
Centre for International
Governance Innovation

Supporting a Safer Internet Paper No. 4

Online Gender-Based Violence in Brazil

New Data Insights

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About the Project

Supporting a Safer Internet: Global Survey of Gender-Based Violence Online is a two-year research project, in partnership with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Ipsos. This project explores the prevalence of online gender-based violence (OGBV) experienced by women and LGBTQ+ individuals in the Global South. From cyberstalking, impersonation and the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, to deliberate personal attacks on communications channels, OGBV is silencing the voices of women and LGBTQ+ individuals, causing digital exclusion and propagating systemic inequalities. To address these emerging challenges, the survey and papers produced under this research initiative will help to develop policy recommendations and navigate shared governance issues that are integral to designing responses to OGBV — whether that be through the regulation of online social media platforms, educational programming or legal recourse.

About the Author

Mariana Valente is an assistant professor at the University of St. Gallen Law School (Switzerland) and a director and board member of InternetLab, Brazil. She is a Brazilian lawyer and researcher on human rights and technologies. For the past 10 years, Mariana has been researching, writing, teaching and speaking publicly about gender inequalities in the digital environment, particularly online gender-based violence (OGBV) and related policies, legal strategies and law enforcement.

She is a co-author of *The Body Is the Code: Legal Strategies for Fighting Revenge Porn in Brazil* (in Portuguese), which influenced local policy change regarding non-consensual intimate images. Recently, she has been dedicating herself to the issue of online misogyny and gender-based political violence by coordinating the InternetLab branch of an International Development Research Centre-funded project in partnership with IT for Change (India). She discussed some of the results recently in the paper “No Place for Women: Gaps and Challenges in Promoting Equality on Social Media” (a chapter in the book *Constitutionalizing Social Media*, Bloomsbury, 2022) and is currently finishing a book about the last decade in policy change on OGBV in Brazil. In 2022, she was part of the Brazilian Senate legal experts commission for drafting an artificial intelligence bill for Brazil.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CETIC	Centro Regional de Estudos para o Desenvolvimento da Sociedade da Informação
CIGI	Centre for International Governance Innovation
IBGE	Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
LEMEP	Laboratório de Estudos de Mídia e Esfera Pública
LGBTQ+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning and other sexualities
NCII	non-consensual intimate images
OGBV	online gender-based violence
TFV	technology-facilitated violence
TFGBV	technology-facilitated gender-based violence

Executive Summary

This paper focuses on the Brazilian results from the Supporting a Safer Internet survey, undertaken by the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and carried out by Ipsos, to understand the prevalence of online gender-based violence (OGBV) in 18 countries worldwide, with a special focus on the Global South. It also draws from other studies and literature referring to gender, sexuality and race to complement, contextualize and interpret the country-based data.

The survey asked 1,000 respondents, both male and female, in each country about first-person experiences of online harms and how they responded, as well as about perceptions of harms experienced by people they know. It also separates results referring to individuals who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning and other sexualities (LGBTQ+).

Worldwide, a few trends stand out: it is not so much in the prevalence of harms in general that gender and sexuality is a central differentiation, but in specific harms that the literature already identifies as very gendered (for instance, sexual harms), and particularly in the effects felt by individuals following an incident. Harms are generally more frequently and more severely experienced by LGBTQ+ individuals. Such differences are clearly heightened in Brazil, a country where violence against LGBTQ+ individuals reaches alarming levels and is documented by other studies.

The results for Brazilian respondents, particularly women and LGBTQ+ individuals in general (that is, including female, male and others), stand out in two other areas: heightened effects on mental health, and low trust in or resort to law enforcement and other institutions. The paper also discusses the higher prevalence of harms experienced by public figures (connected to the very pressing issue of political violence in Brazil) and image-based abuse.

Introduction

In Brazil, online violence against women and Black and Indigenous persons is pervasive to the point of being normalized (Barbosa and Santiago 2021).¹ In academia and civil society, there has been a growing understanding that while all women can be subject to gendered forms of technology-facilitated violence (TFV), women who also belong to social groups that are culturally, economically and socially subalternized — in particular LGBTQ+, Black and Indigenous women — face specific manifestations of such violence, and that vocal and highly visible women are targeted in certain ways, which produce specific silencing results. Within the United Nations, both the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression have recently reached similar conclusions regarding the global picture (United Nations General Assembly 2021; United Nations Human Rights Council 2018).²

Part of the pervasiveness of this kind of violence is linked to processes of growing visibility and diversification in women's organizing.³ However, when it comes to Brazil — a country that inherited a violent culture and extreme gender and racial disparities from colonial times (when sexual violence against enslaved African women was a colonizer power tool; see Gonzalez 2020) — it would be a mistake to reflect foreign analyses⁴ and establish a simple causality between the growth of networked feminisms and violent responses in social media. Explorations of the realities and connections behind the violence statistics require careful interpretation and juxtaposition against history, social structure and institutional responses.

This paper analyzes the data on Brazil gathered by the Supporting a Safer Internet survey undertaken by CIGI and the IDRC and carried out by Ipsos.

The survey looked at people's experiences online and the incidence of online harms and their intersections with gender in 18 countries across four continents, with a specific focus on countries in the Global South. Online harms are a form of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) — gender-based violence assisted by technologies or forms of abuse that would not exist if not for technologies (Dunn 2020, 3).

The survey was carried out between June 25 and September 2, 2021 and is representative of the general population aged 16–74 years old in all countries (18–74 in Canada and the United States), applying quotas and weighting by age, gender and region to ensure a representative sample. The appendix offers more details about the survey methodology. Since there is evidence worldwide that transgender, non-binary and gender-nonconforming people, as well as gay men and men falling outside the norms of masculinity, are harmed by TFV in similar or parallel patterns as cisgender women and girls (ibid.), the research also focuses on the experiences of LGBTQ+ people. However, sample sizes for LGBTQ+ per country are small and must be interpreted cautiously.

Two issues should be highlighted. First, in conceptual terms, the way the categories are grouped means that the categories of women, men and LGBTQ+ overlap. Women are all those who answered that they identify as women, be they cis or trans, and also lesbian or any sexual orientation other than straight. The same is true for men (with their parallels). In the analysis of the results, the distinctions and overlaps will be brought forward when considered particularly important. Second, in the data collection, demographic information about race and ethnicity was not gathered for Brazilian respondents, which leaves a central variable out of consideration. Nevertheless, as referred to later in this paper, the evidence in research about online violence in Brazil shows either a higher prevalence or a qualitative difference in how Black and Indigenous populations experience online violence. The analysis in this paper tries to collate the survey results with additional studies to point to this difference where the data is lacking.

The data is extensive and allows for multiple approaches. This paper will address what the author considers to provide the most interesting new insights into widely recognized problems in Brazil: gendered aspects of TFV and their relation with unequal and violent structures and

1 When referring to colour/race, this paper will use the most common English translation of the official categories used by the Brazilian national census, which differ from the system of classification in other places. Further, such categories will be explained and some of the controversies involving them will be discussed.

2 This is also why the issues of gendered political violence and gendered disinformation have been gathering momentum.

3 As discussed in greater detail later in the paper, the conservative movement organized around the concept of "gender ideology" in the 2010s, in response to the gender equality agenda (Biroli 2021).

4 See Ging (2019) and Nagle (2017).

practices; characteristics and effects of violence against women and LGBTQ+ individuals of high political visibility; and sexual violence.

Background: Gender, Race, Sexuality and Violence in Brazil

Lola Aronovich, born in Argentina in 1967 and a naturalized Brazilian, is a journalist and university professor who has kept a prominent feminist blog since 1998. In Brazil, the so-called blogosphere was vibrant and innovative for years between the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, in particular in feminist themes. Aronovich has resisted the transition to social media and continues to write on her blog — appropriately called *Write Lola Write*.⁵

Since 2011, organized misogynist groups have attacked Aronovich on- and offline. She has decided not to hide, and in addition to having fought to bring them to justice — a law for investigating misogyny introduced in 2018 is known as “Lei Lola”⁶ — she writes openly on her blog about the aggressions, the aggressors (Aronovich 2015) and what she has had to do to live with the attacks. They have never truly ceased, even though one of the leaders of the attacks against her was arrested in 2018, years after briefly being detained in 2009 for racism in online spaces (Baptista 2020). Behind her good humour and cheerful spirit is a life of paying lawyers, travelling for hearings, receiving seasonal threatening phone calls (she reports receiving a call before every Christmas, telling her it is her last), receiving threatening e-mails and never knowing exactly which threats are worrisome.⁷

Aronovich’s most frequent aggressors organized in “chans,” anonymous online forums used

for several kinds of conversation, but also as a meeting point for misogynists and a site for organizing collective online attacks (Instituto Avon and Decode 2021). There is evidence that her abusers were also the ones who targeted Débora Diniz, a feminist academic who fights for reproductive rights; Jean Wyllys, a former congressman who is openly gay; and Anderson França, a journalist, writer and activist on issues such as racism, inequality and police violence. The three of them went into exile after receiving online and physical threats (Phillips 2019).

The Argentinian anthropologist Rita Segato describes the symbolic economy of gender-based violence as not just an act toward a subject but also an enunciation: it has an expressive dimension that has to do with the relationship between the aggressor and their peers. The vertical dimension of violence dynamics is that of difference, and hierarchical power — expressed through gender, racial and sexual hierarchies. The horizontal dimension is that of an alliance, mutual recognition and competition — a signal to peers of belonging; the equilibrium of those axes is always unstable and is reinforced by violence (Natansohn and Morales 2022, 118; Segato 2003, 253). Similarly, British social anthropologist Henrietta Moore (1994) sees interpersonal violence, in particular concerning “the relationship between violence and particular forms of difference — gender, race, class,” not as a breach of social order but as a signal of maintenance of (unstable and evolving) fantasies of power and identity involving gender, race and class, therefore an effective form of social control. Gender-based violence is thus intimately related to gender hierarchies.

