



## Q & A

### Stop Violence Against Women Online

#### **Q) What do we mean by Violence and Abuse against Women Online?**

Violence against women online reflects the gender-based violence and abuse that affects women offline. It can include:

- Direct and indirect threats of physical or sexual violence
- Violations of privacy through the sharing of sexual and private images without consent, and 'doxing,' (the posting of personal details such as phone number, home address, workplace online with the aim to cause an individual alarm or distress)
- Offensive, insulting or abusive language or images directed at women on the basis of their gender that is intended to shame, intimidate or degrade women
- Online harassment, which is sustained communications sent with the intention to cause alarm or distress. Online harassment can include repeated communication from just one individual or the cumulative effect of single communications directed at an individual from multiple people over a short or coordinated period of time (i.e. 'cyber mobs' / 'pile-ons').

#### **Q) Why is online abuse of women a Human Rights issue?**

Research by Amnesty International has revealed the alarming impact that abuse and harassment on social media are having on women all over Australia.

In 2017 Amnesty International commissioned a survey across 8 countries into women's experiences online. One in four of the women surveyed had been on the receiving end of abuse and harassment from strangers online. 42% said that the abuse has included sexist or misogynistic comments. One in 5 said that this included threats of physical or sexual violence. One in four felt that their physical safety was at risk as a result of these threats.

Women have reported stress, anxiety, or panic attacks as a result of these harmful online experiences.

The pervasive nature of online abuse and harassment is pressuring women and girls into censoring themselves on social media and fuelling gender-based discrimination and violence. This has a silencing effect on women's right to freedom of expression & limits their participation in public spaces.

#### **Q) Why are we targeting Twitter?**

Twitter is one of the worst offenders in letting abuse run wild on its platform with little accountability or transparency.

A 2015 study found that out of 134,000 abusive social media mentions, 88% of them occur on Twitter.

And while Twitter says it's trying to tackle the abuse, it won't tell us how. Women are being harassed, intimidated and threatened into silence on Twitter's watch.

### **Q) What are we asking them to do?**

Amnesty is calling on Twitter to :

1. Enforce its own policies and terms of service on [hateful conduct and abuse](#).
2. Increase transparency around how it is tackling online abuse by releasing data on the number of reports of abuse and harassment they receive, and how many of these have been resolved.

### **Q) Isn't harassment an issue for everyone online, why are we just focussing on women?**

Online violence and abuse is experienced by Internet users of all genders. However, women's experiences online often mirrors the discrimination, sexism and violence that women experience offline. Women are more likely to receive threats that are sexist, misogynistic and involve sexualised threats of violence. They are also more likely to experience intense, prolonged harassment and abuse from multiple users. This is creating an environment where women are more likely to self-censor or stop participating in public debate online altogether due to fears for their safety.

### **Q) Being called names online isn't that bad, why don't people just stop using Twitter and Facebook?**

Social media platforms, especially for women and marginalised groups, are a critical space for individuals to exercise the right to freedom of expression. Online violence and abuse are a direct threat to freedom of expression.

We don't want to see people forced out of participating in a public forum because of their gender. This is also not something that goes away when people log off from social media. Many people have had online abuse translate into physical threats to their safety.

### **Q) How will this campaign convince Twitter to change the way it operates?**

This campaign will bring international attention to the problem of online violence against women. Pressure from Amnesty supporters around the world will demonstrate the need for action from Twitter to combat abuse on it's platform. We have already seen Twitter respond to criticism that it is not doing enough to address the issue of online abuse of women by strengthening their policies. This is our chance to make sure they enforce them.