult for the justice system to deal with technology-facilitated abuse. Kouzani (2023) points out that technological innovations have great potential to save lives, but at the same time raise questions about privacy. This includes how much surveillance is ethically justifiable in a context where the home is traditionally considered a private sphere. The question arises as to what measures are compatible with a democratic society's principles regarding the individual's right to privacy. This clearly illustrates the problem and the tension that arises between protecting individuals and holding perpetrators accountable, while at the same time not restricting individuals' freedoms and rights. There is therefore a great need for measures that both prevent violence and ensure individuals' rights. For victim-survivors, this means that their protection cannot be based solely on restrictions, while the legal system faces the challenge of determining when actions or communication constitute punishable threats, violence or harassment, and when they fall within the scope of freedom of speech. In practice, this means that careful assessments are required to balance protecting individuals from violence with protecting rights and freedom of expression.

Technology as a resource for initiating support

The importance of self-help is significant – society has a responsibility to provide support

Several articles describe how victim-survivors develop new strategies to protect themselves from technology-facilitated abuse, for example, to manage their digital presence (Grimani et al., 2022) or to hold perpetrators accountable by publishing their names online (Gueta et al., 2023). There are also several reports on strategies for protecting oneself online (UNFPA Argentina, 2024) and a growing feminist movement that emphasises digital security as central to avoiding exposure to violence. Evidence also points to shortcomings in the support provided to victim-survivors of technology-facilitated abuse, including a lack of initiatives that support women in their long-term recovery and in the process of moving on after separation (Rempel et al., 2018). There is a risk that interventions are designed to focus on individual behavioural change rather than structural change (Rempel et al., 2018). Companies that develop security products or security strategies often target these at those exposed to violence and abuse, which implicitly places the responsibility for changing the situation on the victim-survivor (Cardoso et al., 2019). The existence of a market for these solutions also indicates that government efforts to ensure safety and security have not provided the protection that international frameworks require states to provide to their residents (UN, 2024a).

One way for society to address issues of technology-facilitated abuse is through digital interventions. Actively asking about abuse in digital encounters, rather than physical ones, has proven successful in getting people to talk about their experiences (Hussain et al., 2015; Tomsett et al., 2025), but the results can be described as contradictory, as some studies report that certain groups are less likely to report exposure to violence in digital encounters than in physical encounters (El Morr & Layal, 2020). Digital support initiatives can also combine several different types of support, which is beneficial as it makes it easier to tailor initiatives to the individual's specific situation and needs (Sabuncu et al., 2024). This is particularly relevant for people who need coordinated support from several authorities or agencies.

Evidence suggests that solutions and interventions need to be context-specific and take into account the intended target group (Leyton Zamora et al., 2023; Emezue et al., 2022). UNFPA and Australia's eSafety Commissioner (2024) highlight principles that should be followed when developing technology-based support tools to ensure relevance and ethical design. However, it is important to emphasise that digital interventions should be seen as complementary rather than a replacement for traditional forms of support, and that collaboration between different actors is crucial to promoting the safety and well-being of victim-survivors (Emezue et al., 2022). In addition, a key limitation that has been highlighted, specifically with digital screening, is that perpetrators may monitor or control the digital assets of victim-survivors, which may render certain computer-based methods impossible (Tomsett et al., 2025). It can be difficult for healthcare providers to determine whether victim-survivors are alone and can speak freely during remote meetings, or if the victim-survivor is being monitored by the perpetrator, creating a potential risk of asking routine questions about violence. It is therefore important to consider such risks that may arise when traditional support measures are digitalised. At the same time, the opportunity to reach people who would not otherwise seek support can be significant, which means that the benefits and risks need to be weighed against each other in each individual case. However, the benefits of increased accessibility must be weighed against the risk that the individual's safety may be compromised, and in such an assessment, safety should be given priority. If it is not possible to ensure the individual's safety, questions about violence and abuse should preferably be asked in face-to-face meetings or in a controlled digital environment. One example of this is when the individual is asked questions via a computer or tablet at a clinic, and the answers can then be reviewed by healthcare providers.

The need for knowledge about technology and violence to intersect

The findings from the reviewed literature and policy documents show that the issue of technology-facilitated abuse is being addressed and taken seriously in the public discourse. However, in practice, it has been difficult to address the issue effectively. Solutions are often limited by a lack of resources or insufficient knowledge. In many countries, the issue has only recently been given political priority, which means that support for people exposed to technology-facilitated abuse is still at an early stage of development.