Although there has been a growing recognition of a continuum between offline and online acts of violence (United Nations Human Rights Council 2018), TFGBV presents specific challenges due to features of the digital environment: facilitated and fast reproduction, anonymity or pseudonymity, potential permanence of effects over time, and the possibility of reaching wide audiences or allowing crowd action such as coordinated attacks (Dunn 2020; Natansohn and Morales 2022; United Nations Human Rights Council 2018). danah boyd’s concept of context collapse, referring to how contexts that would be separated in offline lives, such as work, family, school or sports circles, can be collapsed in online interactions (boyd 2010), also helps us to understand some of

5 *Escreva Lola Escreva*, a reference to the 1998 German movie *Run Lola Run*, directed by Tom Tykwer. See <https://escrevalolaescreva.blogspot.com/>.

6 Law no. 13.642 of 3 April, 2018 [Lei Loi], online: <www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2018/lei/L13642.htm>.

7 Interview given to the author in 2021, in the context of an IDRC-funded project about online hate speech against women, conducted by InternetLab, a law and technology research centre based in São Paulo, Brazil, where the author is a board member and associate director.



Photo: Angela Macario/Shutterstock

the specific consequences of TFGBV: acts whose visibility would be limited to a particular space may reach other spheres of people’s lives.

The Local Gender Equality Debate

In the past decade, feminist, LGBTQ+ and anti-racist struggles have simultaneously gained momentum and faced fierce opposition in Brazil. Referring to the mediatized term “Feminist Spring” to explain the genesis of the 2015 street and online feminist mobilization throughout the country, Jonas Medeiros and Fabiola Fanti (2019) argue that since 2011, the national public debate on feminism had been consolidating in new organizational networks and new forms of collective action, marked by intensive participation of young women.⁸ Social media is widely recognized as an area where new forms

of organizing and narratives around feminism, LGBTQ+ rights and anti-racism have developed in Brazil in recent years (see Barbosa and Santiago 2021; Medeiros 2016; Valente and Neris 2019).⁹

On the one hand, these new feminist movements built on the previous political advances of institutionalized, state-oriented feminist struggles;¹⁰ on the other, they clashed with them through their new, more informal forms of association and performative, cultural-artistic practices (Medeiros

8 In 2011, the first “SlutWalk” march was organized in Toronto, Canada, after sexist comments by a police officer in a lecture were shared. Similar marches were organized around the world after information spread on the internet. In Brazil, SlutWalks were organized in more than 30 cities (Medeiros and Fanti 2019, 227).

9 Jonas Medeiros (2016) describes how the internet was central in the organization of peripheral feminist groups in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, allowing them to overcome geographical limits. Bia Barbosa and Larissa Santiago (2021) refer to several groups of women that have developed online strategies of action and resistance in the country lately: Mídia Índia Oficial, Vedetas.org, Wambra Medio Digital Comunitario, Rede Transfeminista de Cuidados Digitais, Blogueiras Negras, LatFem, Genderhacker, Coletivo Periféricas, InfoPreta, Meninas Digitais, PretaLab, Universidade Livre Feminista, AqualtuneLab, Ogunhê and Oguntec.

10 Building also on communication strategies that have a long history before blogging and social media; in the 1970s, during the Brazilian military dictatorship (1965–1984) that censored, tortured and killed dissidents, feminists circulated alternative periodicals such as *Brasil Mulher* (1975–1979), *Nós Mulheres* (1976–1978) and *Mulherio* (1981–1987) (Teles 2017).

and Fanti 2019). But more significantly, they clashed with the conservative wave that, although part of a longer development (Nobre 2022; Nunes 2022; Rocha 2021; Rocha, Solano and Medeiros 2021), had a landmark first in 2013, the so-called June Protests, and a second key moment in 2018, with the election of rightist former military officer Jair Bolsonaro as president. For political scientist Flavia Biroli (2021), the concept of “gender ideology” was central in organizing the conservative, especially conservative-religious, stakeholders, against the gender equality agenda in the 2010s.¹¹

The current situation is paradoxical: the feminist (as well as LGBTQ+ and anti-racist) agenda and slogans disseminate quickly; however, discursive and effective opposition also spreads (Medeiros and Fanti 2019). With gender-based violence considered as an effort to maintain status and power (Moore 1994), such a paradox expresses itself on social media: as a site for heightened TFGBV and, at the same time, a place to discuss, report and develop strategies to combat such violence. Aronovich’s story, which has been developing since 2011, started when this process was beginning to unfold, and therefore speaks to a longer tradition of violence and misogyny; all the other cases mentioned so far took place during this period of heightened social and political conflict in the last decade.

Local Inequalities: A Few Numbers

According to recent statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE] 2021b), women make up 51.1 percent of the population; 43 percent of the Brazilian population declares itself to be white, and 56.1 percent declares itself to be Black (*preto*, 9.1 percent, and *pardo*, 47 percent; see explanation of categories below). Brazil has a high degree of social and economic inequality,¹² and that difference expresses itself in terms of gender and race. This section will briefly address some available data to help interpret the survey results.

The National Census (developed by the IBGE) uses the “colour/race” categories *branco* (white), *pardo* (brown), *preto* (Black), *amarelo* (of Asian ancestry) and *indígena* (Indigenous) (Loveman,

Muniz and Bailey 2012).¹³ The last two groups and “not declared” amounted to 0.9 percent in 2021.¹⁴ The categories themselves are disputed, especially as activists and scholars criticize the “mixed” category of *pardo* (brown), saying its existence breaks solidarity and has its history in government stigmatization and intentional promotion of both the denial of racism and a “path towards whiteness” (Loveman, Muniz and Bailey 2012; Santos 1999; Skidmore 1993). Following that lead, this paper refers to Black as comprising the official census categories of *preto* and *pardo*. Historically, the most important statistical differences are between white and non-white people (Guimarães 1999) — but the local categories explain the Brazilian inequalities better.

Several statistics express Brazil’s social and economic differences according to race and gender. In 2019, Brazilian women dedicated almost twice as much time as men to domestic work (21.4 hours a week, compared to 11 for men), and their average income was 77.7 percent of that of men; fewer women are employed than men, and fewer Black women are employed than white women (IBGE 2021a). And although homicides are much more prevalent among men (particularly Black men), 30.4 percent of homicides against women happen at home (compared to 11.2 percent of men), which highlights the problem of domestic violence (*ibid.*). Data collected during the pandemic reflects the amount of violence that different groups of women are subjected to: 24.4 percent of Brazilian women aged 16 years or older suffered some type of violence in the period of 12 months between May 2020 and 2021, with a higher prevalence for Black women (comprising, as said, *pretas* and *pardas*) (Bueno et al. 2019).

According to official statistics, in 2020, white persons had an income that was 73.4 percent higher, on average, than Black persons, and men 25 percent higher than women (IBGE 2022). In 2021, 32.7 percent of white persons had informal occupations, compared to 46.3 percent of Black persons; 18.6 percent of white Brazilians lived

11 For a detailed account on how those differences intertwine, see Gonzalez (2020).

12 Brazil is among the most unequal countries in the world. According to 2020 World Bank data, it occupies position 156 in the equality ranking, with a 0.539 Gini index (IBGE 2020).

13 “The Brazilian state has a long history of recognizing racial and colour distinctions within the population in censuses as in other administrative domains. In stark contrast to the United States, however, the explicit use of such categories in public policy or law was rare” (Loveman, Muniz and Bailey 2012).

14 Indigenous, “yellow” and not declared persons are treated as one single category by the IBGE for all the other responses, which is why there is not much specific data on, for example, Indigenous persons.

below the poverty line (US\$5.50/day), compared to 37.7 percent of Black Brazilians (ibid.). These inequalities also prove true in violence (deaths by homicide rate), political representation, literacy and education. When race and gender intersect, we see heightened disparities: Black women are the social group with the lowest income (IBGE 2019).

As expected, these inequalities are reflected in internet access and use. The latest data about internet usage in Brazil shows that, in 2021, 81 percent of the population were internet users, that is, had used the internet on any device in the previous three months.¹⁵ Internet access is unequal according to social class: 98 percent of people defined as economic class A¹⁶ are users, against only 66 percent of people in classes D and E. There are regional differences, differences between urban (82 percent) and rural (73 percent), as well as along age (only 48 percent of people aged 60 and over are users) and education level. There are no significant differences in access between men and women or white and Black persons, but disparities become visible in the type of access and online activities. For instance, in 2021, 45 percent of male internet users played games online compared to 30 percent of women. Also, only 57 percent of Indigenous persons are connected. Considerably more women (68 percent) than men (60 percent), and more Black (65 percent) than white (54 percent) people have mobile access only; that is also the case for 79 percent of Indigenous people (CETIC 2022).

Digital divides are still very real. TFGBV refers mostly to connected people; among those, differences in access and meaningful connectivity (involving devices, frequency, speed and capabilities) play a role. Meaningful

access also has a role in how the internet may or may not be used by those experiencing TFGBV to seek advice and support.

Prevalence of Online Harm: Brazilian and Global Results

The Supporting a Safer Internet survey shows that online harm¹⁷ is pervasive. Out of all people in the 18 surveyed countries, almost six in 10 (59.1 percent) report having experienced at least one of the four types of online harm categorized and listed in the survey. Not all of them are gender-based harms:

- **Coercion and harassment:** being repeatedly contacted by someone you do not know online, blackmailed online, physically threatened online, networked harassment.¹⁸
- **Identity and reputation-based harms:** called discriminatory names or derogatory cultural terms, lies posted online about you, online impersonation, experienced harassment online because of gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, gender expression, etc.
- **Privacy and security-based harms:** someone accessing a device or social media accounts belonging to you without permission, having personal contact information or address posted online without permission, monitored, tracked or spied on online.

