

# Supporting a Safer Internet

 United Arab Emirates  
(UAE) Findings



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Centre for International  
Governance Innovation

 IDRC • CRDI  
Canada

 Ipsos

# About This Study



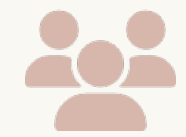
**Online gender-based violence (OGBV)** is recognized as one of the most widespread forms of interpersonal violence and, with rapid digitization, has become all too prevalent in today's online interactions.

OGBV takes many forms, including hacking, impersonation, surveillance/tracking, harassment/spamming, the non-consensual distribution of intimate photos and messages, and through recruiting victims into violent/harmful situations. The prevalence of OGBV is an **exacerbating factor in digital exclusion**. Yet currently there is **limited data** available on how various groups of people (women, men, LGBTQ+) experience the online world, the levels of harassment or violence they face and how the impacts of OGBV unfold on individuals as well as on the overall composition and freedom of the online world.

The Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) have embarked on the project **Supporting a Safer Internet**. This project engaged an array of leading experts in the field to conduct research on this growing phenomenon with the aim to present a final report with proposed programmatic, policy and legal options for **mitigating OGBV for a safer online world**.

A key part of the overall project is a **research survey (led by Ipsos) that seeks to understand people's experiences online and the incidence of OGBV, with a specific focus on countries in the Global South**.

# Methodology



## TARGET AUDIENCE

General population representative survey covering respondents aged 18–74 in Canada and the United States and 16–74 in all other countries. Quotas and weighting by age, gender and region to ensure a representative sample.



## SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The survey instrument was designed in consultation with the steering committee (subject matter experts from and/or partnering with CIGI/IDRC). Ipsos global and regional experts also contributed from the point of view of both regional nuances and operational feasibility.

Pilot interviews were conducted in each country and based on the feedback, further adjustments were made to the content and flow, as well as administration (instructions/descriptions, etc.).

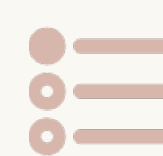


## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

An online survey was supplemented by offline interviews in selected countries.

*(In countries where internet penetration is limited or based on limitations of online panel coverage, offline interviews [face-to-face or telephone] were also conducted to ensure inclusion of respondents that may have been under-represented or excluded online.)*

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



## FIELDWORK DATES AND LENGTH OF INTERVIEW

**Fieldwork dates:** June 25 to September 2, 2021

**Length of interview:** Online survey: ~15 minutes and offline survey: ~30–35 minutes

# Reporting Conventions and Considerations

**1** The term “LGBTQ+” has been used throughout the report where “+” stands for each country’s unique traditions, norms and definitions.

The survey asked three separate questions on 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.

**2** Due to **lower base size for the LGBTQ+ group**, differences may not test as statistically significant. Based on 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.

**3** Some **questions were not asked in certain countries**.  
A full list of country-specific adaptations can be made available upon request.

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

## REPORTING CONVENTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

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 a list of local resources and helplines if they wished to seek support.

As mentioned above, 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 the report **do not exclude** these cases and include 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 report.



# UAE Findings

“Online gender-based violence has been minimized and ignored because of the mistaken belief that online abuse is not as harmful as abuse that happens in the physical world. To combat this misconception, it is vital to understand the many forms that online gender-based violence takes, who the victims are and what harms arise as a result of it.”

Suzie Dunn, CIGI Senior Fellow

Total surveyed: **1,000**

Total LGBTQ+ respondents: N/A

*Note:* Respondents were not asked about their sexual orientation or non-binary gender identity in this country.



- 73% of UAE men and 64% of UAE women respondents experienced online harm(s).
- Of the women impacted, 44% believe they were targeted because of their gender identity.



- 57% of the women surveyed feel that their mental health was negatively or very negatively impacted by the incident(s) of online harm.
- 32% of women respondents took a break from social media after experiencing online harm(s).





- 27% of those surveyed who experienced some form of online harm did not reach out to anyone following the incident.
- 30% of respondents believe that the police have the most responsibility to help end OGBV.

# Internet Access

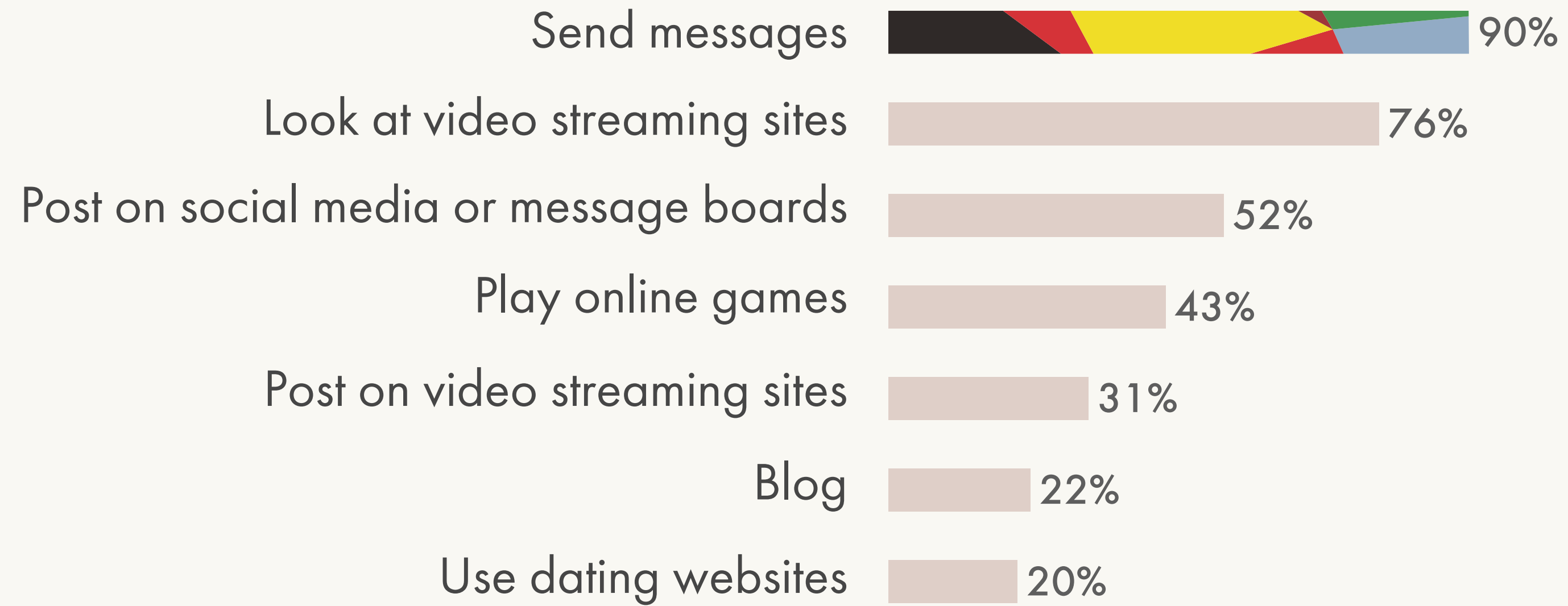
95%

of UAE respondents have personal access to the internet.

Q1. How do you access the internet?

*Note: "Personal access" refers to access through a personal smartphone, tablet and/or a personal computer.*

# Frequency of Daily Use

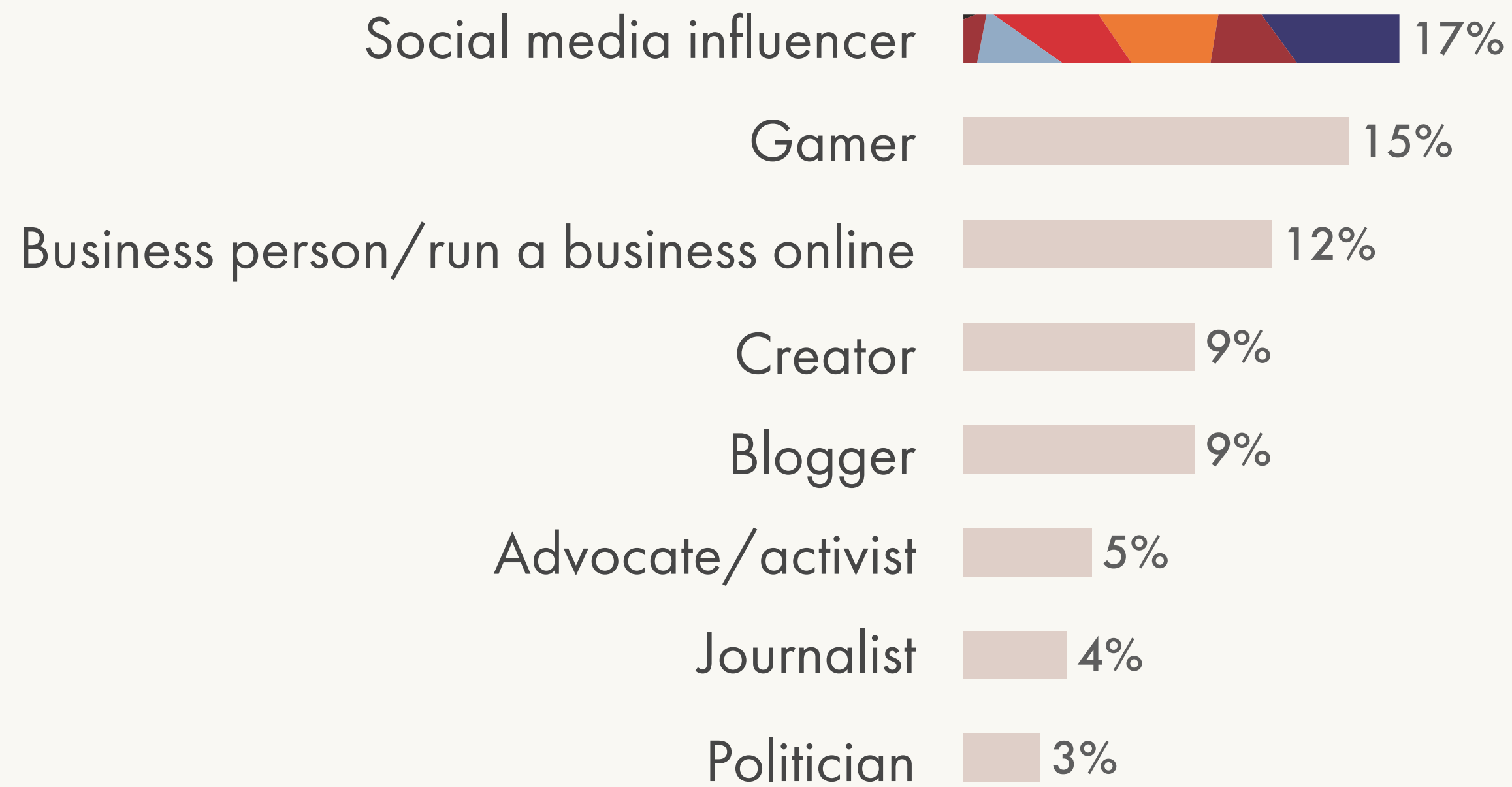


90%

browse social media sites  
or message boards daily.

Q2. Please indicate how often you do the following.

# Type of Internet User



75%

describe themselves as an "average/typical" internet user.

Q3. What kind of an internet user are you? Select all that apply.