Available evidence indicates that police in several countries, such as Australia and the United Kingdom, often lack the resources, training and legal understanding to deal with technology-facilitated abuse, while legislation is fragmented and inconsistently applied (Henry et al., 2019; Eaton & McGlynn, 2020). The various initiatives presented in the report indicate that states still have gaps regarding their response. The report has not reviewed or mapped the situation in Sweden, but GREVIO's latest evaluation of Sweden identified several areas that need to be strengthened. Several of these are consistent with what is written in other international

documents, such as the importance of training for professionals who encounter victim-survivors to include knowledge about the digital dimensions of violence (Council of Europe, GREVIO, Art. 55–56; UN, 2024a) and the need for specialised support functions for victim-survivors that include aspects of technology-facilitated abuse (Council of Europe, GREVIO, Art. 88 d; UN, 2024a). GREVIO emphasises the importance of strengthening the competence and knowledge of society's support mechanisms for victim-survivors of violence and abuse so that they also include the digital dimensions of violence.

Conclusions

Development of knowledge

- The digital arena appears to be a growing arena for intimate partner violence, both in an international and Swedish context, while knowledge about adults' experiences remains fragmented. Technology-facilitated abuse highlights the tension between the right to live free from violence and the rights to freedom of expression and privacy in the digital sphere. In order to deepen the knowledge about technology-facilitated abuse and the support that can be offered, more comprehensive work is needed, including a review of reports on cyber security, access to digital aids in healthcare, and the balance between protection against abuse and the preservation of freedom of speech.
- The material reviewed in the report shows that there is a lack of consensus concerning how to define and conceptualize technology-facilitated abuse, which hinders understanding of the violence and abuse that occurs in the digital arena. This also creates problems in terms of measuring the prevalence of the phenomenon, understanding the nature of the problem, and implementing effective measures.
- Several important initiatives are underway within the UN, the EU and the Council of Europe, and research is also developing rapidly. National initiatives will be more effective and relevant if they are developed in close cooperation with international actors and build on evidence-based knowledge.

Need for knowledge

- The current literature is centred on data from Europe, Australia and North America, which means that knowledge is limited from a global perspective. Furthermore, there is limited knowledge about specific groups' exposure to technology-facilitated abuse and its consequences. In particular, there is a lack of knowledge about exposure to technology-facilitated abuse among LGBTQI+ individuals, older people and migrants. There is also limited knowledge about differences between men and women's exposure to technology-facilitated abuse. There is a clear need for prevalence studies to ensure evidence-based and effective development of legislation and measures.
- International organisations, authorities and researchers may find it difficult to keep up with the rapid technological developments, and there is a risk that the research field will be dominated by studies of the most visible phenomena. Furthermore, the field of research is still relatively young. Policy discussions often focus on conceptualisations of phenomena that have existed since the early years of the internet, more than 30 years ago. There is a risk that

developments in AI may follow a similar pattern. Further research is needed to understand the interaction between AI and intimate partner violence.

- Efforts to combat technology-facilitated abuse should be seen as an extension of efforts to combat men's violence against women and intimate partner violence, even though technology creates new aspects that require specific handling and special measures. Future development of policy in this domain should be done from a holistic perspective, integrating knowledge about technology-facilitated abuse into existing strategies and policies, but also ensuring that individuals' use of technology is not restricted.

Technology as a resource

- Many studies highlight that people are more likely to report violence and abuse when questions are asked in a digital format, for example through computer-based screening. At the same time, some studies show the opposite results, and the methods involve risks, such as the perpetrator being able to monitor the victim-survivor's digital activity or the individual not being able to respond safely. Digital tools should therefore be used as a complement to traditional methods and designed with a particular focus on security, privacy and the victim-survivor's space for action.
- Victim-survivors create their own strategies for protection in the digital sphere. For example, there are opportunities for safety planning, for sharing one's experiences on one's own terms, and for tools to remove intimate images that have been shared without consent. At the same time, effective work against technology-facilitated abuse requires social responsibility, where individuals do not solely bear the burden of protecting themselves. Collaboration between different actors, such as tech companies, authorities, and civil society, is key. It is not the responsibility of the individual to protect themselves against violence and abuse, and the same rights that apply "in real life" also apply in the digital arena.

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