15 Defining an internet user as someone who used the internet at least once in the past three months is obviously questionable, but is used by the Centro Regional de Estudos para o Desenvolvimento da Sociedade da Informação (Center of Studies of Information and Communication Technologies) (CETIC), the institution belonging to the Brazilian Internet Steering Committee that produces these statistics yearly, in following the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) measurement standard, which allows for comparative results (ITU 2020; CETIC 2022). CETIC recently started to publish a new indicator that also includes those who do not have internet access, but who have used a mobile app that uses the internet, for example. Considering this population, the percentage of internet users is 85 percent.

16 According to the official national statistics institute IBGE, people in class A have a monthly household income that is more than 20 times the monthly minimum wage. People in class D have a monthly household income between two and four times the monthly minimum wage, compared to up to two times the monthly minimum wage for class E. As of October 2022, the monthly minimum wage in Brazil is R\$1,212.

17 Following the choices made for the survey, this paper will treat online harm and violence as equivalent. Harm can be understood here as the experience of the victim of violence.

18 The definition of harassment is particularly tricky because of how it is used differently both within academia and the public debate. It can be defined as unwanted digital communication, including brief incidents and organized or long-standing attacks, and can be defined as violence that people do directly to one another (Lenhart et al. 2016); some authors include “doxing” (violation of privacy) and misogynist posts as harassment as well (Citron 2009). It is frequently used as an umbrella term for different kinds of violations. For the purposes of this paper, the categorization defined in the survey instruments, according to the questions asked and grouped under the four categories, will be followed, even if some of the acts under other categories could also be defined as harassment.

→ **Sexual harms:** unwanted sexual images sent to you, personal nude/sexual images of you shared or shown to someone else or posted online without permission.

The two most common forms of harm reported are being repeatedly contacted by an unwanted person (44 percent of men and 45 percent of women; when LGBTQ+ persons are aggregated, they are 57 percent) and receiving unwanted sexual images (26 percent of men and 39 percent of women, and 45 percent for aggregated LGBTQ+ persons). For 11 percent of respondents, violence occurs frequently: monthly (five percent), weekly (three percent) or daily (three percent). In 32 percent of the cases, the perpetrator is someone close to them.

Out of the 18 countries surveyed, there is no significant quantitative difference in the experiences of violence by men and women when all forms of violence are considered together (around 59 percent have experienced some form of violence in both cases) (see Table 1). Seventy-five percent of the LGBTQ+ persons aggregated, however, report having experienced online violence (as defined above): the percentage was greater for those who identify as female (76.9 percent) than those who identify as male (71.8 percent). The types of violence, however, are very different: men report more privacy and reputation harms than women, while women report more sexual violence, coercion and harassment.

Interestingly, the figures are a bit different when Brazil is considered separately. General prevalence is lower: a total of 54.2 percent of all people report having experienced online violence. The percentages for men and women are also slightly lower and there is a small difference between men and women (52.5 percent and 55.6 percent). However, 80.4 percent of LGBTQ+ persons report having experienced online violence.

A recent Plan International survey of 14,000 girls and women across 22 countries revealed that 58 percent had personally faced some form of harassment on social media platforms — in Brazil it was 77 percent (Plan International 2020). Of course, these two surveys differ in methodology, the building of samples and scope: Plan International surveyed women between the ages of 15 and 25, and different questions were asked — for example, the Plan International survey also asked questions about “abusive and insulting language,” “purposeful embarrassment,” “racist

comments” and “body shaming,” and did not use other categories included in the Supporting a Safer Internet survey. In the latter, when only women under 35 are considered, the prevalence in the 18 countries surveyed is 68.7 percent — and 67.9 percent in Brazil. One figure that stood out in the Plan International research was that 41 percent of women and girls in Brazil reported racist comments compared to 29 percent worldwide.

About one-third of the people interviewed in the 18 countries in the survey say that they were targeted because of their gender identity, expression or sexual orientation in the most significant incident of online violence that they experienced (see Table 2). Women are always more represented than men; in Brazil, almost two-thirds of LGBTQ+ people (all genders) say they were targeted for those reasons.

In Brazil, 59.1 percent of LGBTQ+ individuals who identify as male say they were targeted foremost because of their sexual orientation, compared to 33.6 percent of LGBTQ+ individuals who identify as female. Those who identify as female report being targeted primarily for gender identity much more than those who identify as men: 45 percent compared to four percent. Race being the foremost reason is also reported much more frequently by those identifying as male (25.1 percent) than female (6.9 percent). However, these numbers should be regarded carefully, not only because of the small sample (112 LGBTQ+ individuals for Brazil), but also because it is not always easy to provide an answer to such a question. The experience of being a Black lesbian involves being targeted violently in ways that are not necessarily separable into the categories given. The numbers seem to point, however, to the fact that gender identity is perceived as a very present reason for these women’s experiences of violence.

Table 1: Prevalence of Online Harm, Global and Brazil

	Total	Men	Women	LGBTQ+ (altogether)
Global	59.1%	59.1%	59.0%	75.0%
Brazil	54.2%	52.5%	55.6%	80.4%

Question 11: Have you ever personally experienced any of the following?

Data source: Ipsos, Supporting a Safer Internet Survey.

Note: Aggregated of everyone who responded yes to any of the types of harm presented).

Table 2: Targeted for Gender Identity, Expression or Sexual Orientation, Global and Brazil

	All	Men	Women	LGBTQ+
Global	32.9%	26.7%	39.2%	62.8%
Brazil	34.8%	29.5%	37.9%	66.2%

Question 16: Thinking of the online incident that had the most impact on your life, do you think you were targeted because of any of the following aspects about yourself? Select all that apply.

Data source: Ipsos, Supporting a Safer Internet Survey.

Note: Aggregated of all who responded yes to “Your gender identity,” “Your gender expression” or “Your sexual expression.”

Violence against LGBTQ+ Individuals in Brazil

Experiences of violence by Brazilian LGBTQ+ people stand out in the Supporting a Safer Internet survey results. Considering the online-offline continuum mentioned above, these results can be easily connected with the social and the historical context in Brazil. Violence and discrimination against LGBTQ+ populations are long-standing in Brazilian history (Trevisan 2018), and took on specific forms during the military dictatorship (1964–1985) when, in addition to being censored, LGBTQ+ people were persecuted, tortured and killed (Quinalha 2021). The LGBTQ+ movement managed to reinvent itself and survive; however, the violence statistics are alarming. The organization Transgender Europe (TGEU) analyzes 72 countries annually through its Trans Murder Monitoring project; since the beginning (2008), Brazil has led the list, most recently with 125 murders of trans people between October 1, 2020, and September 30, 2021 (TGEU 2021).

The Brazilian data journalism organization *Gênero e Número* (Gender and Number) researched violence against LGBTQ+ people in the 2018 elections and the post-election context, when a re-escalation of violence reached the media

and the public debate, fuelled especially by the declarations of presidential candidate Bolsonaro and by the actions of his supporters. Three days before the first round of elections, a video went viral: football fans in the São Paulo subway singing, “gay people, be careful, Bolsonaro will kill you” (Bulgarelli and Fontgaland 2019, 8; author’s translation). Death threats and homicides with political-electoral intent were recorded.

Gênero e Número interviewed 400 LGBTQ+ people in social spaces in the cities of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador. Violence was already on the rise: the Grupo Gay da Bahia (Bahia’s Gay Group) recorded 445 LGBTQ+ people killed in the country in 2017, a 30 percent rise from 2016 (Bulgarelli and Fontgaland 2019). Lesbians were the group that had faced the most violence motivated by sexual orientation and gender identity — 57 percent reported facing, in particular, moral harassment, verbal violence and discriminatory treatment (ibid., 19). In addition, 92.5 percent of respondents perceived a rise in violence against LGBTQ+ people during the elections. Although violence in public spaces was still predominant (83 percent said it happened in the street and public spaces), 36 percent reported having suffered violence while using social media; Black persons are the

majority in this case, comprising 53 percent of all people reporting such an experience (ibid., 44).

The longer and more recent history has much to say about the numbers gathered in the Brazilian response to the Supporting a Safer Internet survey. A striking percentage of Brazilian LGBTQ+ — 80.4 percent — report having experienced online violence: 85.7 percent of those under 35 years old, and the number goes as high as 95.4 percent among those with a higher household income, with relatively more internet access (although only 20 people in this situation were surveyed).

Gender Differences in Online Violence

In the 18 countries surveyed in the survey, women (33 percent) and LGBTQ+ (29 percent) victims¹⁹ are much more likely than men (17 percent) to say they were targeted because of their gender identity. Those numbers are slightly different in Brazil (31.9 percent women, 20.6 percent LGBTQ+, 11.7 percent men) but mirror the pattern. The figures are even higher among women and LGBTQ+ individuals in the 18 countries who have been victimized by a male perpetrator (42 percent and 33 percent, respectively).

The survey brings forth several critical differences in how women and men are differently targeted, how they perceive online violence and how LGBTQ+ people experience this differently. Three of these differences, which seem particularly fruitful for exploration, will be highlighted: types of violence, characterization of the aggressor and race. There are important differences in perceptions of violence, but that will be addressed specifically later.

Types of Violence

The survey groups the different forms of online harms into the four categories mentioned earlier: coercion and harassment, identity and reputation-based harms, privacy and security-based harms, and sexual harm. Globally, LGBTQ+ people (comprising women, men, as well as other genders) report a higher incidence in all of these categories (see Figure 1). A clear trend emerges both in international figures and in the countries separately: women are more

likely to experience coercion and harassment, as well as sexual harms, than men.

Brazil is not one of the top countries in experiences of online violence: 54 percent of respondents report having suffered one of the forms of violence, compared to the global average of 59 percent, placing Brazil in fourteenth place out of 18. It is, therefore, remarkable that, specifically regarding sexual harm (29 percent globally), where gender is central, Brazil presents a figure of 30 percent and jumps positions, to seventh.