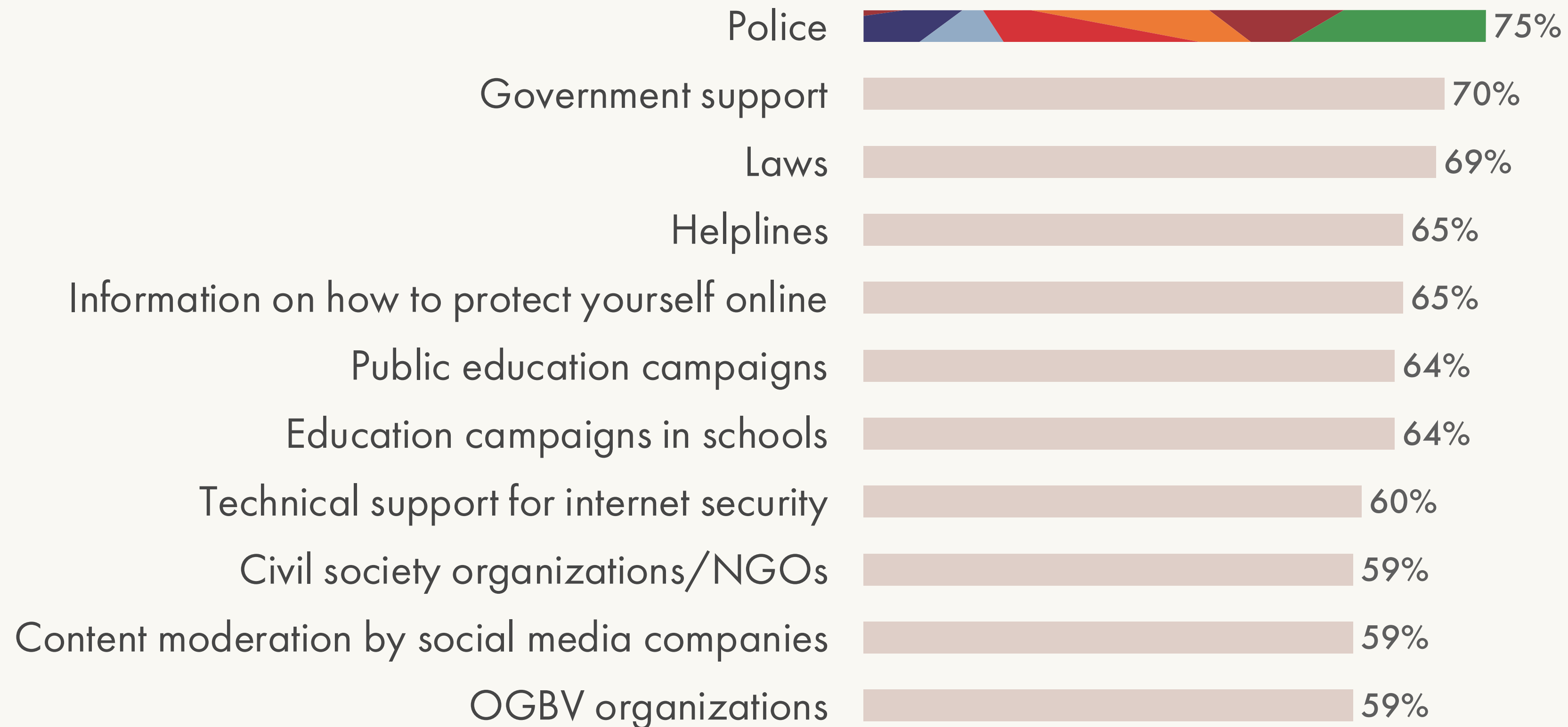
# Social Media Following

48%

say they have a significant social media following.

Q4. Would you say you have a significant public following on your social media accounts?

# Most Effective Resources Available to Help Respond to OGBV

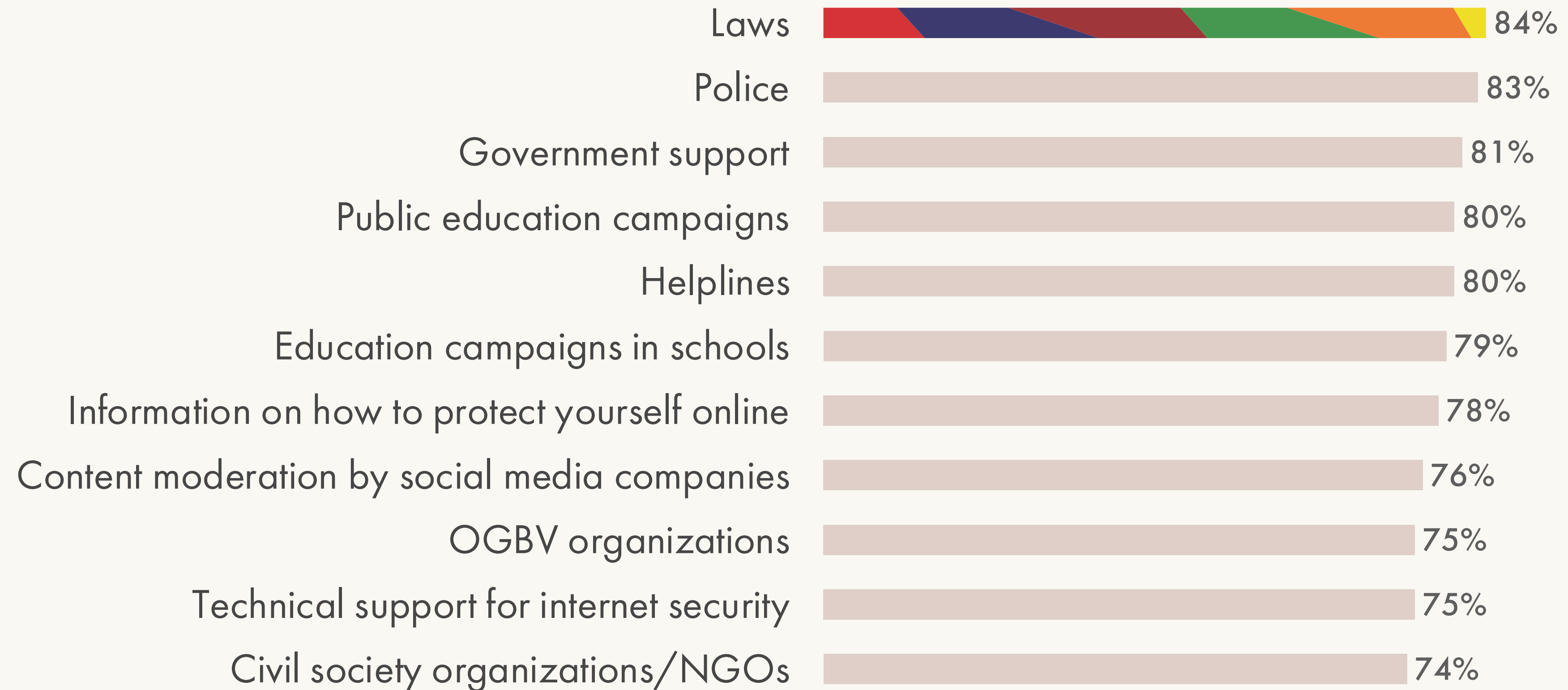


Q5. Please rate the effectiveness of resources available in your community to help respond to online gender-based violence on a scale of 1–5 with 1 being very ineffective resources and 5 being very effective resources.

*Note:* The percentages reported are for T2B scores, i.e., those who rated 4 or 5 on the scale of 1–5 (T2B = top two box).



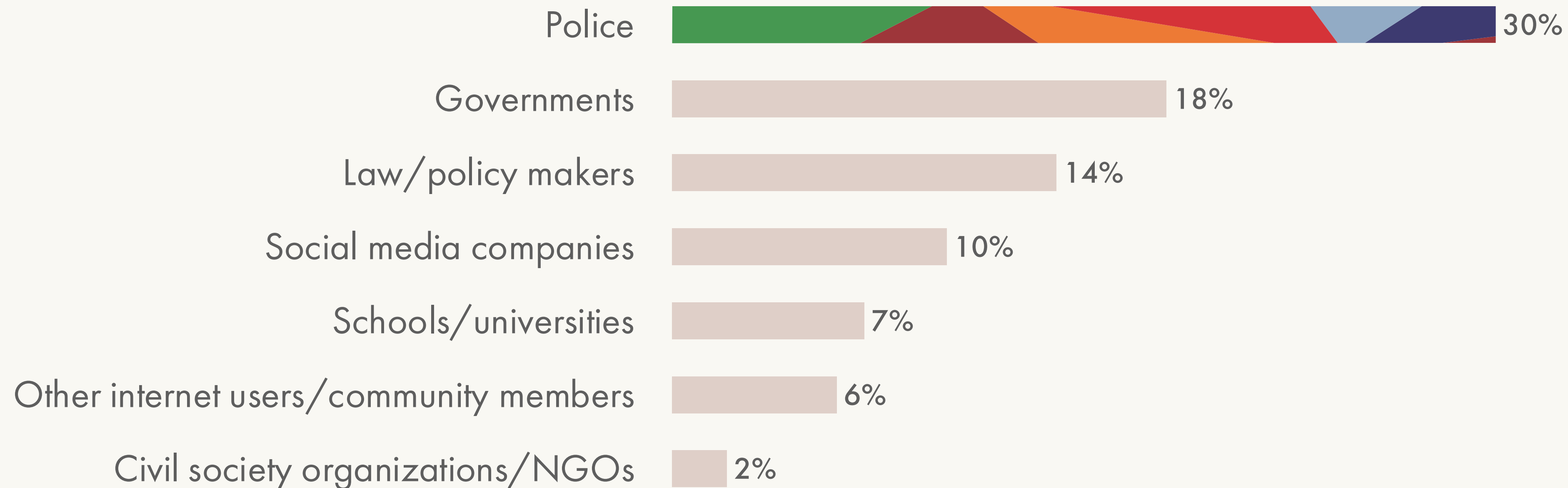
# The Most Important Resources for Addressing OGBV



Q6. On a scale of 1–5 with 1 being not important at all and 5 being very important, how important do you think the following mediums/resources are in addressing online gender-based violence?

Note: The percentages reported are for T2B scores, i.e., those who rated 4 or 5 on the scale of 1–5.

# Organizations That Have the Most Responsibility to Help End OGBV



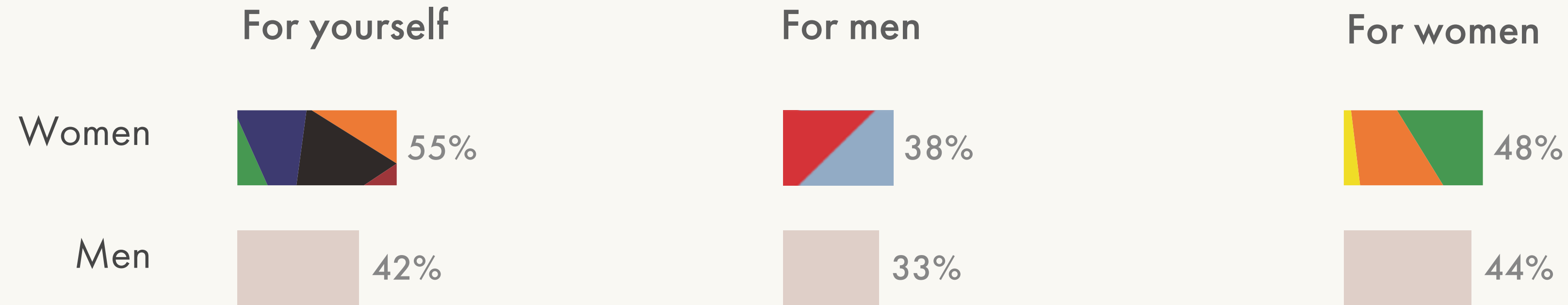
Q7. Please rank this list from 1 to 7, placing the organization you think has the most responsibility to help end online gender-based violence at the top (rank 1) and the organization that you think has the least responsibility at the bottom (rank 7).

*Note:* The percentages reported are for rank 1 scores, i.e., organizations with the most responsibility.

**79%** strongly or somewhat agree that they have the knowledge or skills needed to help someone who has experienced an incident of OGBV.

Q8. If someone you know were to experience an incident of online gender-based violence, to what extent do you agree that you have the skills or knowledge needed to help the person with their problem?

# How Big a Problem Is OGBV in Your Country?



Q9. How big an issue do you think online gender-based violence is for yourself, men and women in your country? (Based on a 5-point scale where 1 means “not a problem at all” and 5 means “very big problem.”)

Note: The percentages reported are for T2B scores, i.e., those who rated 4 or 5 on the scale of 1–5.