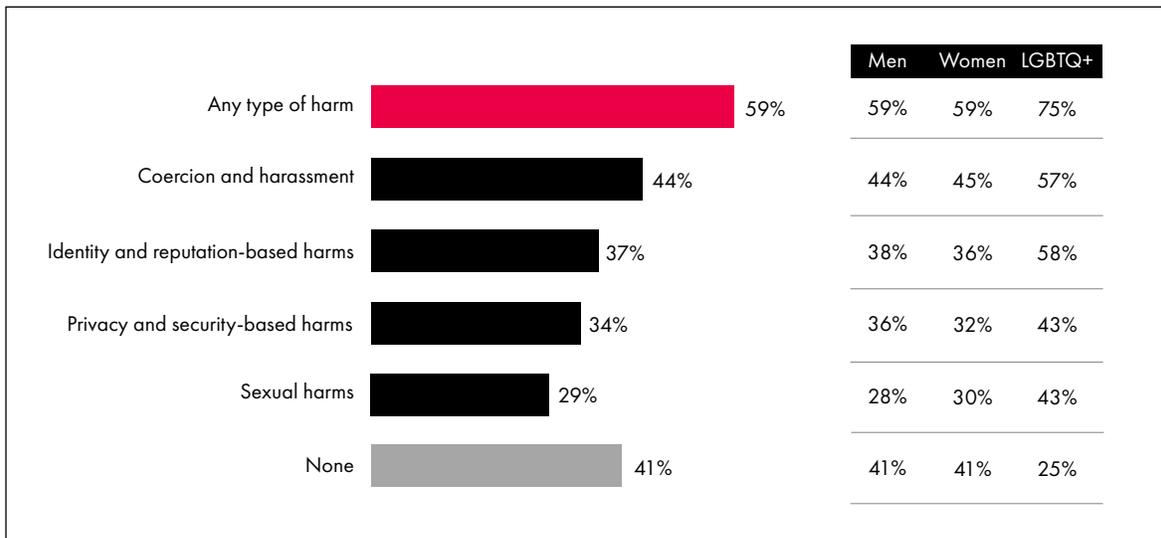
In a few categories, a higher proportion of men than women report being targeted in Brazil. That is the case, for instance, in having lies posted about you (18 percent compared to 15 percent of women) and, perhaps surprisingly, having nude or sexual images of you posted without your permission (11 percent compared to seven percent of women). That number rises to 12 percent if only LGBTQ+ women are considered. Image-based violence (non-consensual intimate images, or NCII) will be discussed as a specific topic later in the paper.

In Brazil, cases in which women are targeted more often than men include being harassed because of gender, race, disability or sexual orientation (21 percent, compared to 13 percent of men) and repeated unwanted contact (38 percent, compared to 12 percent). It must be said that the sum of LGBTQ+ people in Brazil reports higher prevalence in *all* categories — in particular in receiving unwanted sexual images (50 percent, compared to the total for women of 28 percent and the total for men of 26 percent) and being physically threatened (25 percent, compared to 10 percent for women generally and 14 percent for men). In addition, 43 percent of LGBTQ+ people report harassment because of gender, race, disability or sexual orientation.

While these numbers are important, they must be read in conjunction with the data on online harm's perception and effects (see the section “Beyond Quantifying Harm: Perceptions, Effects and Reactions”). Because of the online-offline continuum, certain forms of violence have a greater impact on certain populations, and the specificities of local inequalities and culture play a role.

¹⁹ It should be reiterated that LGBTQ+ also comprises people who identify as men and women in the survey; that is, it is an aggregate category.

Figure 1: Personal Experiences of Harm, Global



Question 11: Have you ever personally experienced any of the following?

Data source: Ipsos, Supporting a Safer Internet Survey.

Intimate Partners

Globally, a similar number of men (31 percent) and women (32 percent) report being targeted by someone close to them; when LGBTQ+ individuals only are considered, the number rises to 39 percent (see Figure 2). Differences start to emerge when broken down by who the close party is: former intimate partner is the case for 11 percent of men and 14 percent of women, and 17 percent when just LGBTQ+ people are considered.

Interesting patterns appear when the focus is on sexual harm: non-consensual dissemination of intimate images is among the top tier of cases committed by someone close, whereas having unwanted nude pictures sent to you is among the lowest figures of that incidence.

Brazil's numbers referring to close relationships are generally above the average: 38 percent of all cases are committed by someone close (compared to 32 percent globally). Furthermore, women in Brazil report that harms committed by former intimate partners make up 18.6 percent of the most serious incidents they faced, which is above the 14 percent global figure; aggregated LGBTQ+ totals 14.2 percent, but if we look just at female LGBTQ+, it is 26.6 percent. Therefore, being female is a central variable for determining the incidence of violence by former intimate partners, confirming

well-known characterizations of domestic violence. Interestingly, women in Brazil are also more likely to have been targeted by someone anonymous (58.6 percent compared to 55.4 percent in the case of men), which does not echo the global trend (64.1 percent for both men and women).

Also important is that a global average of 50 percent of the people surveyed reported that their main aggressor was male, and only 19 percent said they were female (26 percent of people do not know or preferred not to answer). Breaking down these figures, 57 percent of women and 58 percent of LGBTQ+ people altogether affirm their aggressor was male (see Table 3). In Brazil, that trend is more acute: 53 percent of all people report having been victimized by a male perpetrator: 62 percent of women and 58 percent of all LGBTQ+.

Race

Because ethnicity and race were not asked of Brazilian respondents, it has not been possible to break down the categories and understand how people of different races and ethnicities in Brazil face online violence differently. As mentioned earlier, this paper will add to the analysis with research developed by other organizations and researchers, who have been pointing to sometimes quantitative, often qualitative differences in how white, Black and Indigenous persons experience

Figure 2: Person Targeting, Global

		Men	Women	LGBTQ+
CLOSE (PARTNER/FRIENDS/FAMILY) NET	32%	31%	32%	39%
Friend	15%	16%	14%	19%
Ex-intimate partner	13%	11%	14%	17%
Family member	6%	7%	6%	13%
Current intimate partner	4%	5%	4%	4%
KNOWN (CO-WORKER/TEACHER, ETC.) NET	21%	24%	19%	30%
Co-worker	9%	10%	8%	8%
Another student	9%	9%	9%	20%
Client/customer	5%	6%	3%	7%
Teacher/coach	3%	4%	3%	6%
OTHERS (NOT KNOWN)	64%	64%	64%	65%
Someone I've never met/anonymous	47%	45%	50%	51%
Could not be determined	11%	13%	9%	9%
A random group of people	10%	11%	8%	12%
Member of an identifiable online group	7%	8%	5%	10%
Politician or public authorities*	3%	4%	1%	4%
Other	5%	4%	5%	6%
PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	6%	7%	6%	5%

Question 17: Thinking of the online incident that had the most impact on your life, who was the person who targeted you? Select all that apply.

Data source: Ipsos, Supporting a Safer Internet Survey.

Note: *Not asked about in Saudi Arabia.

online violence in Brazil. The survey indicates that 14.5 percent of all global respondents claim that they were targeted because of their race in the most relevant incident they faced; Brazil, in that respect, is above the average (16.2 percent) (see Table 4). Women and LGBTQ+ people (including males and females), in particular, more frequently report race and ethnicity as a reason; race and ethnicity is the second reason most frequently given by people targeted by online violence in the country.

When speaking of violence against people they know (people “close” to them), 19 percent of Brazilians answered that these people were targeted because of their race, which is above the global average of 14 percent and comparable only to India (19 percent) and the United States (20 percent).

Brazilian Women Who Speak Out: Violence against Politicians, Activists and Journalists

Women journalists, academics, politicians and human rights defenders face serious forms of violence, especially when they speak of male-dominated topics or equality issues (Dunn 2020). The survey separates the category of an “average user” from respondents who recognize themselves as “high-profile individuals,” that is, advocates, journalists and politicians; social media influencers; and those who identify as having a significant public following. The numbers for these three categories are strikingly higher: whereas 59 percent of the average users report having personally experienced online harm, in those categories, the numbers amount to 77 percent, 76 percent and 73 percent (see Figure 3).

Table 3: Targeted by Male Aggressors, Global and Brazil

	All	Men	Women	LGBTQ+
Global	50%	43%	57%	58%
Brazil	53%	53%	62%	58%

Question 18: What was the gender of this person who targeted you?

Data source: Ipsos, Supporting a Safer Internet Survey.

Notes: Other possible answers were “woman,” “other” and “do not know gender.” The global average of respondents saying “woman” was 19 percent; for Brazil it was 21 percent.

Table 4: Targeted because of Race and Ethnicity, Global and Brazil

	All	Men	Women	LGBTQ+
Global	14.5%	18.6%	10.4%	14.3%
Brazil	16.2%	18.1%	14.9%	17%

Question 16: Thinking of the online incident that had the most impact on your life, do you think you were targeted because of any of the following aspects about yourself? Select all that apply. Response: Your race/ethnicity.

Data source: Ipsos, Supporting a Safer Internet Survey.

In addition, 82 percent of LGBTQ+ high-profile users report being targeted specifically because of their identity, expression and sexual orientation, and 42 percent of high-profile women say they were targeted specifically because of their gender identity (compared to 26 percent of high-profile men, or 25 percent of the typical user in general). That trend is even more striking in Brazil: when all types of “high-profile individuals” are considered together, 83 percent report having experienced some type of online harm.

The effects and impacts, which will be discussed in detail later, are more severe as well: high-profile women (overall, in all 18 countries surveyed) report more difficulty in their ability to focus and with their mental health (48 percent of high-profile women, compared to 41 percent of men and 37 percent of typical users), and LGBTQ+ high-profile users report more suicidal feelings (51 percent) than high-profile men and women (39 percent altogether, that is, also including part of the LGBTQ+ category) and the typical user (29 percent).

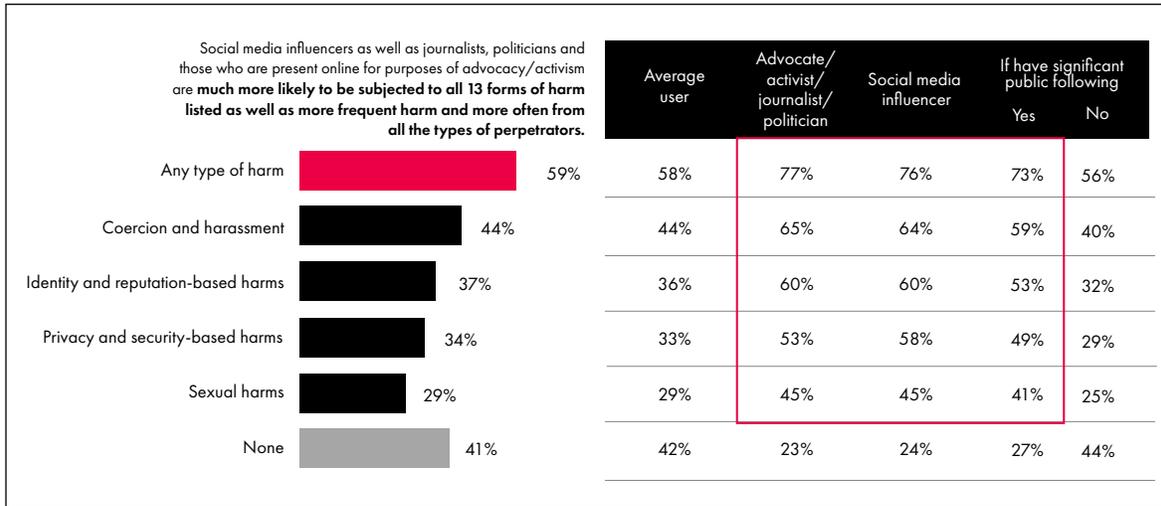
Several stories and studies in Brazil support the findings of the Supporting a Safer Internet research in this respect. In 2015, the Brazilian journalist A. F., self-identifying as a geek, wrote an article about

sexism in the geek world and was the victim of doxing,²⁰ which led to her receiving death and rape threats, as well as having all sorts of unwanted and offensive packages delivered to her and to her neighbours. In the forums where they organized, her abusers said they would not stop until she committed suicide (Valente 2022). In 2020, Brazilian reporter Patrícia Campos Mello (a white female) was targeted on social media by the Brazilian president, who reinforced false information that she had offered sex to obtain evidence during an award-winning investigation about the digital tactics he used during his election campaign (Association for Progressive Communications et al. 2022; Santos 2021).²¹ The same year, journalist Bianca Santana (a black female) was accused of producing “fake news” by the same president because of an article highlighting ties between his family and people under investigation for murdering councilwoman Marielle Franco, which led to attacks aimed at

20 Doxing refers to exposing someone’s private information without their consent, normally with malicious intent (Coding Rights and InternetLab 2017).

21 See also *Folha de S. Paulo* (2020).

Figure 3: Experiences of Harm for “High-profile Individuals,” Global



Question 11: Have you ever personally experienced any of the following?

Data source: Ipsos, Supporting a Safer Internet Survey.

her by his supporters.²² Precisely because of the opportunity that the internet, in general, and social media, in particular, offers to women and other socially subalternized groups to present themselves and their ideas in the public sphere, the issue of violence against high-profile individuals has been highlighted abundantly in recent research.²³

TFV against female journalists is widespread. In 2021, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization published a paper that discussed the results of a survey of 901 female journalists from 125 countries, arguing that the group is under severe attack: nearly three-quarters experienced online hostility of some sort, and a quarter was threatened with death and sexual violence (Posetti et al. 2021). The paper also provides information on the kind of attacks these journalists are subjected to: misogynistic, intimate and extending to family, sources and colleagues.

22 She gave a statement before the 44th session of the Human Rights Council, as the 2020 Special Rapporteur’s annual report was devoted to combatting violence against women journalists (ARTICLE 19 2020; Santana 2020; Reporters Without Borders 2021).

23 Several authors have questioned the idea that social media is disintermediated and presents no bottlenecks for anyone to speak and be heard. Social media platforms create and enforce rules unilaterally (Belli and Venturini 2016), and not only connectivity, but external factors and communicative skills matter in who gets heard and why (Enke and Borchers 2021). More recently, some authors have been even proposing that the extraction of data from women and feminist movements, used to feed distribution and curation algorithms, could be conceptualized as gender-based digital violence (Natansohn and Morales 2022).

In 2017, a study of 70 million comments posted to the newspaper *The Guardian’s* website between 2006 and 2016 revealed that eight out of the 10 most targeted journalists were women (who made up only 28 percent of the newspaper’s writers) and that Black, Asian and minority ethnic women were disproportionately affected (Gardiner 2018).

In its 2021 Global Expression Report, the non-governmental organization ARTICLE 19 reclassified Brazil’s environment from “open” to “restricted.” A key factor has been attacks on journalists, in particular women (ARTICLE 19 2021). Reporters Without Borders and the Instituto de Tecnologia e Sociedade analyzed hashtags used to refer to the media in critical terms. They identified that female journalists are referred to 13 times as often as their male peers (Reporters Without Borders and Instituto de Tecnologia e Sociedade 2021). A research consortium monitoring the Twitter and YouTube profiles of 133 female and 67 male Brazilian journalists found that four out of the five journalists most associated with attacks are women; on Twitter, they are targeted almost twice as much as men (15.83 percent of all tweets to them). Tweets directed toward Black female journalists were considered more aggressive (InternetLab et al. 2022).

The trends of violence against politicians follow similar patterns. Gender-based political violence,

in general, and technology-facilitated, in particular, has been very much discussed in Latin America²⁴ — in part because of its high incidence and in part because of how political representation is highly unequal. In 2018, the assassination of Rio de Janeiro city councillor Marielle Franco, a peripheral, openly bisexual Black woman, was a brutal milestone for how far political violence can go. In online spaces, in particular on social media, female politicians report harassment, hostility, and direct and indirect threats (D’Ávila 2022). Although important institutional advances and social movements have been making the equal representation agenda visible and achieving results,²⁵ party funding for women is still disproportional to the number of candidacies and very disproportional for Black women (Ramos et al. 2020). In 2020, Brazil elected the highest number of women for local offices (mayors) in history, but it was only 13 percent. No woman was elected to a state capital (Martins and Silva 2020). In the 2022 elections, women were elected to 18 percent of state-level legislative positions nationally; Black women make up seven percent of the positions and only one Indigenous and one woman of Asian descent were elected (Gênero e Número 2022). Women’s representation in the House of Representatives grew from 15 percent to 18 percent, but out of the 91 elected women,

64 percent are white, 32 percent are Black and four percent are Indigenous (Bruno and Régia 2022).²⁶

During the 2020 local elections, MonitorA, a joint observatory between InternetLab, a think tank on digital rights,²⁷ and AzMina, a feminist media organization, found that female candidates received an average of 40 offensive comments on Twitter every day during the first electoral round (AzMina Magazine and InternetLab 2021). GBQ+ men were also highly affected. Cis-straight male candidates were very often met with criticism, but the *nature* of the criticism was generally very different: it was frequently about their professional performance in political or public management positions, whereas women were criticized for their bodies, intellectual capacity or moral and family aspects of their lives. Another study showed that 49 percent of LGBTQ+ candidates who ran for office in 2020 report having received attacks because of their sexual orientation, 32 percent for being a woman, and 29 percent for gender identity. Fifty-four percent looked to their party for assistance, but in 56 percent of the cases, the party did not act (VoteLGBT 2022).

In an examination of the online interactions with elected LBTQ+ women in 2021, the Brazilian organizations MariaLab and Casa 1 observed the intersections of misogyny, lesbophobia and transphobia; these politicians are frequently called “crazy,” faced with words referencing the domestic place (“dona,” “senhora”), or accused of not being part of the political world (Araújo, Carvalho and Penteado 2022, 164). The recognition of gender-based political violence in the country led to the approval, in 2021, of a specific law to criminalize and address political violence

24 For a discussion about the concept of political violence, its uses and how it has developed in recent years, see Biroli (2016). It is important to highlight that the paper was written before the approval of a law to address political violence against women in Brazil (in 2021). See also initiatives carried out by the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States, in effect since 2015: www.oas.org/en/cim/politicalviolence.asp.

25 The electoral legislation has progressively admitted measures for gender parity in representation — such as quotas of 30 percent for female candidacies (Law no. 12.034/2009) and obligating proportional distribution of resources to them (Resolução TSE no. 23.575/2018). Following a Supreme Court decision obliging parties to offer proportional resources to Black candidates, a Constitutional Amendment (no. 111/2011) created incentives for parties to work on supporting such candidacies, which affect access to resources for them — each vote for women and Black people counts double. These measures reflect intense activism for fair representation in Brazil.

26 Several initiatives were vocal in supporting Black and Indigenous candidates, in particular women, in political representation in the 2022 federal and state-level elections. Quilombo nos Parlamentos (Quilombos in Parliaments) was an initiative led by the Coalizão Negra por Direitos (Black Coalition for Rights) movement to support the election of Black candidates; 26 of the candidates they supported were elected, and although the number of Black candidates grew by 36.25 percent, the growth among the number elected was just 8.94 percent (amounting to 25 percent of legislative houses), which, according to Sheila de Carvalho (a lawyer who is one of the movement’s leaders) was far from satisfactory (Sardinha 2022). Other examples are Mulheres Negras Decidem (Black Women Decide), Estamos Prontas (We [female] Are Ready) and Agenda Marielle Franco.

27 The author has been one of the leaders since 2014.

against women.²⁸ The effects of this law are yet to be analyzed; meanwhile, in the 2022 elections, the MonitorA project identified that female candidates were disproportionately affected by attacks diminishing their mental capacities (Belin 2022a), that they were targeted repeatedly by insulting expressions used by the president (and candidate to re-election) himself (Belin 2022b), and that transgender candidates were the main targets of attacks, of a transphobic and misogynous nature, on Twitter (Belin and Grangeia 2022).