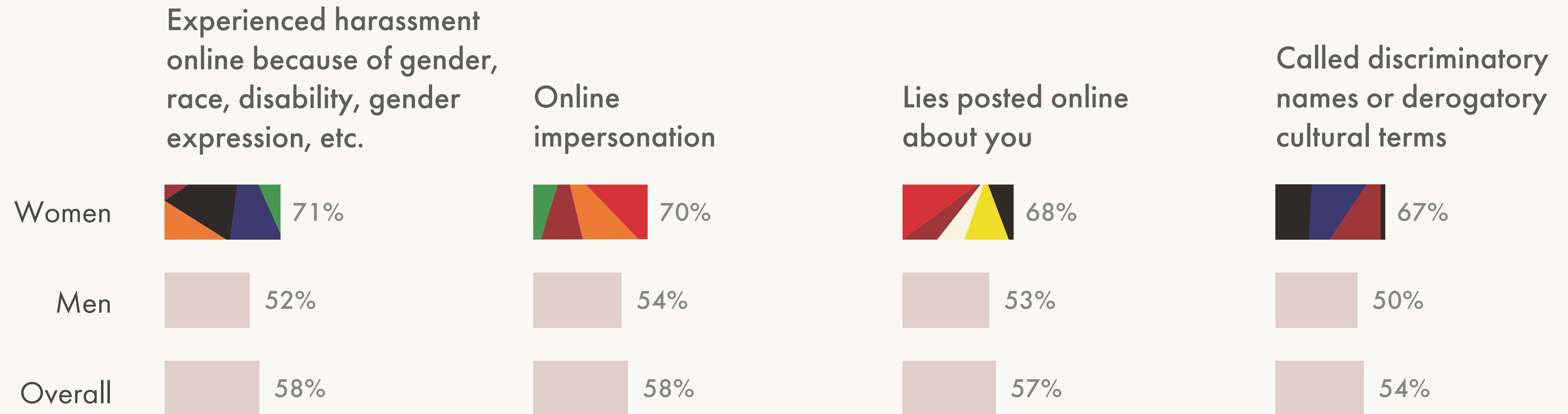
# Behaviour Harmfulness Level

	Men	Women	Overall
Identity and reputation-based harms	52%	69%	57%
Privacy and security-based harms	54%	70%	58%
Coercion and harassment	53%	69%	57%
Sexual harms	54%	73%	59%

Q10. If the following were to happen to you or someone you know, how harmful would you consider these online behaviours? Please rate on a scale of 1–5 where 1 is not very harmful and 5 is extremely harmful.

Note: The percentages reported are for “extremely harmful (rated 5/TB)” (TB = top box).

# Identity and Reputation-Based Harms

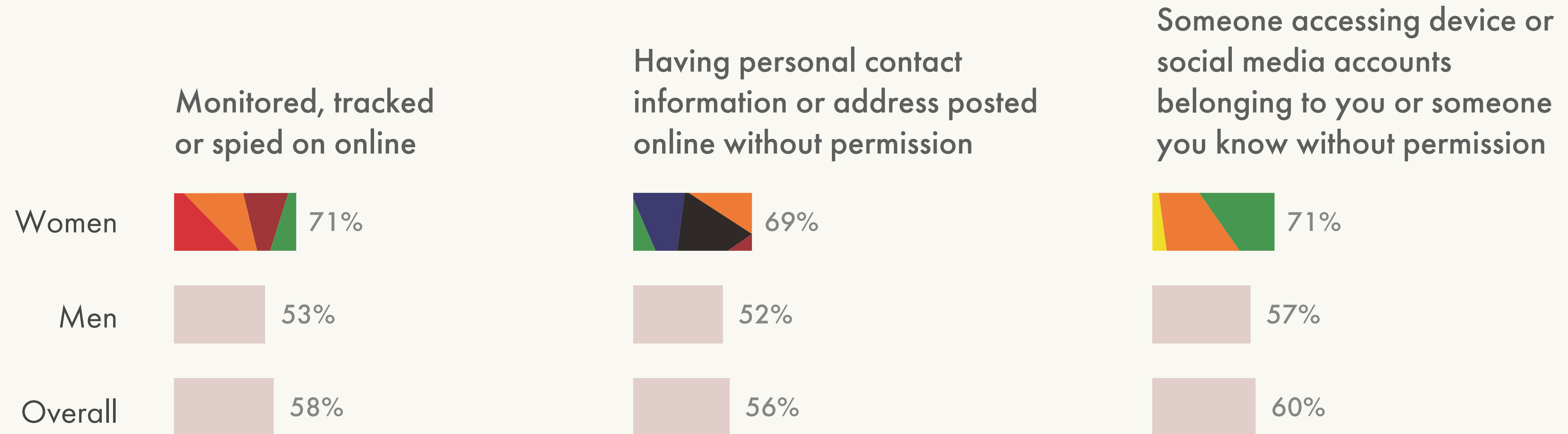


Q10. If the following were to happen to you or someone you know, how harmful would you consider these online behaviours? Please rate on a scale of 1–5 where 1 is not very harmful and 5 is extremely harmful.

Note: The percentages reported are for “extremely harmful (rated 5/TB).”



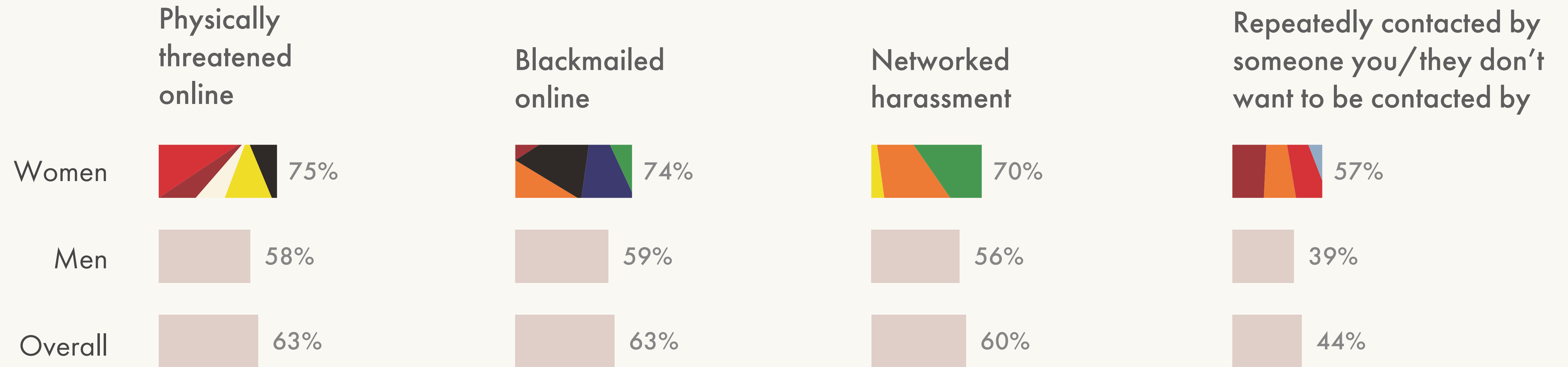
# Privacy and Security-Based Harms



Q10. If the following were to happen to you or someone you know, how harmful would you consider these online behaviours? Please rate on a scale of 1–5 where 1 is not very harmful and 5 is extremely harmful.

Note: The percentages reported are for “extremely harmful (rated 5/TB).”

# Coercion and Harassment



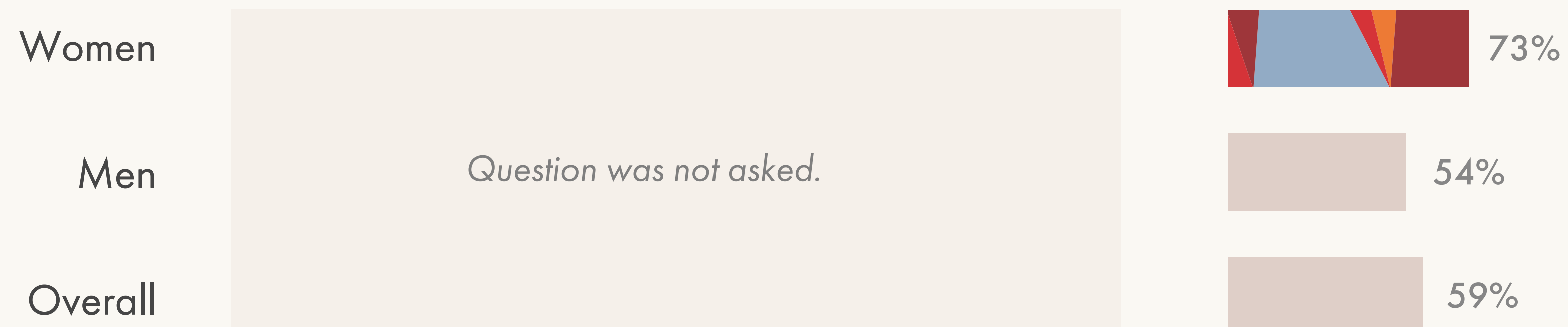
Q10. If the following were to happen to you or someone you know, how harmful would you consider these online behaviours? Please rate on a scale of 1–5 where 1 is not very harmful and 5 is extremely harmful.

Note: The percentages reported are for “extremely harmful (rated 5/TB).”

# Sexual Harms

Personal nude/sexual images of you/someone you know shared or shown to someone else or posted online without permission

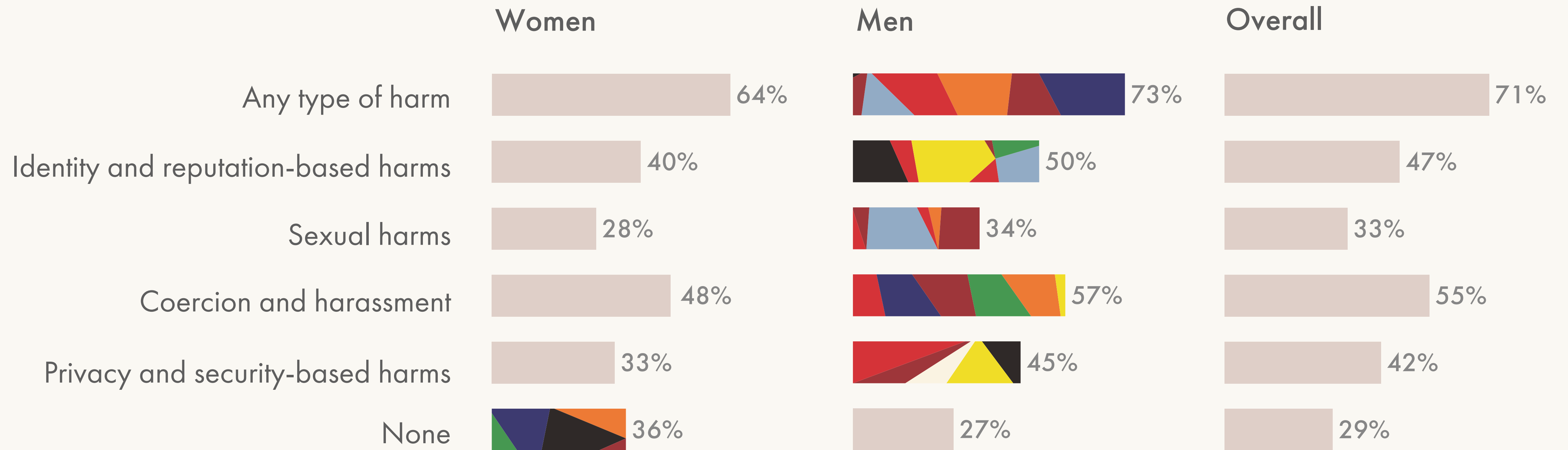
Unwanted sexual images sent to you/someone you know



Q10. If the following were to happen to you or someone you know, how harmful would you consider these online behaviours? Please rate on a scale of 1–5 where 1 is not very harmful and 5 is extremely harmful.

Note: The percentages reported are for “extremely harmful (rated 5/TB).”