Political violence, including technology based, affects political aspirations and concrete living conditions²⁹ — as the numbers of the Supporting a Safer Internet survey on effects and impacts show (see the section “Beyond Quantifying Harm: Perceptions, Effects and Reactions”).

Demystifying Liberation: Pushing Back against Sexual Expression

While high-profile women can also be the targets of technology-facilitated sexual violence, this form of violence affects women at large — and follows different patterns along age, demography and motivation. Surprisingly, the survey shows that, on average, men report having been victims of the non-consensual dissemination of intimate

images more often than women in the 18 countries. In Brazil, seven percent of female respondents reported having had their nude or sexual images shared without permission, compared to eight percent of men and 18 percent of LGBTQ+.

However, there is evidence that NCII is a form of gender-based violence that affects women the most, expressing misogynistic values. For example, between 2015 and 2016, a case law study coordinated by the author found 93 decisions involving image-based abuse in the São Paulo Court of Appeals (the largest in the country). In around 90 percent of the cases, women were the plaintiffs — even when, in many of these cases, images depicted heterosexual couples (Valente et al. 2016). Moreover, with the aid of qualitative interviews and a case study about the practice of NCII among teenagers, the research concluded that the consequences were felt much more harshly by girls and women (Valente, Neris and Bulgarelli 2015).

The Supporting a Safer Internet data shows that, among women and men, 34 percent of victims of NCII reported that gender identity was the primary reason for them being targeted. The same proportion mentioned race (23 percent) and sexual orientation (23 percent) as primary factors. The numbers reveal strong perceptions of harmfulness: in most countries, many people found NCII extremely harmful (rated 5 out of 5). Brazil is slightly above the average (with 76 percent, compared to the global average of 73 percent), and 78 percent of all women participants found it extremely harmful. Globally, 59 percent of those who know someone who has been targeted with non-consensual sharing of intimate images affirm that the victim is a woman.

The commonly held belief about a “liberated” Brazilian culture regarding the human body and sexuality — particularly the female body, and particularly Black women’s bodies, hypersexualized by the media and cultural representations³⁰ — could lead to the false expectation that NCII would attract less harm to the victim. Some contradictions in Brazilian culture and society regarding gender have already been addressed; following Carole Vance’s (1984) understanding of pleasure and danger, it could be added that the traditional bargain established around women’s sexuality is that they are punished when they do not behave

28 Law no. 14.192/2021 of August 4, 2021, online: <www.in.gov.br/en/web/dou/-/lei-n-14.192-de-4-de-agosto-de-2021-3363154171>. In the context of heightened conflicts around the word “gender” (resisted by conservatives), the law addresses political violence against women only. It is recent and its effects are yet to be measured.

29 A study published by Laboratório de Estudos de Mídia e Esfera Pública (LEMEP) and Instituto Peregum states that connection clearly, especially when speaking of Black candidates:

When asked about the dominant feeling when deciding to run, most of those interviewed chose fear. This fear actually has several causes, the biggest one being violence. But even violence is multi-causal, as it was attributed to racism, sexism attributed to racism, to sexism, and to the ethos of Brazilian society as a whole....Political violence figures prominently among the obstacles identified by black candidates. This violence, which has increased greatly due to the recent rise of the extreme right in the country, is perceived as both physical (life-threatening) and symbolic (often perpetrated through the Internet and social networks) threats. It damages the mental health of candidates and their supporters, even affecting their ability to run electoral campaigns. (LEMEP and Instituto Peregum 2022, 42, 32; author’s translation).

30 See Gonzalez (1984).

according to gender norms, that is, performing the role of a “guardian” of the male desire. While cultures of exhibition and liberation may encourage girls and women to expose themselves, they are punished when they cross a (very unstable) line — a form of maintenance of power and gender roles. In a CETIC study with 16 focus groups of teenagers from different social classes in the city of São Paulo, all groups spontaneously reported NCII cases and revealed these contradictions: girls are under pressure to send pictures to boys, but they are immediately judged and blamed when non-consensual dissemination occurs (Jereissati and Macaya 2021, 68–69). In her extensive, detailed Ph.D. research about the practice of “sharing nudes” and its social meanings in Brazil, the anthropologist Beatriz Accioly Lins (2021) affirms that it challenges notions of appropriate femininities but illustrates the permanence of hegemonic norms.³¹

The helpline service Safernet reports that, in 2021, NCII was the second-most reported topic in Brazil, with 273 cases.³² Every year, NCII is among the most reported issues. The suicides of two teenage girls in 2013 following NCII triggered a specific civil liability rule for online intermediaries in 2014³³ and a specific criminal offence added to the Federal Criminal Code in 2018.³⁴ In 2021, official national occurrences of that crime mounted to 3,181 cases (Benevides 2022). Of course, these crimes are underreported. Field research back in 2016 exposed the difficulties that young women faced when going through episodes of NCII: often, they did not feel it was safe to ask for help at school or with their family, where they would likely be blamed; in many territories, the police is not seen as a resort for support or protection (Valente et al. 2016).

A metaphor, brought forth by a lawyer with extensive experience with victims of all ages who was interviewed for the same research, can help us understand the reasons behind under-reporting. She argued that, in order to look for legal help, victims would have to overcome three “sieves of shaming”: tell people close to them, who might not yet know; tell the story to a lawyer; and agree to

have their story told and retold within the justice system, including to police, judges and legal clerks. Often, victims decide to fight to take down the images but do not pursue reporting the aggressor, to avoid having to live and relive the story several times. A recent study analyzing stories about TFGBV shared on social media in Brazil shows that 15 percent of the women reported feeling guilty, and 36 percent mentioned a preference for quick ways of resolving the problem (Instituto Avon and Decode 2021). *Gênero e Número*’s research with LGBTQ+ people during and after the 2018 election reports that 62 percent of those who faced online violence reported the content to the platforms; however, only two percent took the issue to authorities, and one percent filed a suit (Bulgarelli and Fontgaland 2019, 49).

The Supporting a Safer Internet survey confirms that very few cases of online harm make it to the investigation authorities and the legal system broadly. As many as 40 percent of people who experience online violence do not reach out to anyone, including friends, family, spouses and partners. Only 10 percent report it to the police and five percent to lawyers. Those with low or medium levels of education levels are more likely not to reach out. Worldwide, the number of people who involve the police after NCII is relatively high at 20 percent. While that could speak against the theory that sexual images involve blame and re-victimizing, it might actually speak for the gravity of the effects on people’s lives, which will be discussed in the next section. Still, NCII is the type of harm identified as the most harmful of all — by 73 percent of people when all the 18 countries are considered, and by 78 percent of female respondents; in Brazil it is a bit higher (79 percent of women).

For now, it also seems important to note that Brazil is the country among the least likely to have victims looking to the police (seven percent), helplines (three percent) or government services (two percent) for help, and it is the second-lowest country for perception of police effectiveness, according to the victims (14 percent, against the average of 28 percent; the only country that fares worse is Chile, with nine percent, and the percentage for the United States is also 14 percent). It is significant, too, that women resort to the police more (8.4 percent) than men (4.5 percent) and that LGBTQ+ persons are the ones who resort to them the least (two percent).

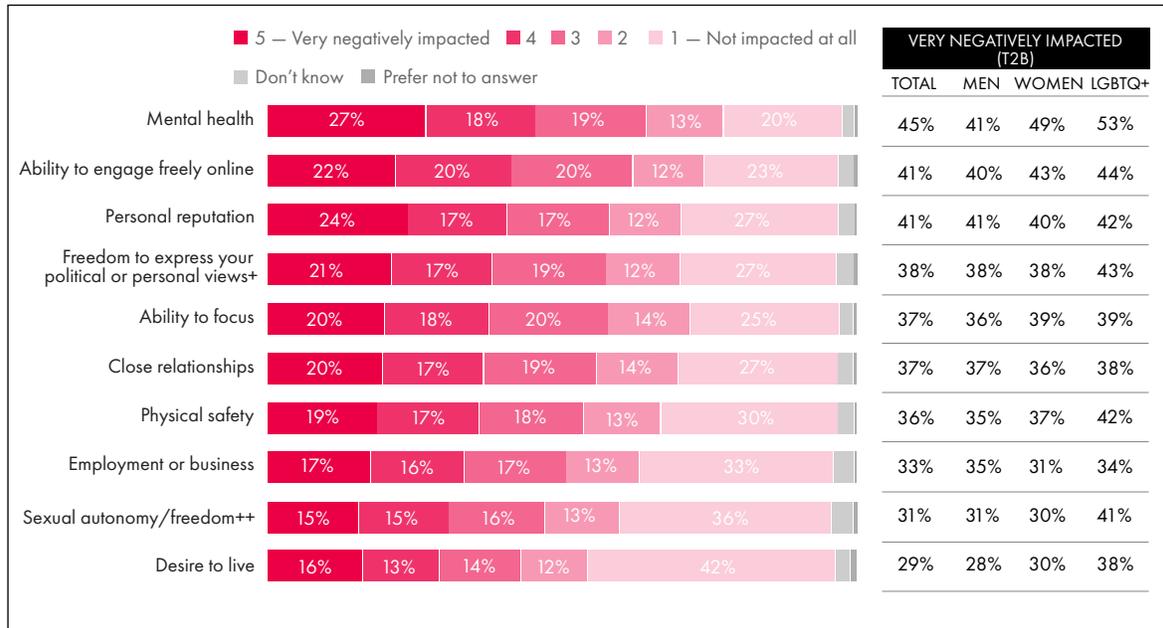
31 Several other studies challenge simplistic and essentialist representations of sexual liberation and female sexuality in Brazil. See, for instance, Goldenberg (2005), Simões (2016) and Goldstein (2013).

32 See <https://indicadores.safernet.org.br/helpline/helplineviz/pt/>.

33 Brazil, *Marco Civil da Internet* (2014), Law No. 12.965.

34 *Penal Code, 1940, 218-C*, introduced by Law No. 13.718 of 24 September 24, 2018 [*Penal Code*].