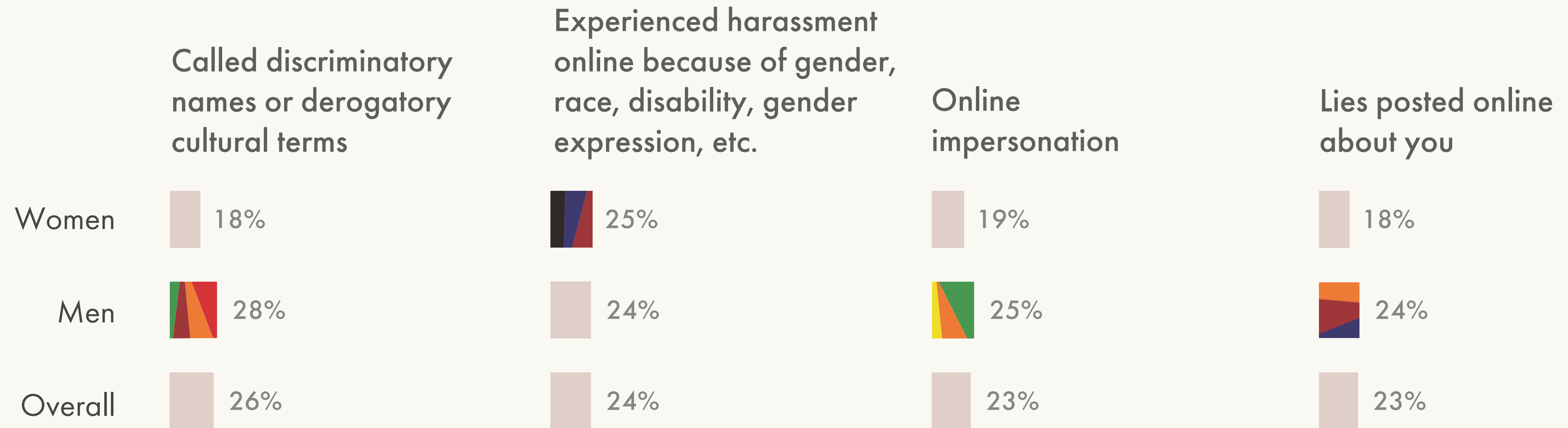
# Personal Experience of Harm



Q11. Have you ever personally experienced any of the following?

# Identity and Reputation-Based Harms

UAE  
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF HARM



Q11. Have you ever personally experienced any of the following?

# Privacy and Security-Based Harms

UAE  
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF HARM

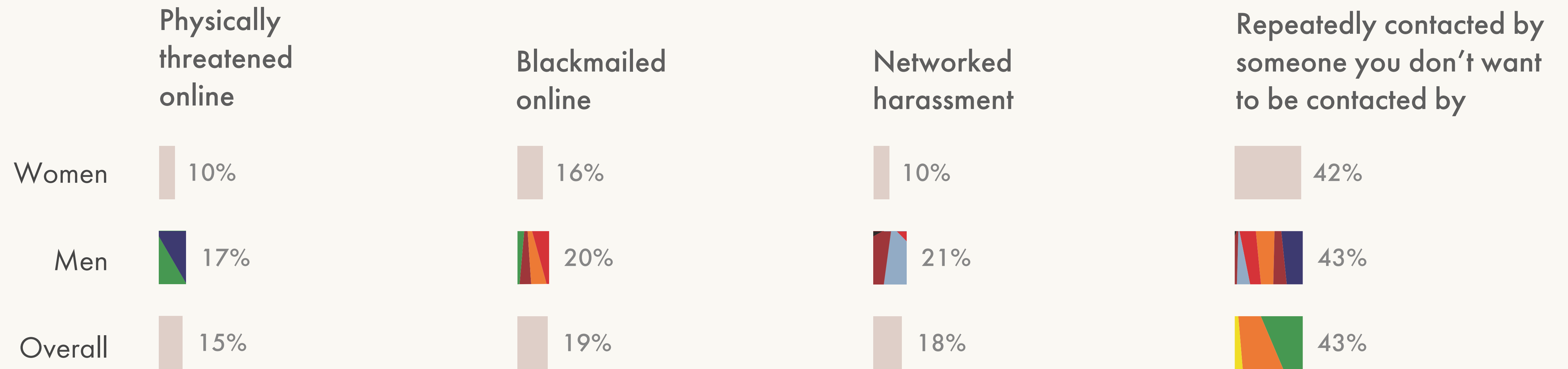


Q11. Have you ever personally experienced any of the following?



# Coercion and Harassment

UAE  
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF HARM



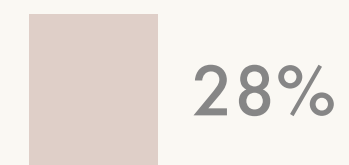
Q11. Have you ever personally experienced any of the following?

# Sexual Harms

Personal nude/sexual images of you shared or shown to someone else or posted online without permission

Unwanted sexual images sent to you

Women



Men

*Question was not asked.*

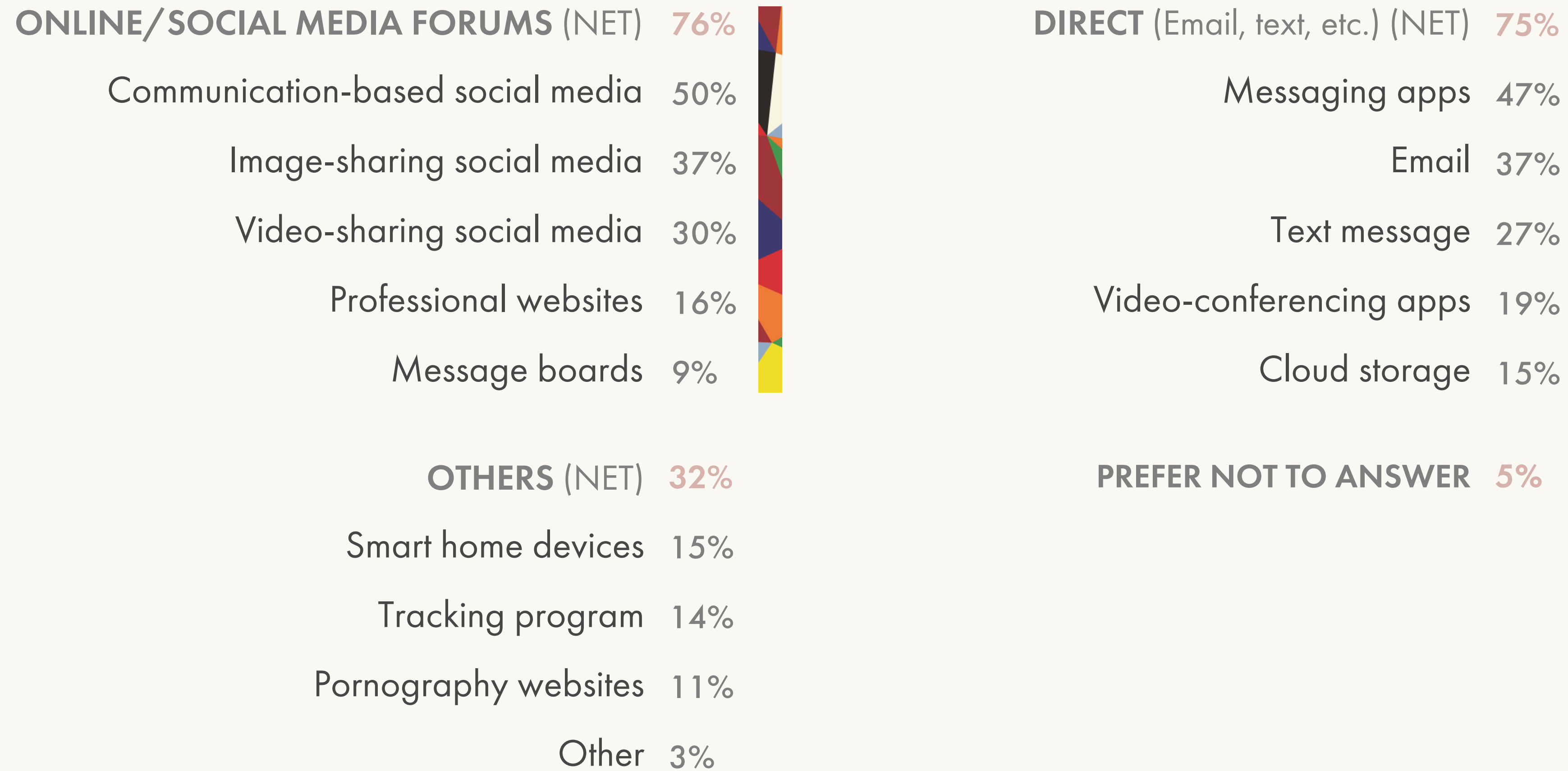


Overall



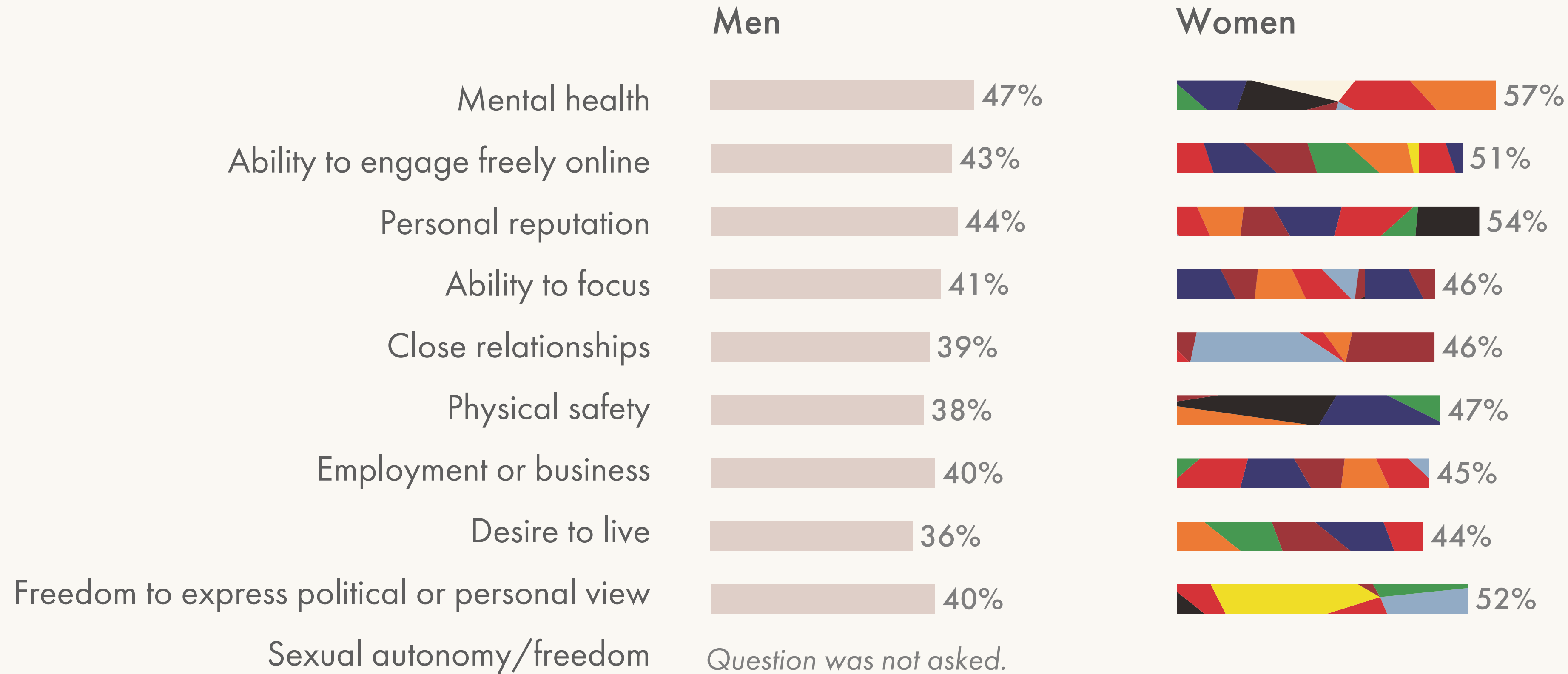
Q11. Have you ever personally experienced any of the following?

# Platforms Used in the Incidents



Q12. What platforms or messaging apps were involved in these incidents? Select all that apply.

# Impact of Harm on Personal Life




Q13. 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?

Note: The percentages reported are for T2B scores, i.e., those who rated 4 or 5 on the scale of 1–5.

# Actions in Response to Incidents

44%

blocked or muted someone following an incident of online harm.


 Changed the privacy settings on your accounts or devices	36%
Took a break from social media	25%
Changed your contact information	25%
Stopped/reduced posting on a certain platform	22%
Deleted or deactivated a social media account	21%
Stopped posting about a certain issue	20%
Changed your profile information	17%
Searched for content about yourself online	15%
Changed your behaviour in a relationship	15%
Avoided social occasions or events	14%
Acted differently in the real world to protect your safety	14%
Stopped participating online altogether	14%
Replaced your device with a new one	12%
Changed part of your identity	10%
Bought something to add to your security	10%
Took time off work or school	10%
Moved to a new address	8%
None of the above	7%

Q14. Did you take any of the following actions in response to any of these online incidents that you have experienced? Select all that apply.

# Actions in Response to Incidents

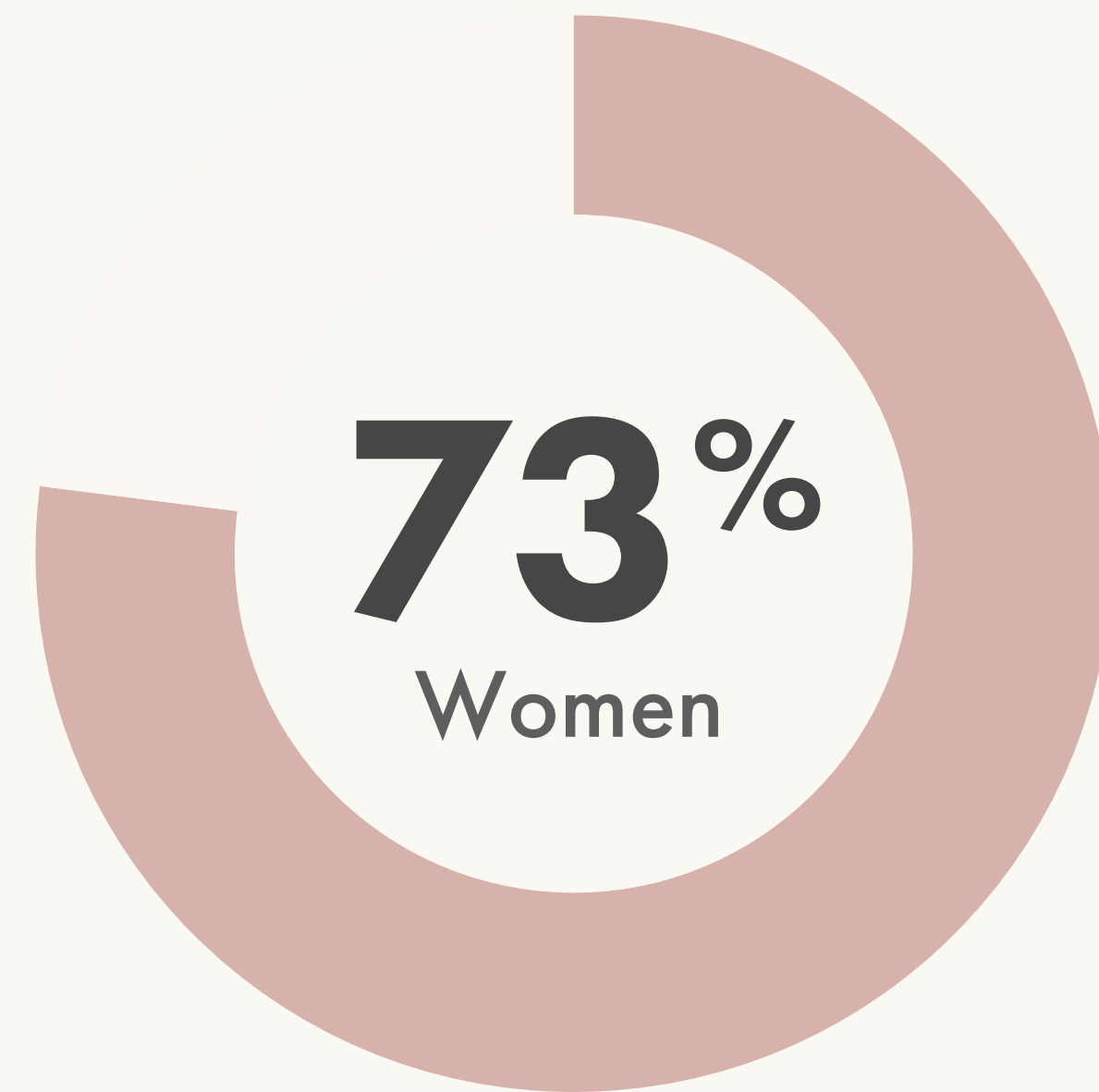
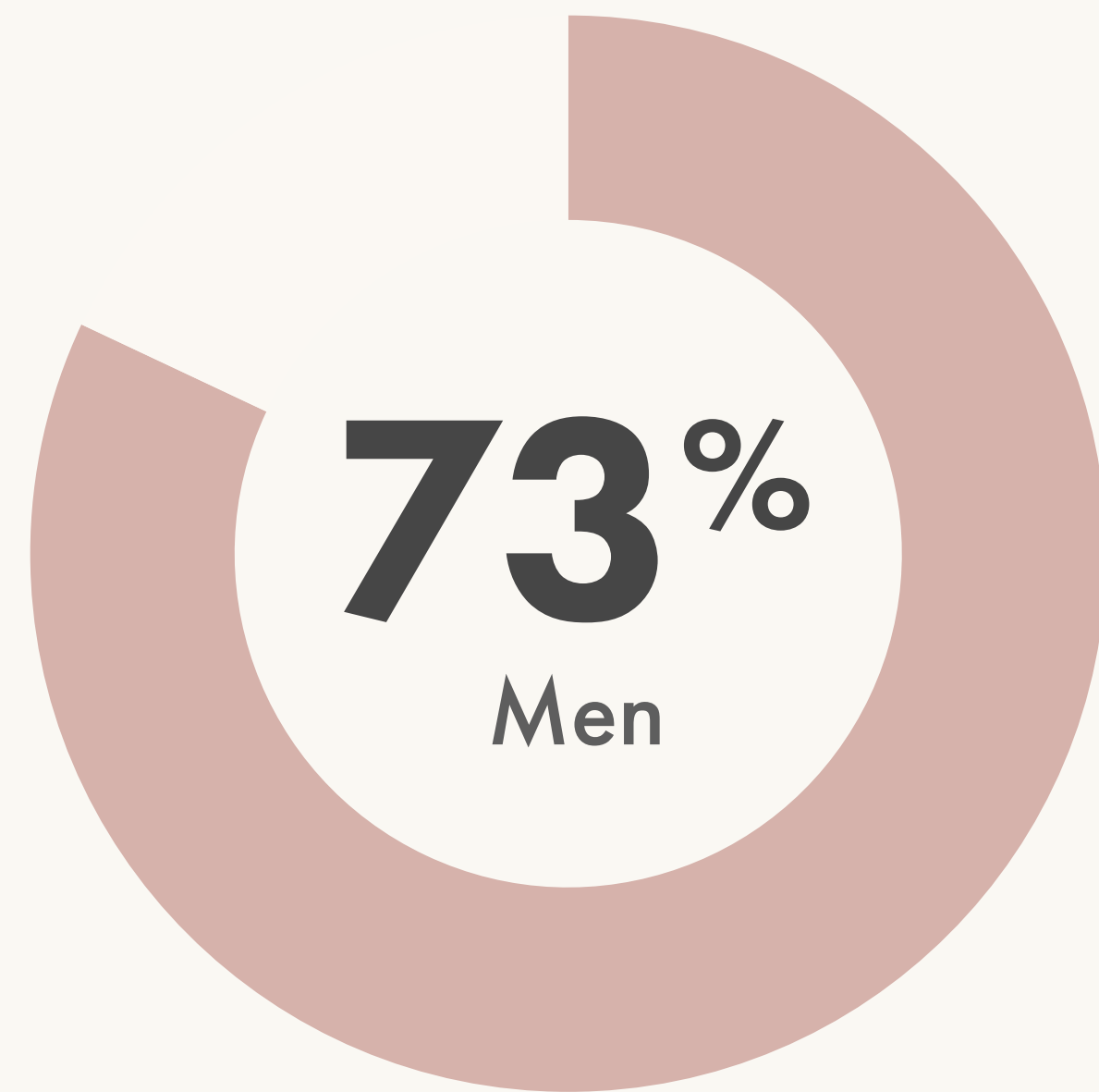


Q14. Did you take any of the following actions in response to any of these online incidents that you have experienced? Select all that apply.

	Men	Women
Changed the privacy settings on your accounts or devices	35%	40%
Took a break from social media	23%	32%
Stopped/reduced posting on a platform	20%	27%
Deleted or deactivated a social media account	19%	26%
Searched for content about yourself online	16%	11%
 Blocked or muted someone	40%	55%
Changed your profile information	16%	19%
Changed your contact information	24%	25%
Avoided social occasions or events	13%	15%
Changed your behaviour in a relationship	15%	14%
Stopped posting about a certain issue	19%	22%
Acted differently in the real world to protect safety	14%	14%
Stopped participating online altogether	15%	12%
Replaced your device with a new one	12%	14%
Changed part of your identity	10%	11%
Bought something to add to your security	11%	7%
Took time off work or school	11%	8%
Moved to a new address	8%	6%
None of the above	8%	5%

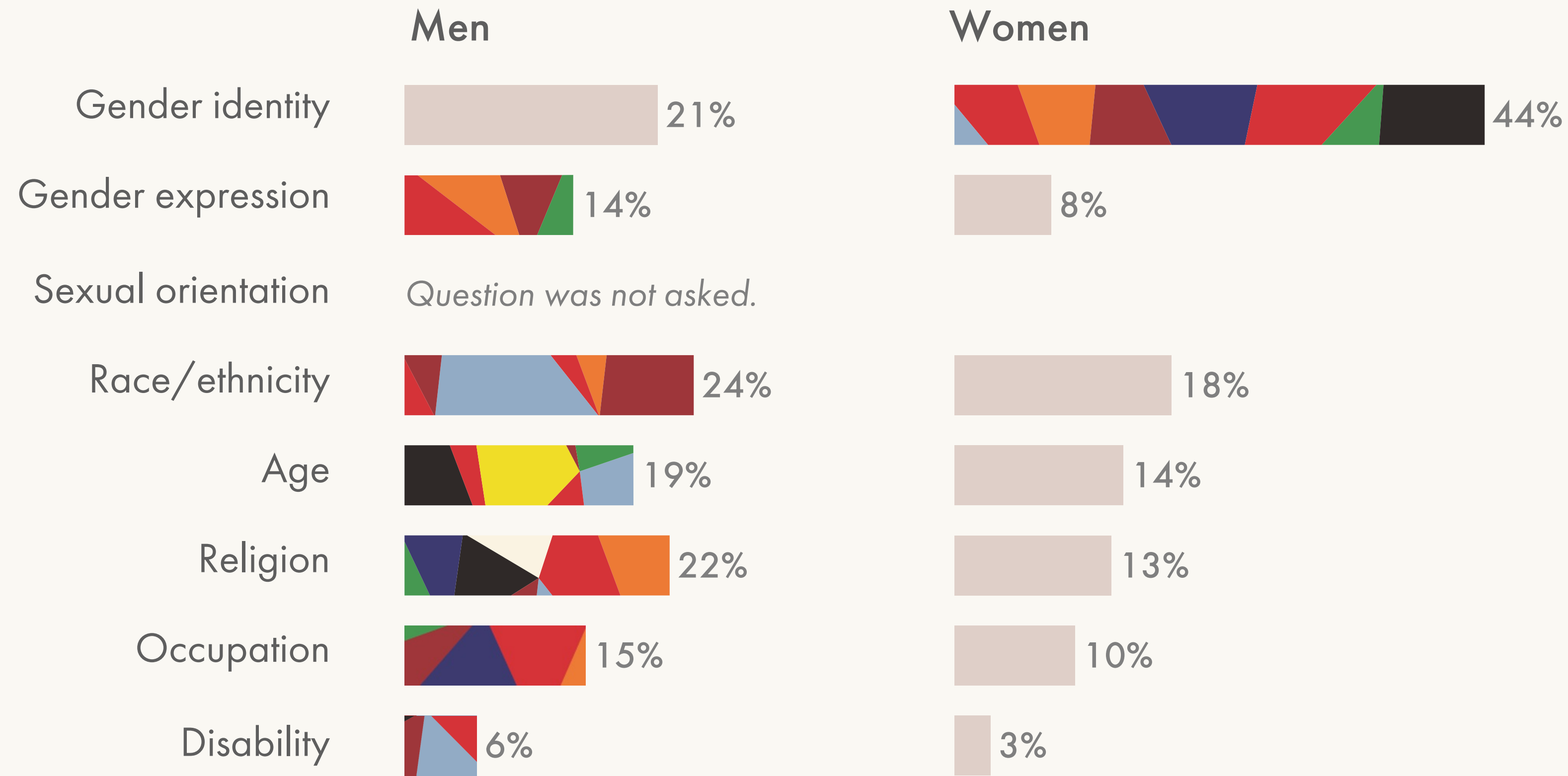
# Frequency of Harm

Once/a few times:



Q15. When the incident(s) occurred, how often did you experience it?