Figure 4: Impact of Harm on Personal Life, Global



Question 13: On a scale of 1-5 where 1 is not impacted at all and 5 is very negatively impacted, how much do you think each of these following areas of your life is impacted by those incidents?

Data source: Ipsos, Supporting a Safer Internet Survey.

Notes: + Not asked in Saudi Arabia. ++ Not asked in Algeria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates.

Base: all respondents who experienced some form of OGBV (n = 10,810). T2B refers to top 2 box score. It combines the two highest responses to a Likert scale question to create a single number, i.e., the percentage who rated 4 or 5 on the scale of 1-5.

Beyond Quantifying Harm: Perceptions, Effects and Reactions

One of the most interesting results of the survey is the capturing of respondents' perceptions of the effects of harm in their lives and in those of people close to them. As stated, this is important because the prevalence of violence is not necessarily equal to how that affects different groups. Structural inequalities are present both in how violence happens and in how it produces substantial effects. For example, in cases of disseminating images of sexual activities between heterosexual couples, the consequences, including professional and career problems, school dropout rates, relocation and identity hiding, are experienced much more often and harshly by women and LGBTQ+ people (Valente et al. 2016).

The general perception of Brazilians about the harmfulness of online violence is around the average (35 percent; the average is 36 percent), but more women see it as a big problem (38 percent). Remarkably, 46 percent of Brazilians do not see it as a big problem (the global average is 43 percent). When respondents are asked if it is a big problem for men, the global average is 33 percent, and the Brazilian average is 36 percent; however, 67 percent of Brazilians respond that it is a big problem for women and when women answer, that rate goes as high as 72 percent. These figures raise the hypothesis that, even when the prevalence of violence is not higher, the connections between acts of violence and a sexist, violent culture mean that effects are more strongly perceived and felt.

The most remarkable piece of data is that despite the low recognition of online violence as a problem generally, 71 percent of Brazilian respondents affirm that it is a big issue for LGBTQ+ people — and 81 percent of Brazilian LGBTQ+ say so (the figures are high in Latin America in general). In all

Figure 5: Impact on Personal Life, Global and Three Countries with Highest Rates

ABILITY TO ENGAGE FREELY ONLINE		VERY NEGATIVELY IMPACTED (T2B)		
		MEN	WOMEN	LGBTQ+
Global average	41%	40%	43%	44%
Algeria	53%	50%	57%	-
Brazil	53%	49%	57%	59%
India	50%	48%	52%	56%
PERSONAL REPUTATION		VERY NEGATIVELY IMPACTED (T2B)		
		MEN	WOMEN	LGBTQ+
Global average	41%	41%	40%	42%
Algeria	59%	59%	60%	-
China	58%	61%	55%	57%
Brazil	56%	53%	59%	57%
ABILITY TO FOCUS		VERY NEGATIVELY IMPACTED (T2B)		
		MEN	WOMEN	LGBTQ+
Global average	37%	36%	39%	39%
China	53%	49%	57%	53%
Algeria	53%	48%	57%	-
Brazil	50%	46%	53%	50%
CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS		VERY NEGATIVELY IMPACTED (T2B)		
		MEN	WOMEN	LGBTQ+
Global average	37%	37%	36%	38%
Algeria	53%	53%	54%	-
Brazil	52%	49%	54%	57%
China	51%	51%	51%	47%
PHYSICAL SAFETY		VERY NEGATIVELY IMPACTED (T2B)		
		MEN	WOMEN	LGBTQ+
Global average	36%	35%	37%	42%
Brazil	57%	51%	61%	58%
China	53%	52%	54%	60%
Algeria	46%	43%	49%	-

Figure 5: Impact on Personal Life, Global and Three Countries with Highest Rates (continued)

EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS		VERY NEGATIVELY IMPACTED (T2B)		
		MEN	WOMEN	LGBTQ+
Global average	33%	35%	31%	34%
China	54%	53%	56%	60%
Brazil	50%	47%	53%	50%
Algeria	45%	44%	46%	-
DESIRE TO LIVE		VERY NEGATIVELY IMPACTED (T2B)		
		MEN	WOMEN	LGBTQ+
Global average	29%	28%	30%	38%
Brazil	48%	42%	53%	56%
China	44%	46%	42%	47%
India	41%	40%	43%	34%
FREEDOM TO EXPRESS YOUR POLITICAL OR PERSONAL VIEWS		VERY NEGATIVELY IMPACTED (T2B)		
		MEN	WOMEN	LGBTQ+
Global average	38%	38%	38%	43%
Brazil	56%	49%	60%	57%
Algeria	50%	48%	52%	-
China	47%	49%	44%	44%
SEXUAL AUTONOMY/FREEDOM		VERY NEGATIVELY IMPACTED (T2B)		
		MEN	WOMEN	LGBTQ+
Global average	31%	31%	30%	41%
Brazil	50%	44%	55%	53%
China	47%	48%	46%	50%
India	46%	45%	48%	41%

Question 13: On a scale of 1-5 where 1 is not impacted at all and 5 is very negatively impacted, how much do you think each of these following areas of your life is impacted by those incidents?

Data source: Ipsos, Supporting a Safer Internet Survey.

probability, that relates to the (already discussed) alarming levels of violence against LGBTQ+ people in Brazil, in particular transgender people.

Worldwide, the number one personal harm people claim to have suffered because of incidents of online violence is to their mental health (45 percent claim to have been very negatively impacted, rated 4 or 5 out of 5); 42 percent claim to have had their ability to engage online very negatively impacted as well (see Figure 4). These figures are higher for women (49 percent and 43 percent, respectively) and LGBTQ+ people (53 percent and 44 percent, respectively), and globally all the figures are higher when the most serious harm the person claims to have suffered is NCII. In that case, 57 percent of all people victimized claim to have suffered in terms of mental health, and 55 percent report having their ability to engage freely online affected.

Another important global result is that LGBTQ+ people claim to suffer most in terms of desire to live, concerning all categories of harm. Moreover, all groups considered, Brazil is within the top three countries in *all* the types of impacts of harm (see Figure 5). It is the country where the higher number of respondents say their physical safety is affected (57 percent, against a global average of 36 percent, and higher among women, 61 percent), their desire to live (48 percent, against the global average of 29 percent), their freedom to express political views (56 percent, against the total average of 38 percent, with Brazilian women at 60 percent), and their sexual autonomy and freedom (50 percent, against a global average of 31 percent; Brazilian women are 55 percent). A number as high as 77 percent of Brazilian LGBTQ+ who suffered harm report having had their mental health severely impacted, and 56 percent declared it had an impact on their desire to live (compared to a 29 percent global average, and 38 percent global average of LGBTQ+).

It is also remarkable that the Global North countries surveyed — Canada, France, Germany and the United States — reported the least impact on mental health. For example, while 58 percent of Brazilians and 56 percent of Chinese who suffered harm report having had their mental health very negatively affected, the figures are 34 percent in Germany, 31 percent in the United States, 30 percent in Canada and 29 percent in France. More data would be needed to understand why and come up with comparisons. However, a tentative explanation is that networks of protection and multi-dimensional insecurities,

that is, stemming from different aspects of social life, influence how these impacts are produced; an additional one is that cultural perceptions of inequalities and social hierarchies, as well as a violent political culture, have a role.

Those numbers speak deeply to gender differences, the online-offline continuum and structural inequalities related to colonial heritage and history, institutional discrimination, violent culture and violent institutions, and low institutional readiness. It is remarkable how 38 percent of people worldwide affected by online violence feel their freedom to express political or personal views is affected, confirming the UN Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression's 2021 report conclusions that OGBV is intimately intertwined with free speech (United Nations General Assembly 2021). Referring to the experience of Brazilian lesbians online, the human rights researcher Juliana Motter reaches a similar conclusion (Motter 2018).

It is also remarkable that the top three countries where respondents confirmed those perceptions were Brazil (56 percent), Algeria (50 percent) and China (47 percent). In terms of respondents saying they decided to stop posting about a certain issue, Brazil came second (25 percent), after Kenya (27 percent).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Supporting a Safer Internet survey reveals the importance of bringing perceptions and personal and societal effects of TFGBV into the conversation. It also speaks to how harms that may not be directly defined as gender-based violence may affect groups differently, based on gender, sexuality and race. It clearly demonstrates the online-offline continuum, as responses about online violence against LGBTQ+, technology-facilitated sexual violence and violence against high-profile women and LGBTQ+ people reflect social disparities that exist in politics and history. The fact that women and LGBTQ+ people, in particular in countries in the Global South, and in particular for certain types of harm, report strikingly higher impacts of such violence in their lives affects the power imbalance in other realms. Political participation, economic



Photo: Nelson Antoine/Shutterstock

and cultural insertion, creativity and well-being are impacted by online violence, as it shuts out certain persons and groups. The important question is what to do to address this. And while the answers are always evolving and must be with the involvement of many stakeholders, this survey provides important insights.

In Brazil, the legal order has absorbed some societal demands around TFGBV.³⁵ In 2013, the *Marco Civil da Internet* (Internet Civil Rights Framework)³⁶ included a specific platform liability

rule to account for the need of NCII victims to get a fast and effective response. In 2018, the Lei Lola clarified that the Federal Police (which is better equipped than state police) is in charge of crimes involving online misogyny.³⁷ The same year, the Penal Code was reformed to include provisions for NCII and disseminating rape scenes.³⁸ In 2021, a cyberstalking law was passed to take into account a kind of violence consisting of small actions.³⁹ Finally, in 2021, Congress passed a new law on political violence against women, recognizing the links between political violence, in particular online, and barriers to political representation.

35 Since at least 2013, when two teenage girls died by suicide after intimate images were disseminated without their consent, the issue of OGBV, in particular that directed at women, has been part of the public conversation in Brazil. Before that, there had been a few cases of NCII in the media; one of them led to the passing of Law No. 12.737/2012, criminalizing invading technical devices. After that, legislative change involved coordinated efforts between feminist organizations and activists, public officers such as public prosecutors working with the issue of domestic violence, and members of Congress.

36 *Marco Civil da Internet*, supra note 33.

37 *Lei Lola*, supra note 6.

38 *Penal Code*, supra note 34.

39 Law No. 14.132, of March 31, 2021 online: <www.in.gov.br/en/web/dou/-/lei-n-14.132-de-31-de-marco-de-2021-311668732>. All of these initiatives have been controversial for their potential adverse effects – and this one in particular. The way cyberstalking was framed could lead – and has effectively led – to encompassing the actions of civil society actors who work on monitoring and exposing targets for political ends.

Even with all these developments, the survey shows that women in Brazil are targeted in alarming numbers, report harsher effects than in most of the countries surveyed, and still do not seek legal or official support. First, these figures reveal a disturbing picture of the normalization of TFGBV, informed by long-time and more recent social and political cleavages in Brazil. Second, they indicate that facing TFGBV involves legal change but that is not all. The following recommendations address some gaps concerning the public sector, the private sector, and the cultural or public debate.

When it comes to the public sector, the need for an intersectional approach comes to the fore. Laws to address TFGBV are only as effective as the means for using them. The author's research back in 2016 with teenagers in peripheral territories in the city of São Paulo showed that several barriers exist between a victimized teenage girl and getting effective support and reparation (Valente et al. 2016). These persons did not see turning to families, schools and local public services and authorities for help as an option: in a conservative context, seeking them could mean re-victimizing. Furthermore, the criminal law response involves paradoxes, as its enforcement discriminates against Black men and women in Brazil regarding who gets condemned and sentence length (Borges 2019). It also does not bring reparation to the victim. Even in legal terms, we should be developing more creative strategies and focusing on civil remedies, as well as creating structures for protection, psychological and economic support, aiding the victims in their demands against platforms and their needs after the acts of violence.

States must take up the task and address it systemically. First, gender and racial equality should not be a side issue — it should be integral to all discussions on information disorders, platform regulation and artificial intelligence governance. Second, beyond the technology field per se, states should be adopting or strengthening transversal measures in their planning of policies such as helplines, counselling services, shelters, having information provided by health units and developing educational campaigns, including topics in the school curricula or policies directed at political parties. Third, they should address the roots of the problem, and anti-discrimination, pro-inclusion, and diversity laws and policies are an integral part of this discussion. As an example, women's low participation in the

STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) sector in Brazil must be addressed if difference-aware science and technology products are a priority for the future.⁴⁰

In addition, creating legal avenues for accountability and redress is ineffective if law enforcement officials do not have the necessary information and guidelines, or a full understanding of the problem. For example, Lei Lola, requiring that investigation of online violence through misogyny cases is the jurisdiction of federal law enforcement, will not be enforced if law enforcement officials dismiss the complaints.

The private sector must be involved, and this need is global in nature. One aspect that the survey also highlights is that only 27 percent of respondents in the 18 countries surveyed feel that companies' content moderation is very effective. While the focus here is, of course, digital platforms, all private sector stakeholders involved in activities in which TFGBV may occur — advertisers, content creators and product developers — must mobilize. Following the Gender Dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,⁴¹ this refers to, at a minimum, the need for gender-responsive assessment, gender transformative measures and gender transformative remedies.

This means that states have a role in regulating these companies so that these objectives are fulfilled, through authoritative measures, incentives and providing guidance. But businesses should also move ahead by themselves and take action.⁴² This should involve creating internal representative teams to promote inclusion, along with measures to address harassment, pay gaps and other forms of discrimination. There should be processes in place to address TFGBV concerns across the board in product development, policy development

40 For the case of Brazil, see Machado et al. (2021). In 1974, at the IME (Institute of Mathematics and Statistics, a prestigious institution in Brazil), women made up 70 percent of the first class in the bachelor of computer science program (Almeida 2021, 58).

41 See www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-business/gender-lens-ungps.

42 There are several examples of cases when companies took action only after scandals or bad repercussions involving their practices. It was not until 2018 that Twitter started to act autonomously in reaction to content against its standards (Amnesty International 2018); and YouTube did not stop recommending supremacist content (reducing 80 percent of its reach) until 2017, and it was not prohibited until 2019, together with implicit threats and abusive behaviour such as harassment (Barbosa and Santiago 2021).

and incident protocols. Social media companies, for example, should include awareness of TFGBV as an integral part of all of their efforts around electoral periods. Across their policy areas, they should publish clear and complete data about TFGBV, fund and support research to make those dynamics visible, and make open and measurable commitments to address the problems. These commitments should be made according to the above-mentioned guiding principles.⁴³

Tackling TFGBV in Brazil and other Global South countries is often seen as a mere extension of thinking about them in Global North countries — relying, therefore, on information, expert opinions, research and civil society partnerships that do not represent the problem for countries in the South. The important differences and how they relate to the broader social, economic and political context must be considered for policies, partnerships, and the development of guidance and educational materials.

This is everyone's problem — from political parties to unions, international organizations to parliaments, digital platforms to advertisers, and schools to civil society organizations. It is evident that states have a central role in coordinating and mandating such efforts. But we need more discussions, more data, and more space for academic and civil society research and activism to inform the state's actions. For example, the recent approval of the political violence law in Brazil was the product of steady work by civil society organizations, academics and politicians to make the problem visible and coordinate an urgent response. These activities must have space, find proper funding and exist in an environment where rights are protected in order to flourish.

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⁴³ See www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-business/gender-lens-ungps.

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Appendix: About the Survey

The survey was targeted toward the general population in each country,¹ aged 18–74 in Canada and the United States, and aged 16–74 in all other countries. In total, 18,149 interviews were conducted, with each country’s sample consisting of 1,000+ individuals. Quotas and weighting were applied by age, gender and region so that each country’s sample composition best reflects the demographic profile of the target age according to the most recent census data.²

The research consisted of a mixed-methodology approach wherein the online survey was supplemented by offline interviews in selected countries. In countries where internet penetration was limited or where online panel coverage was insufficient, offline interviews (face-to-face or telephone) were also conducted to ensure the inclusion of respondents who may have been under-represented or excluded online — as a result, fieldwork in Brazil, India, South Africa, Tunisia, Kenya, Algeria and Colombia had an offline interviewing component, in addition to the online survey.

The accuracy of Ipsos online surveys is measured using a credibility interval, a measure similar to a margin of error. A survey of 1,000 interviews is considered accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had all people in the country in the target age range been surveyed. Smaller subsets of the population will have larger credibility intervals. For more information on Ipsos’s use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.³

The fieldwork was conducted between June 25 and September 2, 2021.⁴

1 Eighteen countries were included in the survey: Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Ecuador, France, Germany, India, Jordan, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States.

2 Except Algeria and Ecuador, where quotas and weights were based on age and gender.

3 See www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/2017-03/IpsosPA_CredibilityIntervals.pdf.

4 In several countries, the fieldwork period coincided with COVID-19 lockdowns and, therefore, the fieldwork duration was impacted, including delayed launch and or/pausing fieldwork intermittently.

The survey instrument was designed in consultation with Ipsos, the project steering committee, CIGI and IDRC. Ipsos’s global and regional experts also advised on operational feasibility. Pilot interviews were conducted in each country (n = 30 in each country for each mode of interview) and, based on the feedback, further adjustments were made to the content and flow, as well as administration (instructions/descriptions, etc.).

The survey was developed in English and conducted in-language in each country.

The online survey averaged approximately 15 minutes in length while the offline versions (face-to-face and telephone) averaged ~30–35 minutes in length.

Reporting Conventions and Considerations

The term “LGBTQ+” has been used throughout this work. For each country, “+” encompasses unique traditions, norms and definitions. The survey asked questions about gender identity and sexual orientation. For simplification and in order to study the data on a quantifiable sample, “LGBTQ+” is defined as those who selected “A gender other than the one I was assigned at birth (‘transgender’)” or “Another gender identity” for questions on gender identity or “Gay/Lesbian/Another Sexual Orientation” for question on sexual orientation.

Sample sizes for LGBTQ+ per country are low and range from n = 30 to n = 136. For India, South Africa and Kenya, n < 40.⁵ However, given the objectives of the research and therefore the importance of analyzing the results separately for LGBTQ+ respondents, data is presented for directional purposes only and should be interpreted with caution.

Some questions were not asked in certain countries due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter.⁶ Based on cultural, legal and political sensitivities, several country/region-specific adaptations were made to the survey content. For example, questions on sexual orientation or gender identity were not asked in the Middle East. Based on the advice and

5 Due to lower base size for the LGBTQ+ group, differences may not test as statistically significant.

6 For example, the term “sexual orientation” was not shown in Algeria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates.

guidance of in-country experts, race and ethnicity questions were only asked in countries where it was not considered sensitive and/or offensive.

It is important to note that Ipsos follows a “no-harm” approach in surveying. Given the sensitive nature of the topic and in recognition of the fact that some of the questions, especially on personal experiences, could be triggering, all respondents were:

- informed about the topic and the objectives of the survey and asked for their explicit consent to participate before the start of the survey;
- informed up front that all questions are voluntary and an option of “prefer not to answer” was available in each question, and could be selected if the topic was uncomfortable or if the respondent did not want to answer for any other reasons; and
- provided with a list of local resources and helplines if they wished to seek support.

The survey questions included options of “Don’t know” or “Prefer not to answer” as valid response options that respondents could select if they did not wish to answer a particular question or did not feel they had enough information to share an opinion on the topic.

The data and analysis presented in this paper does not exclude these cases and includes a proportion of respondents who selected these options of “Don’t know” or “Prefer not to answer.” This proportion varies for each question and for each country and may be representative of a “response style” unique to each country and culture.

Please note that if the proportion of those who selected “Don’t know” or “Prefer not to answer” is excluded from the data, the analysis and interpretation may change and will differ from what is presented in this paper.

Where results do not add to 100 percent, it is due to rounding, or because the question allowed the selection of multiple responses.

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