# Reason for Being Targeted



Q16. 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.



# Types of People Conducting Harm

**CLOSE** (Partner/friends/family) (NET) **30%**

- Friend 14%
- Ex-intimate partner 9%
- Family member 9%
- Current intimate partner 6%

**KNOWN** (Co-worker/teacher, etc.) (NET) **30%**

- Co-worker 13%
- Client/customer 10%
- Another student 9%
- Teacher/coach 5%

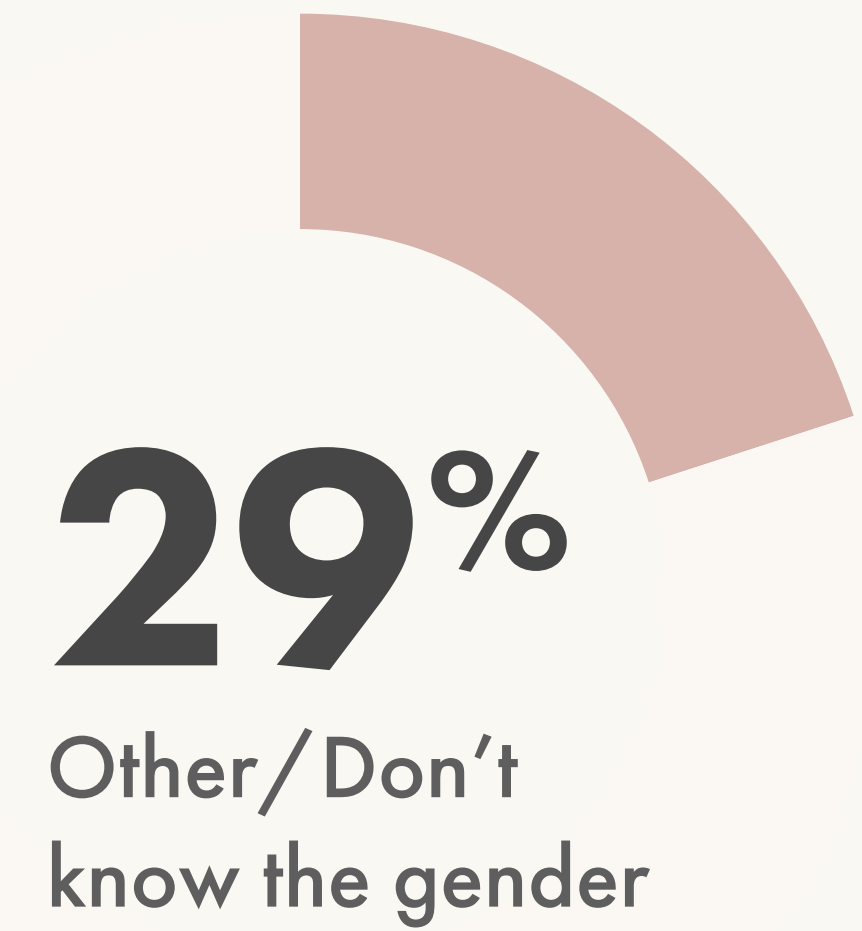
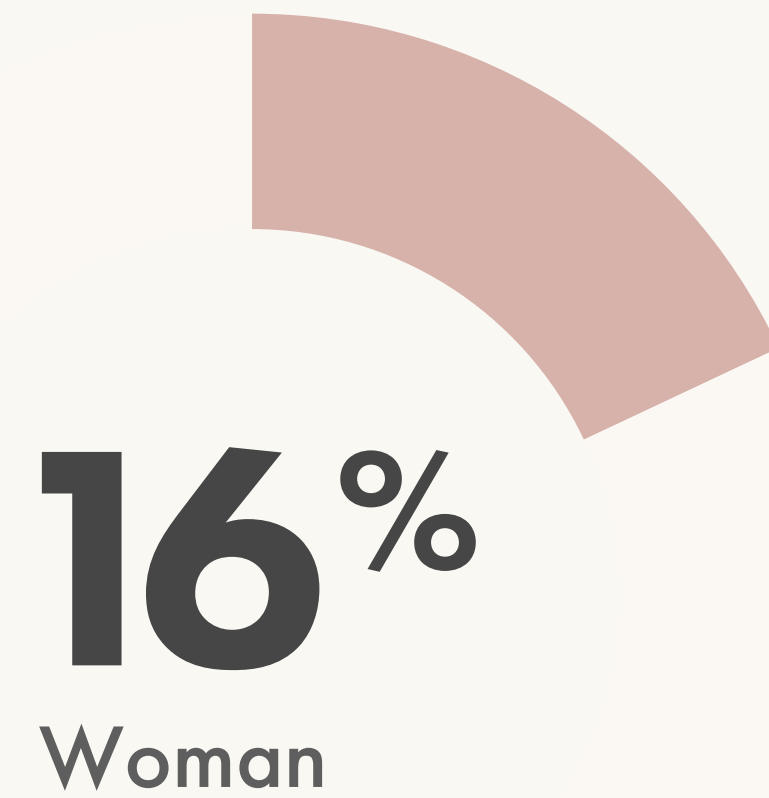
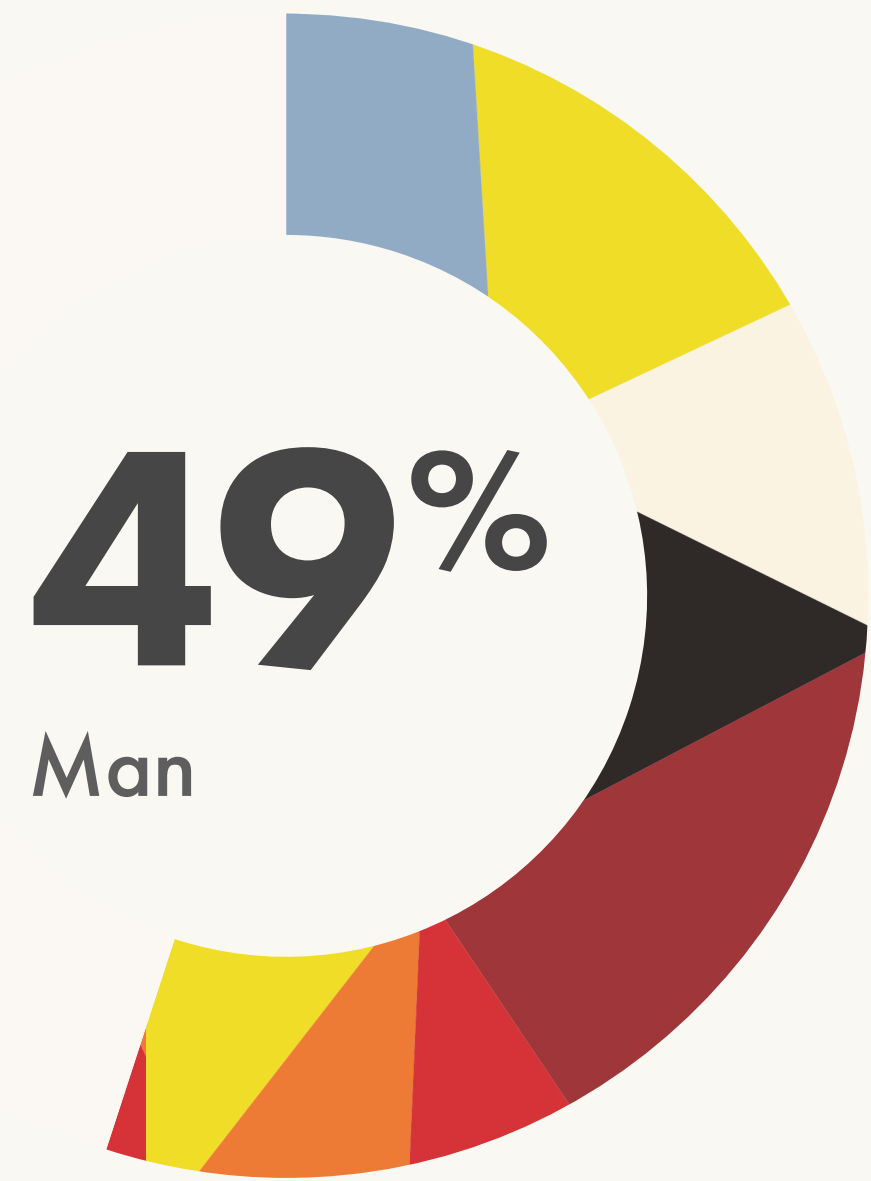
 **OTHERS** (Not known) (NET) **64%**

- Someone I've never met/anonymous 47%
- A random group of people 15%
- Could not be determined 10%
- Member of an identifiable online group 8%
- Politicians or public authorities 5%
- Other 2%

**PREFER NOT TO ANSWER** **9%**

Q17. Thinking of the online incident that had the most impact on your life, who was the person who targeted you?  
Select all that apply.

# Gender of the Party Inflicting Harm



Q18. What was the gender of this person who targeted you?

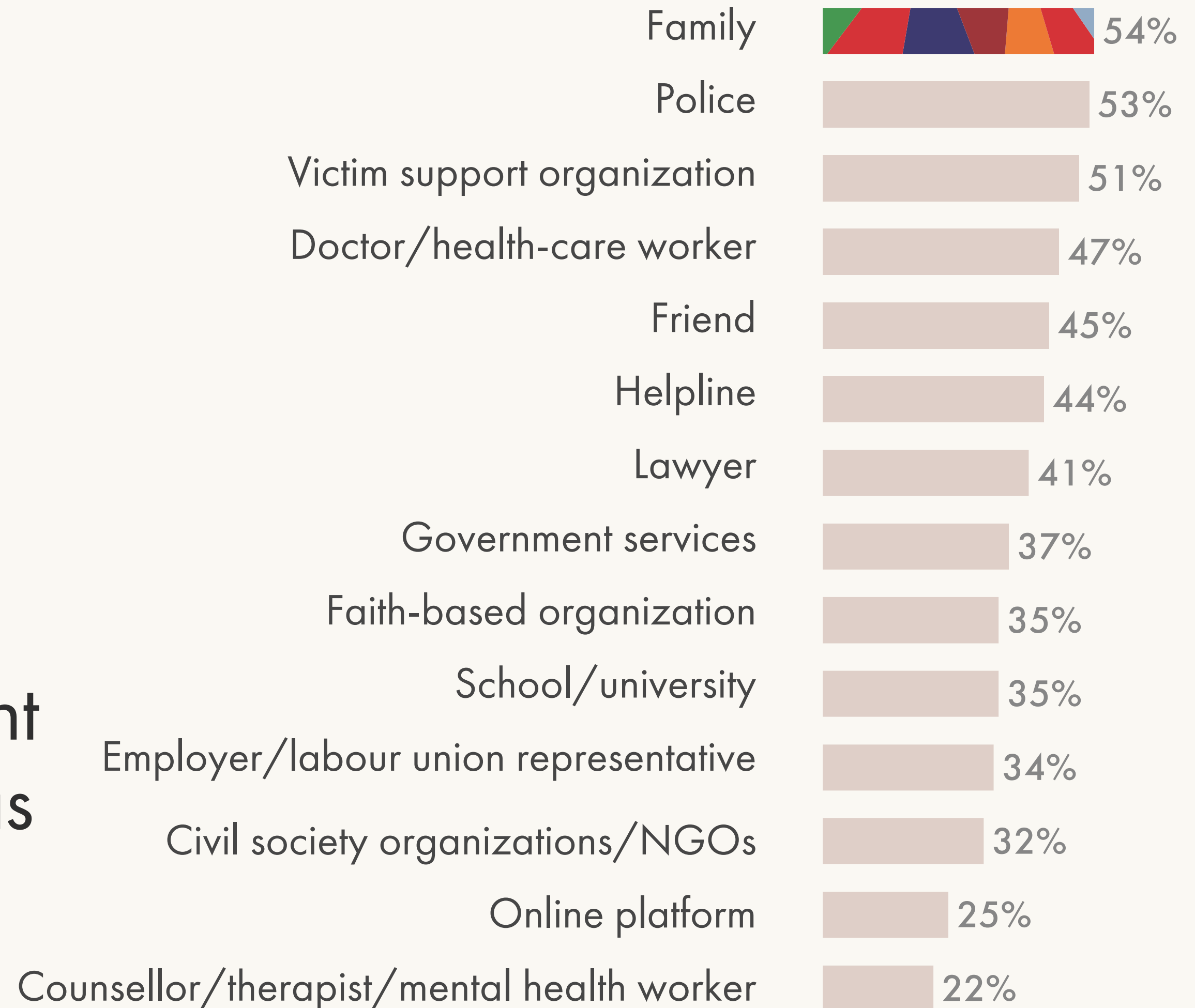
**27%** of those who experienced some form of online harm did not reach out to anyone after the incident.

Q19. Did you reach out to any of these people or organizations after the incident? Select all that apply.

# Effective Resources

63%

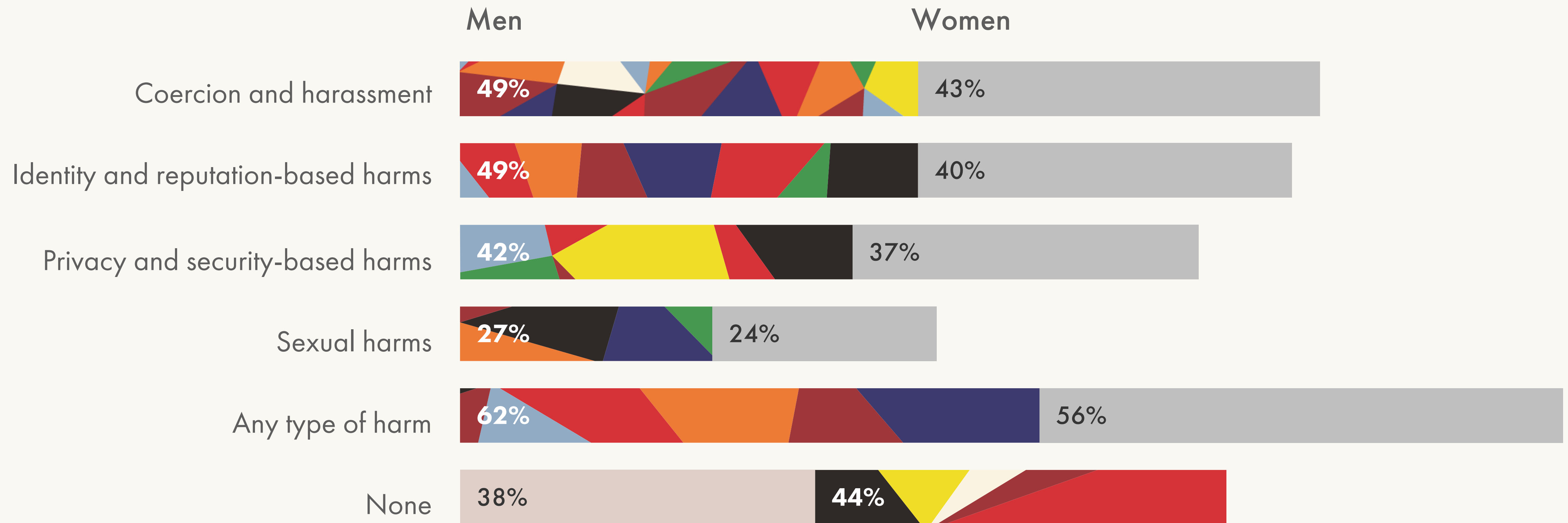
of those who contacted someone following an incident identified a spouse/partner as the most effective resource.



Q20. How effective were the people or organizations you contacted in helping you with the incident?

Note: The percentages reported are for "very effective (rated TB)."

# Witnessing Online Harms



Q21. Has anyone close to you ever experienced any of the following?

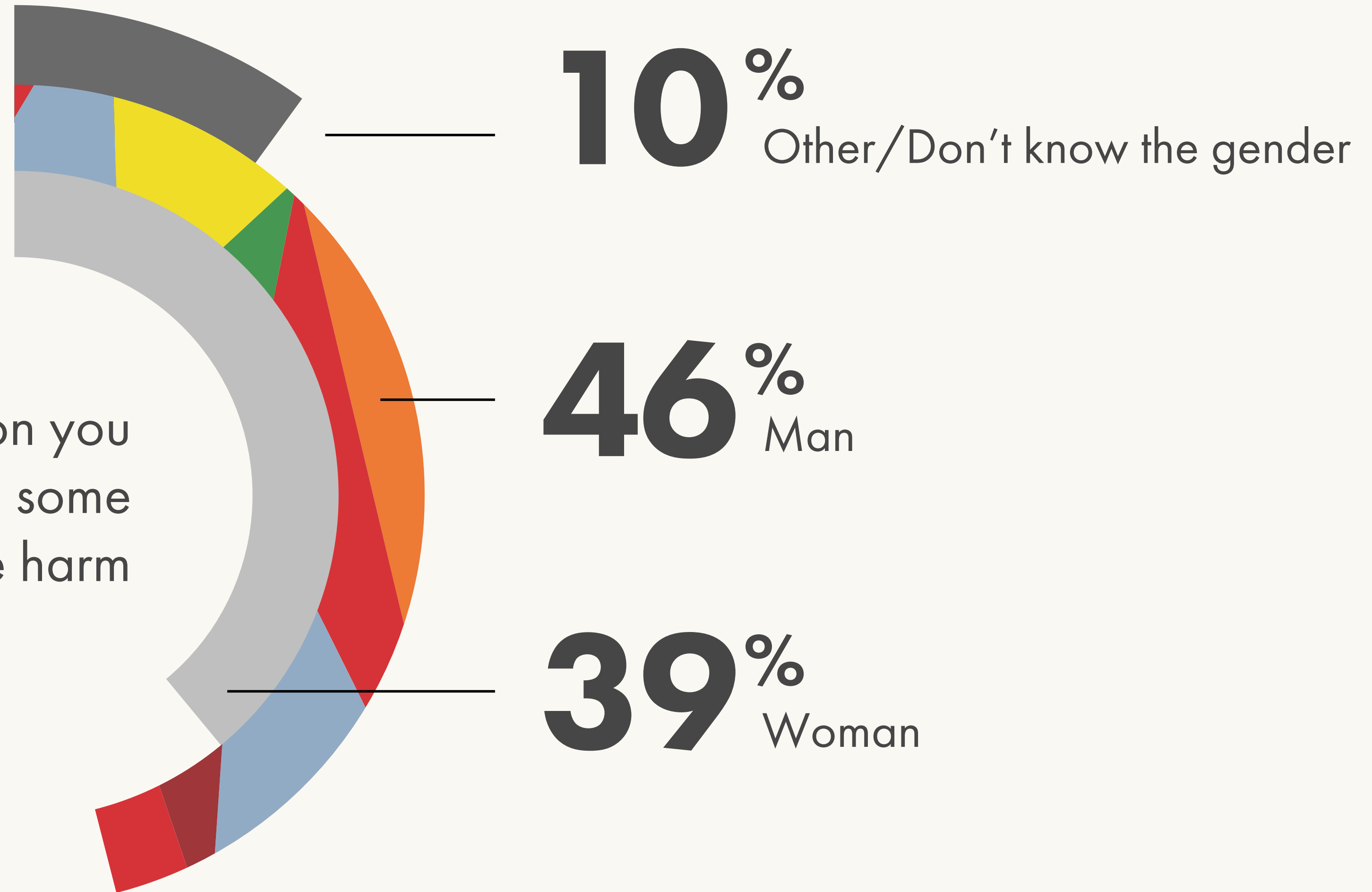
# Witnessing Online Harms

	Men	Women	
Called discriminatory names or derogatory cultural terms	27%	21%	Identity and reputation-based harms
Lies posted online about them	25%	24%	
Online impersonation	28%	26%	
Harassed because of gender, race, disability, etc.	25%	22%	
Someone accessing device or social media account without permission	30%	28%	Privacy and security-based harms
Monitored, tracked or spied on online	21%	16%	
Having personal contact information posted online without permission	23%	17%	
Physically threatened online	19%	15%	Coercion and harassment
Blackmailed online	23%	22%	
Networked harassment	19%	17%	
Repeatedly contacted by someone they don't want to be contacted by	35%	30%	
Personal nude or sexual images of them shared with someone or posted online	<i>Question was not asked.</i>		Sexual harms
Unwanted sexual images sent to them	27%	24%	

Q21. Has anyone close to you ever experienced any of the following?

# Victim's Gender

Gender of the person you know that experienced some form of online harm




Q22. What is the person's gender?

# Platforms Used in Incidents

42%

of incidents occurred on communication-based social media platforms.

 Messaging apps	34%
Image-sharing social media	24%
Video-sharing social media	20%
Text message	20%
Email	18%
Video-conferencing apps	12%
Smart home devices	11%
Cloud storage	10%
Tracking program	9%
Message boards	8%
Professional websites	8%
Pornography websites	7%
Prefer not to answer	7%

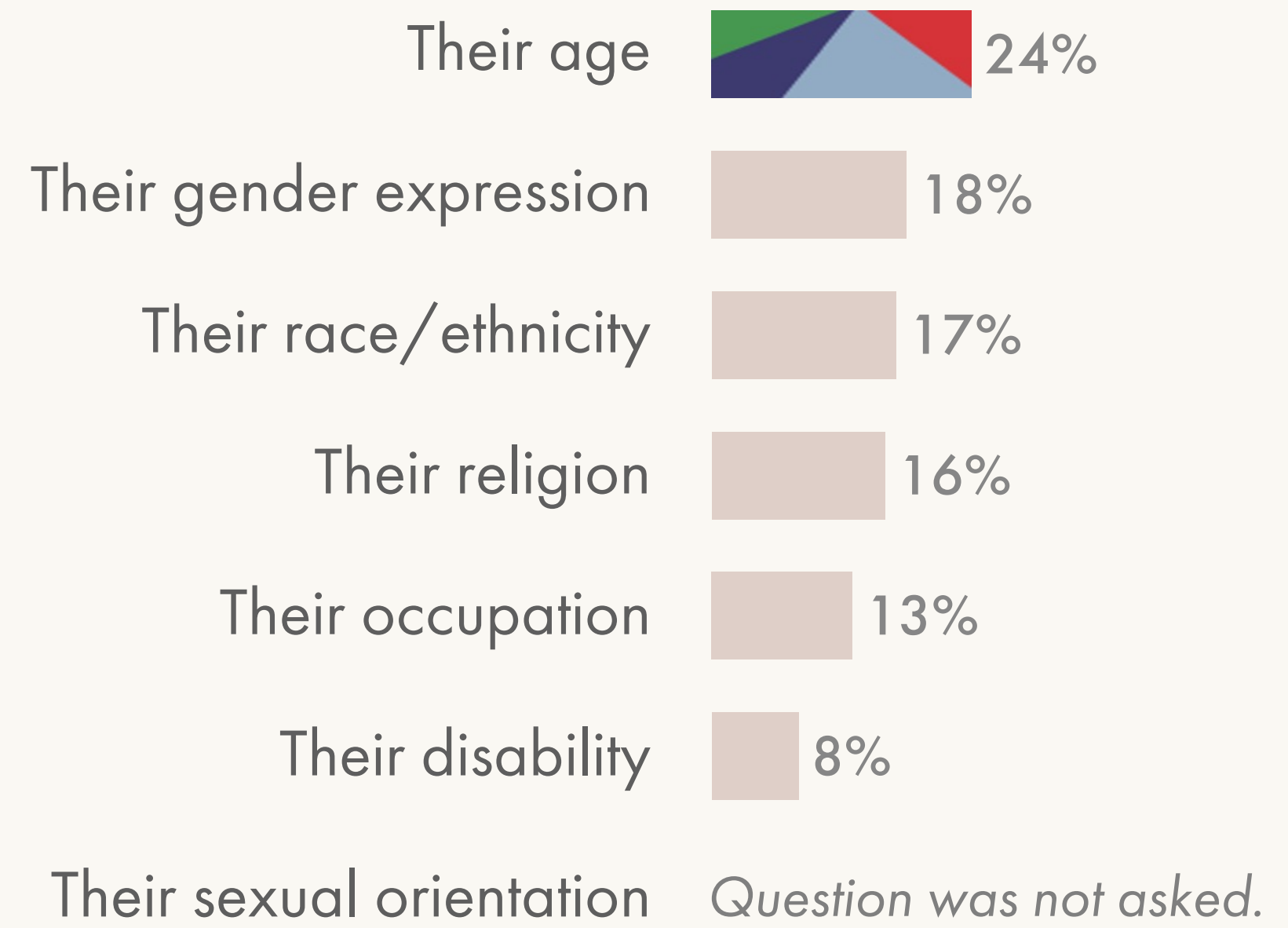
Q23. What platforms or messaging apps were involved in the incident? Select all that apply.



# Reason for Being Targeted

40%

believe that gender identity was the reason a person close to them experienced a form of online harm.



Q24. Do you think the person was targeted because of any of the following aspects about them? Select all that apply.

# Party Inflicting Harm

**CLOSE** (Partner/friends/family) (NET) **43%**

Friend 20%

Family member 13%

Ex-intimate partner 12%

Current intimate partner 8%

**KNOWN** (Co-worker/teacher, etc.) (NET) **31%**

Co-worker 15%

Another student 9%

Client/customer 9%

Teacher/coach 6%

 **OTHERS** (NET) **49%**

Anonymous person 21%

Stranger 18%

A random group of people (e.g., online mob) 10%

Could not be determined 9%

Member of an identifiable online group 6%

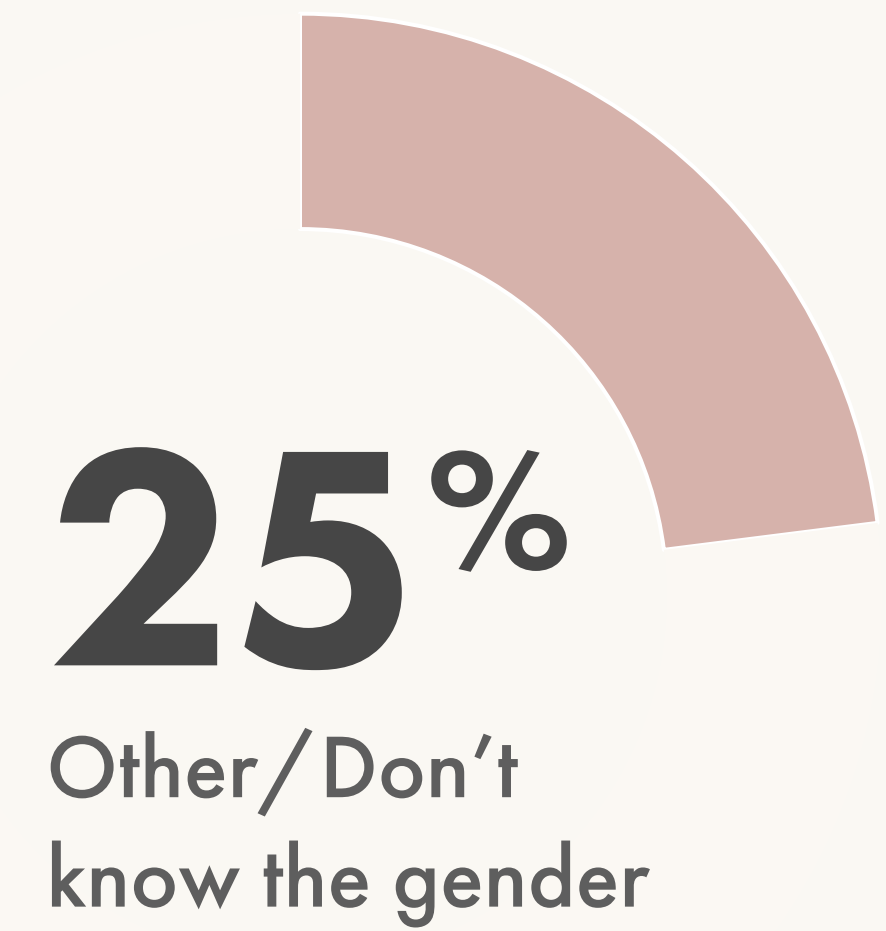
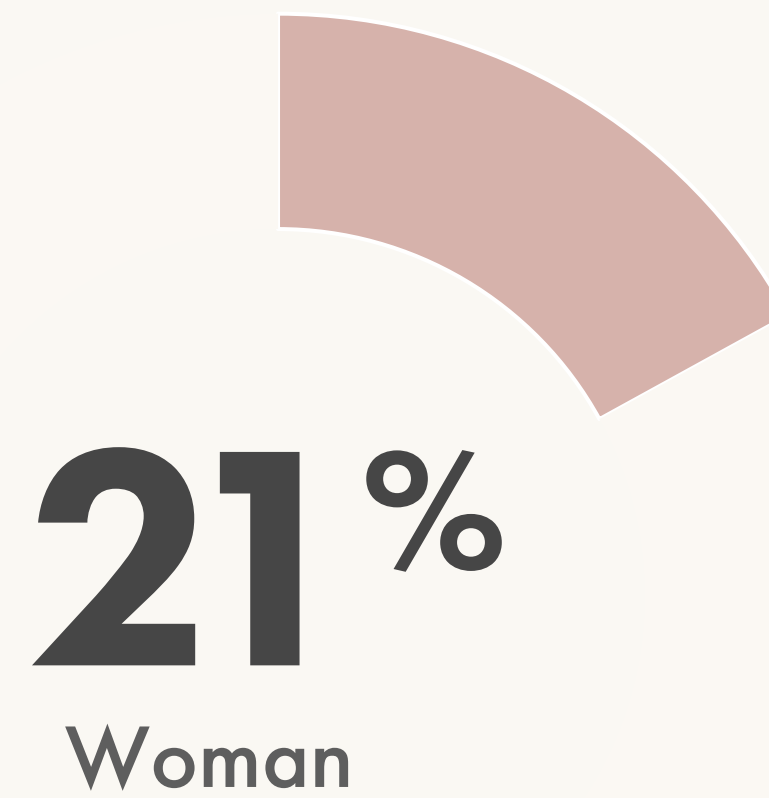
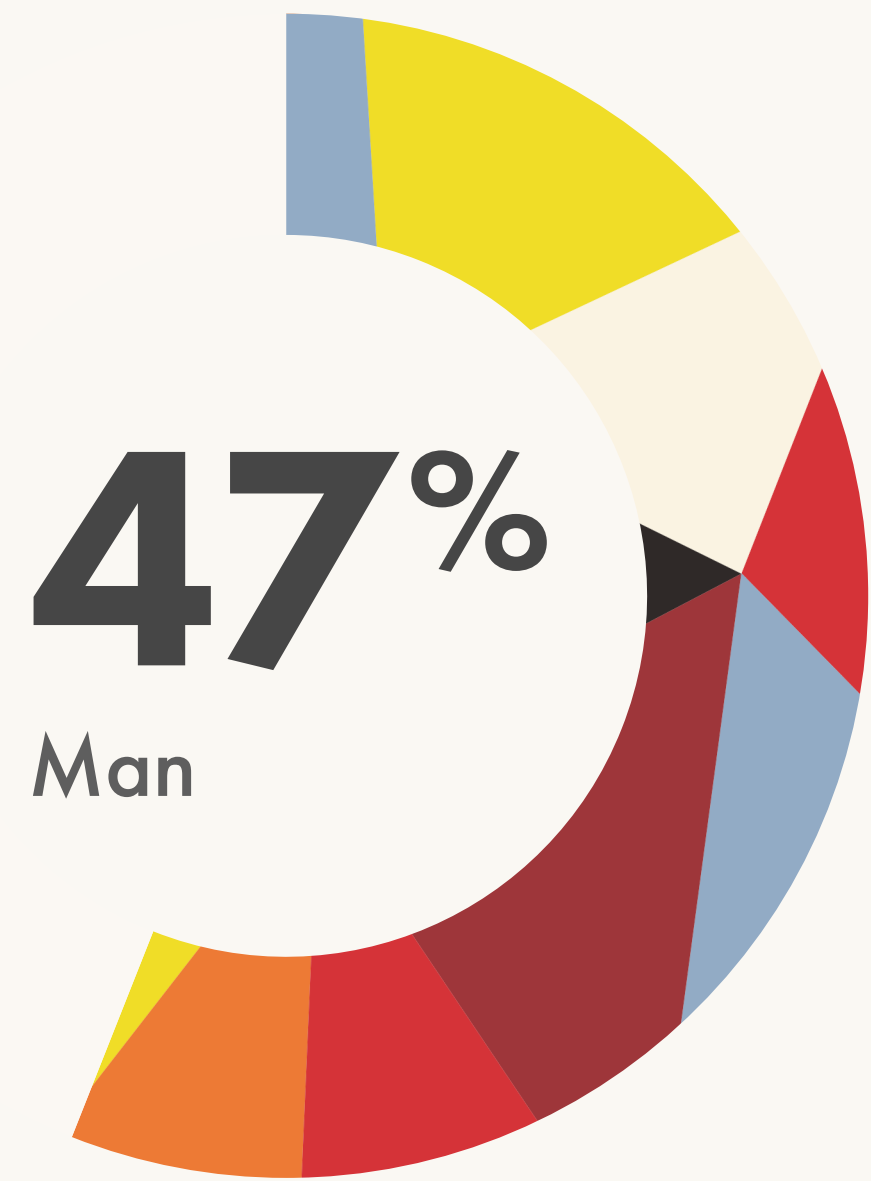
Politicians or public authorities 4%

Other 2%

**PREFER NOT TO ANSWER** **8%**

Q25. Who was the other party involved (the person who targeted someone close to you)? Select all that apply.

# Gender of the Party Inflicting Harm



Q26. What was the gender of the other party involved (the person who targeted someone close to you)?

# Action Taken

	Men	Women
Listened to the person who was being harassed	23%	34%
Offered to help the person being harassed	26%	26%
Stood up for the person being harassed	22%	23%
Told the person getting harassed what happened to them was wrong	18%	25%
Reported the incident to the social media platform	22%	31%
Reported the incident to the police	18%	12%
Talked to the victim's family or friends about the harassment	12%	17%
Talked to the perpetrator's family or friends about the harassment	15%	14%
Reported the incident to the perpetrator's workplace or school authorities	10%	10%
Reported the incident to the victim's workplace or school authorities	10%	9%
I didn't take any of these listed actions	4%	3%
I didn't take any action	13%	10%

Q27. Did you take any of the following actions? Select all that apply.